

Attachment disorders during childhood: Preliminary data on the validation of the ETRADD-Q

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INTRODUCTION

Attachment Disorders (AD), namely Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), and Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder (DSED), are mental health problems that children may develop as a result of social neglect (e.g., maltreatment, orphanage, repeated change of caregivers). Although there are some tools for measuring AD, there are several gaps: most focus on DSED, none has been through a complete validation process, and none is based on the new diagnostic criteria of DSM-5 (APA, 2013).

It is for this reason that we have developed the ETRADD-Q (Early trauma related and dysregulation disorders questionnaire; Monette, 2015), which is a new tool for the evaluation of AD updated to DSM-5 criteria. The research version (92 items) is currently being validated.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to present the ETRADD-Q short version (16 items) and the results supporting its reliability and validity.

METHOD (SAMPLE)

The sample consists of 145 school-aged children (6-12 years old) in three groups:

- Typically developing children (TD) from the general population enrolled in regular schools ($n = 81$, 40 boys, $M_{age} = 8.26$)
- Adopted / foster children WITHOUT AD diagnosis ($n = 44$, 25 boys, $M_{age} = 8.84$ years)
- Adopted / foster children WITH AD diagnosis ($n = 20$, 16 boys, $M_{age} = 10.25$ years). The diagnosis was made by a child psychologist or psychiatrist. Most of these children have more than one diagnosis (Dx) in mental health (see Table 1).

METHOD (MEASURES)

Primary caregivers completed three questionnaires:

- Sociodemographic questionnaire.
- ETRADD-Q short version: This version contains 8 items measuring RAD behaviors (based on DSM-5 criteria A1, A2, B1, B2, B3) and 4 items measuring DSED behaviors (based on DSM-5 criteria A1, A2, A3, A4). Four other items involving interactions with unknown adults were added to balance the DSED scale.
- RPQ (Relationship problem questionnaire, Minnis et al., 2002): a screening questionnaire to assess RAD (6 items) and DSED (4 items), based on DSM-IV and ICD-10 criteria.

FIGURE 1. SCREE PLOT

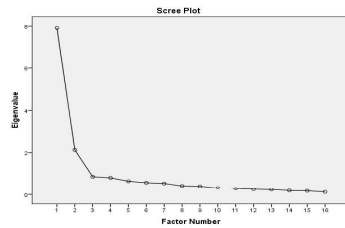


Table 1. Diagnosis frequencies by group

Number of Dx	TD group	WITHOUT AD group	WITH AD group
0	74%	60%	0%
1	15%	25%	20%
2	3%	2%	25%
3 +	8%	10%	55%

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and group comparison on two ETRADD-Q scales

ETRADD-Q scales (sums of items)	TD group		WITHOUT AD group		WITH AD group		Anovas	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F (2, 142)	Post-hoc
RAD scale (8 items)	2.21	(2.31)	6.98	(5.62)	11.35	(6.33)	44.79**	1 < 2 < 3
DSED scale (7 items)	2.98	(4.10)	6.11	(6.12)	11.60	(6.59)	23.57**	1 < 2 < 3

** p < .01

Table 3. ETRADD-Q items, exploratory factor analysis (PAF extraction, Oblimin rotation) and caregivers answers

ETRADD-Q items (short version, 16 items)	DSM-5 Criteria	Factor loading		% of caregivers scoring the item			
		1	2	0	1	2	3
				(not at all true)	(a bit true)	(pretty much true)	(very much true)
2. Rarely seeks comfort from his/her adult caregivers when he/she is in distress.	RADA1	.59		68%	16%	11%	5%
8. Is hard to comfort when offered comfort in moments of distress.	RAD A2	.57		56%	39%	5%	0%
1. Demonstrates little emotional reaction when interacting with others.	RAD B1	.85		85%	15%	0%	0%
4. Seems uninterested when others try to talk to or interact with him/her.	RAD B1	.82		82%	18%	0%	0%
11. Is rarely joyful or enthusiastic.	RAD B2	.93		83%	15%	2%	0%
3. Can get angry for no apparent reason when with an adult caregiver.	RAD B3	.65		79%	12%	6%	3%
6. Can become scared for no apparent reason when with an adult caregiver.	RAD B3	.48		88%	10%	2%	0%
15. Can begin to cry or become sad for no apparent reason when with an adult caregiver.	RAD B3	.62		84%	14%	2%	0%
7. Shows little hesitation to interact with unknown or little known adults.	DSED A1		.63	54%	21%	22%	3%
9. Behaves with others in an overly familiar or intimate manner.	DSED A2		.75	78%	12%	9%	1%
12. Hardly ever refers back to adult caregivers in unknown places (e.g., drifts away...).	DSED A3	.43		64%	23%	12%	1%
10. Could easily leave with an unknown or little known adult.	DSED A4		.62	78%	15%	5%	2%
5. Takes the lead to engage unknown or little known adults in conversation.	n.a.		.89	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
13. Is overly friendly with unknown or little known adults.	n.a.		.90	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
14. Is affectionate with unknown or little known adults.	n.a.		.91	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
16. Can place him/herself at risk by approaching unknown or little known adults.	n.a.		.77	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Note, Coefficients < 0.30 not shown.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

- As expected, adoptees or foster children WITH AD had higher scores (see table 2) on both scales of the ETRADD-Q than adoptees or foster children WITHOUT AD and ;
- As expected adoptees or foster children WITHOUT AD had higher scores (see table 2) than typically developing children.
- Factor analysis (see figure 1 and table 3) indicates that the items of the ETRADD-Q short version form two distinct factors (RAD scale and DSED scale) that are moderately correlated ($r = 0.58$).
- The item measuring DSED Criterion A3 (item 12) saturates the RAD factor rather than the DSED factor. Other researchers have obtained similar results (Dobrova-Krol et al., 2010; Pears et al., 2010), which calls into question the relevance of DSED criterion A3.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

- Behavior relating to DSM-5 DSED criterion A1 (little hesitation to interact with unknown adult) seems to be the most common AD behavior among the typically developing school-aged children.
- Behavior relating to DSM-5 RAD criterion B1 (little emotional reaction in interactions) and B3 (becoming scared of caregiver) seems to be the rarest AD behavior among the typically developing school-aged children.
- The ETRADD-Q RAD scale (sum of 8 items) correlates in the expected direction ($r = 0.89$) with the RPQ RAD scale. The ETRADD-Q DSED scale (sum of 7 items) correlates in the expected direction ($r = 0.91$) with the RPQ DSED scale.
- Internal consistency of both ETRADD-Q scales were very high (Cronbach alpha : 0.89 et 0.93).
- These results indicate that the ETRADD-Q short version has very good psychometric properties.

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