

Behaviour and Emotional Disorders among Egyptian Primary School Children: Prevalence and Risk Factors

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Abstract

Childhood behavioural and emotional disorders occur frequently in any population. Their long-term effects have been reported by many studies, yet little is known about their prevalence in Egypt. This study aimed to estimate the prevalence rate, range and nature of behavioural and emotional problems in a representative random sample of Egyptian school children aged 6-12 years old, and also to examine the association between behavioural problems and some family and psychosocial variables such as parental education, social class, number of siblings and gender. One of the secondary aims is to establish whether there is a difference in prevalence between urban and rural children. The study used the Arabic version of the extended Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires for completion by teachers and parents as well as a purpose developed questionnaire to collect socio-demographic factors. The study sample was 1177 children randomly selected from 10 schools. The overall response rate varied between 90 and 98%. The results showed that teachers consistently rated the children very high (mean score=13, SD 6.2). Parents rated children lower than teachers though still high (mean score=11.6, SD 5.9). Using standard cut-off points, teachers' and parents' estimated prevalence rates of childhood behavioural problems were 34.7% and 20.6% respectively. Using the multi-informant computerized algorithm, the estimated prevalence rate was found to be 8.5%, which is comparable to those of the UK. Poor academic and achievement, lower level of parental education and not living with both parents were found to be associated with high risk of behaviour problems. Although the results revealed some significant difference between

rural and urban children, this could not be concluded. It is clear that prevalence rates of childhood behaviour problems are at least similar to those found in other countries. The study has important implications for further child mental health research in Egypt and also for service provision improvement in order to match the pressing needs.

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