
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Behavioral disorders at school have negative consequences for students' social development and academic achievement. A better understanding of their causes would help to develop more adapted prevention and intervention strategies. This study analyzes the association between behavioral disorders and executive dysfunctions in Elementary School students. A sample of 974 students from third to sixth grade of Primary School (aged 7 to 12), belonging to 30 schools in Asturias (Northern Spain), as well as their families and teachers, took part in this study. Behavioral disorders were assessed through teachers' completion of *ACE* rating-scale (Arias, Ayuso, Gil & Gonzalez, 2009). The frequency of occurrence of behaviors associated with deficits in nine executive functions (impulsivity, hyperactivity, emotional control, functional memory, planning, organization, cognitive flexibility, concentration and focus) was assessed by means of the *EFE* scale (developed by the authors) in its three forms (student self-report, and teachers and family rating-scales). Spearman correlation coefficients between scores obtained in *ACE* and the nine executive functioning components of *EFE* scale in its three forms were calculated. Statistically significant correlations between both measures were obtained. The strongest correlations were found between disruptive behavior and Impulsivity, Hyperactivity and Emotional Control. Results were consistent for the three forms of the *EFE* scale, being correlations higher when teachers were the informant. This study highlights the relevance of considering executive functioning components for the prevention and treatment of behavioral disorders.

Keywords: Behavioral disorders, executive functioning, school.