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Perceptions of Adolescent Behaviour in School: Comparing Student Self-Reports and Teacher Assessments

Archisha Dixit

Kunskapsskolan Gurgaon, India

Abstract

Adolescence is one of the stages when students become vulnerable to diverse types of emotional discomfort, behavioral disorders, social disputes that is why the correct diagnosis of the psychosocial problems becomes especially significant in the school setting. The research question in this paper was to analyze the degree of congruency between the self-reports of adolescents and teacher-reported socio-emotional and behavioural problems based on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Data was collected from 59 students aged 12-19 years enrolled in grades 9-12 at an under-resourced school in Gurugram, India, along with corresponding teacher reports from 4 faculty members. The study made use of the SDQ which was administered physically to the students during the school hour. The questionnaire assessed emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, and prosocial behaviour. Statistical analyses included paired-samples t-tests, intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC), Bland-Altman plots, and multiple regression analyses to evaluate differences and agreement between informants. The results of the study indicated that most of the SDQ domains did not have significant student and teacher ratings. For prosocial behaviour the students rated higher than teachers. Poor agreement was shown in all domains of the ICC results even though the mean scores were similar. Thus, it signifies low cross-informant agreement on adolescent difficulties of students and teachers. In addition, regression analyses revealed that teacher ratings were not predicted by students' self report, age and gender. This study highlights the significance of using multiple informants to improve the understanding of adolescent mental health issues in an altruistic school.

Keywords: conduct, hyperactivity, prosocial behaviour, strengths and difficulties, teachers, students, education