

PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE SELF-REPORT AND PARENT-REPORT VERSIONS OF THE STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE (SDQ) IN A CLINICAL POPULATION OF LATVIAN ADOLESCENTS

Gerhards Reinholds Miķelsons¹, Nikita Bezborodovs¹, Arta Kočane¹

¹Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia

Keywords. Strengths and difficulties questionnaire; Adolescents; Emotional and behavioural disorders

Objectives. This study aims to investigate the validity, reliability, and factor structure of the self-report and parent-report Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) in a clinical sample of help-seeking adolescents.

Materials and Methods. Research participants were adolescents 11 to 17 years of age, who received outpatient psychiatric treatment at the Children's Clinical University Hospital in Riga, from November 2019 to October 2020. The adolescents and their parents provided screening information prior to their first-time psychiatric appointment, which was part of the usual clinical procedure. The SDQ screening information was subsequently available in the patients' medical records for retrospective analysis.

Results. In total 207 adolescents were included in the study. The internal consistency of the subscales of the SDQ reached sufficient levels (> 0.700) in the Emotional problems and Prosocial behaviours subscales of the self-report SDQ, as well as the Internalizing and Total difficulties scales. In the parent-report SDQ the Hyperactivity and Prosocial behaviour subscales and Externalizing and Total difficulties scales were sufficient (> 0.700). The mean scale scores were significantly higher in the adolescent self-report in Conduct difficulties and Hyperactivity subscales and the Externalizing difficulties scale. Overall, the level of inter-rater reliability as measured by Fleiss multirater kappa statistic showed slight agreement (0.01 to 0.10) for all subscales and scales of the SDQ except the Hyperactivity subscale that displayed poor agreement (< 0.00). The self-report and parent-report versions of the SDQ had substantially different factor structures in the principal component analysis, and both variants did not demonstrate the 5-factor structure of the original UK adolescent population.

Conclusions. Adolescents seem to be better informants regarding the symptoms of internalizing psychopathology, whereas parents are more reliable in reporting signs of externalizing psychopathology. When using the SDQ to screen for mental health difficulties in help-seeking adolescents a multi-informant screening protocol is recommended.