

STRESS AND ATTACHMENT

A STUDY OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH EXTERNALISING AND INTERNALISING PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

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INTRODUCTION

- Problem behaviours defined as the act of a person who either “exerts a significant negative impact on his/her quality of life or the quality of life of others, or forms significant risk to the health and/or safety to oneself or others”.
- Categorised under two broad headings of Internalising and Externalising behaviours.
- Parenting stress understood as parent’s perception of having access to available resources for meeting the demands of parenthood including knowledge about and competence at, the day-to-day as well as long term tasks of parenting, relative to the perceived demands of the parenting role.
- Bowlby defined parental attachment as a stable connection that provides a feeling of safety and security for the child.
- Parental Attachment and stress observed to be having a key impact on the internalising or externalising problem behaviours in children and adolescents.
- The comparison of the two variables across these populations have been done separately, yet very limited literature is available focusing on both the population together.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess and compare attachment and stress between parents of children and adolescents having internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Descriptive cross-sectional hospital-based research study.
- 40 children/adolescents, 20 each with Externalizing and Internalizing disorders along with their parents.
- Inclusion criteria- Children/Adolescents between ages 6-17 years of either gender
- T score 65 and above in internalising , 64 above in externalising on CBCL
- The Parental Stress Scale was administered on the parents to assess the level of stress and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment Scale- Revised (Parent version) was administered on the children and adolescents.

RESULT

Results showed a higher level of stress among the parents of the externalizing group compared to parents of the internalizing group, but there was no significant difference in the attachment in both the groups.

Comparison of Parental Stress among Externalizing and Internalizing Groups

Variables	Father		t	p
	Group 1	Group 2		
	Externalizing	Internalizing		
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD		
Parental Stress	52.05±9.04	43.95±8.55	2.909	0.006 **
Mother				
Parental Stress	59.60±6.27	49.45±10.35	3.747	0.001 **

Comparison of Parental Attachment among Externalizing and Internalizing Groups

Parental Attachment	Father		t	p
	Group 1	Group 2		
	Externalizing	Internalizing		
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD		
Alienation	13.25±3.00	14.75±3.49	-1.456	0.154
Communication	16.05±3.11	18.00±3.64	-1.818	0.077
Trust	14.75±3.43	15.75±4.73	-0.765	0.449
IPPA-R Total	17.65±6.43	19.25±7.36	-0.731	0.469
Mother				
Alienation	13.15±3.16	14.25±3.61	-1.024	0.312
Communication	17.00±4.43	18.25±3.33	-1.007	0.320
Trust	15.40±4.58	15.45±5.47	-0.031	0.975
IPPA-R Total	20.25±9.50	19.40±8.22	0.302	0.764

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DISCUSSION

- ❑ Significantly higher level of stress was found in parents of children/adolescents with externalising disorders. Similar results have been observed in other studies (Cappa et al., 2011; Wadsworth & Compas, 2002; Deater & Deckard, 2004)
- ❑ Attachment was found not statistically significant among both the groups, this finding is not consistent with previous studies (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Lochman, 2006) which shows that the type of attachment that children have with their parents are great predictors of problem behaviours.
- ❑ This can be supported by the understanding of cultural influence and traditional Asian families e.g., collectivistic vs individualistic culture of the west.
- ❑ Routhbaum et al., (2000) highlight the cultural variation in attachment and also put focus on the western idea of attachment and western influence of the attachment theories.

CONCLUSION

- ❑ In the current study when both the groups were compared it was found that parents of children/ adolescents with externalizing disorders were impacted more in terms of stress. This study brought to light part of the problems that come along with the diagnosis of, especially externalizing disorders.
- ❑ It can be concluded from the study that externalizing problems in children have a direct bearing on the mental well being of the parents yet there was no significant difference found in the attachment in both groups.
- ❑ There is a need to further assess the parenting style, the home environment, and also the neighborhood where the family stays to better understand the onset and maintaining factors of the problems. Secondary interventions may be targeted at the individual level and the family level to reduce the further impact on each individual and family as a whole.

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