Is the CBCL-PTSP Scale Related to Dysregulated Temperament?

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Objective
To examine whether the temperament dimensions associated with "Posttraumatic Stress Problems" (PTSP) on the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) are indicative of disordered self-regulation.

Introduction
The validity of the CBCL-PTSP Scale, which was designed to measure PTSD, has been questioned in multiple studies. Ruggiero and McLeer (2000) found that the CBCL-PTSP scale did not distinguish between children with PTSD and children with other psychopathology. Ayer et al. (2007) hypothesized that the CBCL-PTSP scale measures underlying dysregulation rather than PTSD symptomology specifically.

Rettew et al. (2008) identified three clusters of individuals with distinguishing temperament profiles: steady, moderate, and disengaged. The steady group was marked by low NS and high persistence (P), the moderate group scored in the average range across all four temperament categories, while the disengaged group had high NS, low P, and low reward dependence (RD).

We hypothesized that CBCL-PTSP would be related to the disengaged temperament profile and to high levels of both NS and HA (which are generally found to be inversely related in community samples).

Sample
• Subjects (probands and non-referred siblings) were recruited from an outpatient child psychiatry clinic to participate in the Vermont Family Study (VFS).
• Probands were selected based on their attention and/or aggression problems.
• A sample of 265 children was used for the current analysis (37% female; mean age = 11.10 years; age range = 5-18 years.

Measures
The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991): A gender and age sensitized questionnaire completed by mothers to respond to 118 problem behaviors exhibited by their child over the previous 6 months. From this, the 14-item Posttraumatic Stress Problems (CBCL-PTSP) scale raw scores were used to assess PTSP.

Juvenile Temperament and Character Inventory (JTCI): A 108-item questionnaire developed to assess the four temperament dimensions of Cloninger’s biosocial model of personality (novelty seeking, harm avoidance, reward dependence, and persistence). Completed by mothers regarding their children.

Rettew et al. (2008) latent profile classes (steady, moderate, and disengaged) were used in person-centered analyses.

Analyses
• Path analyses were conducted in M-Plus (Muthen & Muthen, 2005)
• The cluster function was used to account for nested data (children within families).

We examined the relation between temperament profiles and CBCL-PTSP Scale scores from both person- and variable-centered approaches.

Results
• A series of path analyses showed that CBCL-PTSP is related to significantly higher novelty seeking (NS) and harm avoidance (HA), and significantly lower reward dependence (RD). Persistence (P) was not significantly related to PTSP scores.

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<tr>
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<th>Beta</th>
<th>P-value</th>
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<tr>
<td>PTSP on:</td>
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<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>0.412</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>RD</td>
<td>-0.216</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>0.491</td>
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Results Cont’d
• The disengaged group scored higher than the steady group on the CBCL-PTSP (ß = 0.41; p < .001)
• The moderate group scored higher than the steady group on the CBCL-PTSP, but to a lesser extent (ß = 0.15; p < .05).

Conclusions
• The results support the hypothesis that the items on the CBCL-PTSP scale are related to disordered self-regulation.
• Variable- and person-centered approaches indicate that a temperamental profile defined by low RD and high HA and NS is associated with CBCL-PTSP scores.
• This is consistent with previous findings that this same pattern of temperament is related to higher scores on the CBCL-JBD scale (Rettew et al., 2007), which has been shown to measure the same latent construct as the CBCL-PTSP scale (Ayer et al., 2007).
• These results provide further evidence that the CBCL-PTSP scale should be used as a measure of dysregulation rather than PTSD.

References


