

Parents' perceptions about disruptive disorders: Implications for treatment

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The significance of parents' role in child psychotherapy is strongly supported by the cognitive-behavioral treatment. Child psychopathology is supposed to be determined by variables operating in the family system, while parents' beliefs and feelings about their child's behavior affect their response to the problem. Thus, the therapeutic process should include modification of parents' possible false beliefs regarding their child's condition and their role in treatment. The present study, which constitutes part of a more extended research, aims to investigate parents' perceptions about the causes of disruptive behavior and their feeling of self-efficacy in coping with the problem.

Participants were parents of 28 clinically referred boys aged 5.5 – 14.5 years (mean age: 10.02, $sd=30.31$). All children received diagnosis of ADHD by an experienced clinician. Parents completed the following questionnaires: (a) Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL/6-18) (b) ADHD Rating Scale IV (c) Parental Account of the Causes of Childhood Problems Questionnaire (PACCP) (d) A questionnaire based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (e) A questionnaire asking for demographic information.

Results demonstrated that 93% of parents attribute disruptive behavior to learning difficulties. Moreover, 57% of parents consider as causal factor the child's character and 39% the spoiled upbringing. Less than 30% attribute disruptive behaviors to familial conditions or neurobiological abnormalities. Causal attribution to child's character and spoiled upbringing was significantly positively correlated with disruptive symptoms i.e. ADHD ($r=.602$ and $r=.399$ respectively), conduct problems ($r=.663$ and $r=.667$ respectively) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder ($r=.499$ and $r=.499$ respectively). Parents' feeling of self-efficacy was significantly negatively correlated with the causal attribution to child's character ($r=-.464$) and spoiled upbringing ($r=-.541$). Learning disabilities were not significantly correlated with parental perceptions of self-efficacy.

Results are discussed in relation to the possible influences of the parents' perceptions of their child's problematic behavior on their role in the intervention program.