

Attachment and Learning Disabilities - recent items

February 2016

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Adaptive behaviour, comorbid psychiatric symptoms, and attachment disorders

[Hans P. Giltaij](#), [Paula S. Sterkenburg](#), [Carlo Schuengel](#), (2016) "Adaptive behaviour, comorbid psychiatric symptoms, and attachment disorders", *Advances in Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities*, Vol. 10 Iss: 1, pp.82 - 91

Abstract:

Purpose

– The purpose of this paper is to describe the mental and intellectual developmental status of

children with combined intellectual disabilities, reactive attachment disorder (RAD), and/or disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED), and to describe the presence of comorbid diagnoses.

Design/methodology/approach

– The study included 55 children that were referred for psychiatric consultation due to low intellectual functioning (borderline or mild; IQ 50-84). Attachment diagnoses were based on the Clinical Observation of Attachment (COA) procedure. Development was measured with the Dutch version of the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales. Psychopathology was measured with the DISC-IV and AUTI-R. Emotional and behavioural problems were measured with the Dutch version of the Developmental Behaviour Checklist.

Findings

– Children with and without attachment diagnoses had similar IQs. However, children with disturbed attachment, RAD, and/or DSED had lower levels of adaptive behaviour than those without attachment diagnoses. No comorbidity was associated with autism or ADHD. However, 80 per cent of children with RAD and/or DSED were also diagnosed with ADHD. Parents of children with DSED often reported disruptive anti-social behaviour.

Practical implications

– Children with RAD and/or DSED may have unused developmental potential. Disturbed attachment should be considered in some cases of ADHD.

Originality/value

– Findings suggested that diagnostic expertise provided added value for distinguishing disordered attachment in young clients with intellectual disability.

