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## The development of the children's social behaviour questionnaire

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Chapter 1 describes the background to the studies. The purpose of the development of the CSBQ was to create a reliable and valid instrument to describe the problem behaviours of children with mild pervasive developmental disorders or PDD-NOS in several developmental domains. Implicit in this central purpose is the need to examine the psychometric characteristics of the CSBQ, its relation with other parent and clinicians instruments, scores obtained by different clinical groups, and the possibility of defining subgroups by means of cluster analyses.

In chapter 2 a short overview of literature on pervasive developmental disorders is given. The PDD-NOS category is used to indicate the residual category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders. No explicit diagnostic criteria have been formulated and it is therefore difficult to give a clear description of this category. The PDD-NOS category includes conditions with quantitative and qualitative variations of symptoms. These variations of symptoms create unclear boundaries to specific PDD categories, other developmental disorders, especially to ADHD, and to the normal population. The different interpretations and definitions of the concept are a major problem for clinical work and research.

Chapter 3 considers the main methodological issues which arise when developing a standardised questionnaire. There are good psychometric reasons for using a questionnaire as assessment method. It provides a relatively easy and inexpensive way of studying clinical problems while maintaining satisfactory levels of reliability and validity. The contents of the CSBQ were kept as broad as possible, since children with pervasive developmental disorders exhibit problems in multiple areas of functioning. The items were unambiguous and formulated in parents' every-day language. The chapter concludes by discussing several scale construction techniques and by empathising the importance of reliability and validity in evaluating an instrument.

In chapter 4 the development of the CSBQ is described and the results of a study with the first version CSBQ are presented. Scores of children with PDD-NOS and normal controls were compared on a-priori scales. These scales were concerned with areas such as verbal and nonverbal communication, interaction, information processing, mood regulation and motor behavior. The results showed that the CSBQ distinguished well between the groups and that the questionnaire appears to offer a positive basis for research aimed at further clarification of the PDD-NOS category.

Following the research presented in chapter 4, several revisions were made to the

CSBQ. Chapter 5 presents the results of a study using the revised version. This study examines possible differences and similarities between social behaviour problems in children with problems classified as PDD-NOS and a group of children with problems classified as ADHD, as measured by parent questionnaires. The instruments used were the CSBQ, the ABC (Autism Behavior Checklist) and the CBCL (Child Behavior Checklist). The results showed that both groups had severe problems in executing appropriate social behaviour, but the PDD-NOS group could be distinguished from the ADHD group by the nature and the extent of these problems. The PDD-NOS group had significantly more social problems, withdrawn problems and PDD-specific problems. Although the descriptions of the social problems are global, i.e. on scale level, the results also showed that the social problems of PDD-NOS children can be positively formulated and described as at least including severe social interaction problems, withdrawn behaviours and communication problems.

Chapter 6 describes the psychometric characteristics of the CSBQ. Data were collected from large samples of children diagnosed as having high-functioning autism, PDD-NOS, ADHD and other child-psychiatric disorders. Parents completed the ABC and the CBCL as well as the CSBQ. The data provided the basis for scale construction in the CSBQ, a comparison of the CSBQ scales with other instruments and a comparison of groups on scores on the CSBQ. The 5 CSBQ scales referred to Acting-out behaviours, Social Contact problems, Social Insight problems, Anxious/Rigid behaviours and Stereotypical behaviours. The results showed that the CSBQ has good psychometric qualities with respect to both reliability and validity.

In chapter 7 norm-scores were established for all scales and the CSBQ Total scores. The results of large samples of different clinical groups were compared. These included a high-functioning autism group, a PDD-NOS group, an ADHD group, a relatively homogeneous clinical control group and a normal control group. The results showed that the HFA group received the highest scores on 4 scales referring to typical PDD problems. The ADHD group received the highest scores on the Acting-out scale. The scores of the PDD-NOS group were generally lower in comparison with the HFA group, except on the Acting-out scale. The PDD-NOS group scored almost as high as the ADHD group on this scale and the scores of the HFA group and the PDD-NOS group did not differ significantly. The scores of the ADHD group were generally lower than those of the PDD-NOS group. However, both groups had similar problems related to

social insight, i.e. difficulties in social orientation and picking up social cues. The clinical control group scored, in comparison with the other groups, relatively low on the PDD scales and received scores as high as the ADHD group on the Anxious/Rigid scale. The normal control group received the lowest scores on all scales. The study indicated that the CSBQ is an effective tool in describing PDD features in different clinical groups.

Chapter 8 describes a cluster analysis of the items of the CSBQ for a sample of children with pervasive developmental disorders, ADHD or symptoms of both. Three clusters were obtained: the first consisted of children with severe PDD problems and general psychopathology, the second comprised children with mild PDD problems and less severe externalising problems and the third cluster consisted of children with severe externalising problems and moderate PDD problems. The first cluster showed a clear relationship with high-functioning autism and the third cluster with ADHD in particular. However, the PDD-NOS group was almost equally divided over the three clusters. Examination of the nature of the behaviours that differentiated the clusters suggested that the children differed not only in degree, but also in the nature of PDD behaviours. Two of the problem scales – Social contact problems and Acting-out behaviours - showed a pattern of occurrence which was not based on degree.

Chapter 9 evaluates the main conclusions of the studies, discusses their implications and provides suggestions for further research. It is concluded that the studies demonstrate that the CSBQ is a useful instrument for describing the problems of children with mild pervasive developmental disorders or PDD-NOS. There is evidence that it is a reliable and valid instrument, which is an effective tool for describing PDD features in different clinical groups. It also offers the possibility for defining subgroups by means of cluster analyses. Many of the results of the studies support a dimensional approach to PDD and PDD related problems. Since the different clinical groups all scored to some extent on the scales in both the comparative study and the study on cluster analysis, it would probably be more informative to describe the problems of children both on the basis of categories such as those of the DSM-IV and on the basis of their problems in several developmental domains. Future studies need to examine the relationships between IQ, age and gender on the CSBQ. Attention should also be given to the construction of norms for different clinical groups and an examination of the predictive validity of the instrument.