

Editor in chief MJCP Salvatore Settineri

Suppl. 4/2 A
AIP Clinical and Dynamic Section
Proceedings SYMPOSIA

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INFANTILE TRAUMA: REPRESENTATIONS OF SELF, OTHERS AND RELATIONSHIPS AND PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOURS IN MALTREATED CHILDREN

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Literature suggests that different types of early traumatic experiences (such as child maltreatment) have an impact on children's psychological well-being, especially, in terms of understanding and expectations of relationships, representations of self and others and on their emotion regulation. This can influence their attachment pattern and their emotional and behavioural development. Narrative tasks, such as the Story Stem Assessment Profile, offer the children an opportunity to express their expectations about themselves, others and relationships, especially attachment relationships (Hodges & Steele, 2000; Hodges, Steele, Kaniuk, Hillman & Asquith, 2009). An area of research that needs further study is the investigation of the link, in traumatised children, between children representations and their symptomatology. The present exploratory research investigates the connection between early traumatic experiences of maltreatment, children's representations of self, others and relationships and psychological well-being in terms of behavioural problems and stress. 25 maltreated and 25 non-maltreated children, aged 4 to 8 years old, participated in this research. The measures used were the Story Stem Assessment Profile to investigate child's representations of self, others and relationships (Hodges et al., 2013), the Child Behavior Checklist to identify behavioural problems in the child (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) and the Parent Stress Index to evaluate the magnitude of *stress* in the parent-child system, as seen by the mother (Abidin, 1990). Preliminary data suggest that traumatised children showed more behavioural and post-traumatic symptoms. Moreover, they represented the world as a dangerous place where adults are dangerous or unaware, protection is lacking and extreme violence often occurs.