

sym102-3 Attachment difficulties behind the dykes: screening instruments for attachment in different settings

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Attachment quality is a powerful predictor of a child's later social, emotional, and cognitive development. An estimated 15% of all children are seriously affected by a disturbed attachment relationship and may encounter problems. Timely identification of children's attachment problems is thus crucial. In this symposium we focus on the validity of four screening instruments for attachment: the Attachment Insecurity Screening Instrument (AISI), the observational checklist for disturbed attachment behaviors (Attachment Checklist), Disturbances of Attachment Interview (DAI) and the Secure Base Safe Haven Observation list.

The first presentation (Spruit et al.) focuses on the AISI: a parent-report questionnaire for assessing attachment insecurity in preschoolers (Wissink et al, 2016). Aim of a study, that is currently being conducted at University of Amsterdam, is to improve the AISI. In the second presentation (Hall et al.) a short checklist for attachment will be discussed. The checklist is based on Boris and Zeanah's (2005) 'Behavioral Signs of Disturbed Attachment in Young Children'. Tilburg University and TNO just started the data collection for a validation and feasibility study. The third presentation (Giltaj, et al.) focuses on the DAI, an interview to assess signs of clinically disturbed attachment in children. Convergent and discriminant validity of this interview are presented using the Clinical Observation of Attachment as criterion. In the last presentation (de Schipper) validity outcomes of the Secure Base Safe Haven Observation list are shown within a group setting for adolescents with intellectual disabilities. The validity of this interview across different informants is also shown.

In this paper symposium we take stock of different validity studies into attachment instruments: which is most useful for which informants and in which settings? The first two presentations primarily focus on what is currently known about the instruments and the design of new studies. The last two present new research findings.

sym102-3.1 How to develop a screening instrument for early attachment difficulties? A study-protocol.

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Aim: The aim of the present research project is to improve an instrument for the screening of attachment difficulties in families with a child between 2-5 years old: The Attachment Insecurity Screening Inventory (AISI).

Methods: The study consists of three parts. Study 1: a qualitative study on how the present version of the questionnaire can be improved, by interviewing parents, a focus group with professionals and a meeting with experts. Study 2: a quantitative study with 100 parents responding to the new questionnaire. Study 3: a combined quantitative and qualitative study with 200 clinical and 200 non-clinical parents filling in the questionnaire, and 40 clinical and 40 non-clinical parents being observed in their attachment behavior.

Results: Each study provides information on the instrument: strong and weak items. After each study good items are kept, weak items are removed or changed, and new items are added. After the third study, definitive conclusions on the final version of the questionnaire are presented.

Conclusions: There is a need for an instrument to screen for early attachment difficulties. With this instrument it should be possible to have a first impression of problems in the attachment relationship between the child and the caregiver.