Distinguishing behavioural paths in Portuguese adolescent boys

A multidimensional study towards the development of universal preventive efforts

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Introduction

**Antisocial behaviour** refer to a diversity of behaviours that violate social rules aimed at promoting respect and consideration towards other people’s life and property

“It must be interpreted as a social event, with meaningful subtypes, topographies, antecedents and functions” (Dodge, Coie & Lynam, 2008, p. 437)

A developmental perspective may offer important clues to understand what needs to be worked in order to prevent antisocial manifestations and amend its consequences, especially considering specific contexts and individual perceptions.

(Morgado & Vale Dias, 2013).
Hypothesis

H1: Delinquent boys present higher scores on Eysenck’s personality traits and lower scores on the “lie” scale of EPQ-J (measure of social conformity) when compared to boys from the general population;

H2: Delinquent boys have lower self-control and empathy than boys from the general population;

H3: Delinquent boys have more negative self-concept than boys from the general population;

H4: Delinquent boys have more negative perceptions of family environment than boys from the general population;

H5: Personality traits, self-concept, social skills, and family environment predict antisocial tendencies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociodemographic Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>• Living conditions&lt;br&gt;• Sociodemographic characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Self-Report (YSR)</strong></td>
<td>• “Antisocial” scale&lt;br&gt;• “Hiperactivity/Attention Problems” scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eysenck’s Personality Questionnaire for Children (EPQ-J)</strong></td>
<td>• “Psichoticism”, “Extraversion”, “Neuroticism”&lt;br&gt;• “Lie”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale for Children – 2 (PHCSCS-2)</strong></td>
<td>• Global score&lt;br&gt;• “Behavioural Adjustment”, “Intellectual/School Status”, “Physical Appearance/Attributes”, “Anxiety”, “Popularity”, “Happiness and Satisfaction”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Skills Questionnaire – Student From (SSQ)</strong></td>
<td>• “Self-control”&lt;br&gt;• “Empathy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Environment Scale (FES)</strong></td>
<td>• Relationship (“cohesion”, “expressiveness”, “conflict”)&lt;br&gt;• Personal Growth (“independence”, “achievement orientation”, “intellectual/cultural orientation”, “active/recreational orientation”, “moral/religious emphasis”)&lt;br&gt;• System maintenance (“organization”, “control”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Occasional sample of 195 adolescent boys: 
- 116 boys with history of delinquency, institutionalized in Educational Centers (reformatories) in Continental Portugal 
- 79 students in three schools from the Coimbra region

Permissions from the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Justice and National Data Protection Commission

Measures filled collectively, in classroom, anonymously and confidentially

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
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<th>School</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
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<table>
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<th>Socioeconomic Status</th>
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<th>School</th>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Group differences in behavioural measures

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
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<td>Gen.Pop Inst.</td>
<td>YSR Antisocial</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td>Gen.Pop Inst.</td>
<td>Hyperact/AttentionProb.</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>-2.820</td>
<td>.005</td>
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Results

T test: Differences between groups

* Statistically significant difference
**Results**

*Multiple linear regression models (Stepwise)*

- **Antisocial**
  - $R^2 = .647$
  - $P = .000$
  - Psychoticism: $\beta = .362$, $P = .000$
  - Independence: $\beta = -.124$, $P = .008$

- **Behavior Adjusted Attention**
  - $R^2 = .425$
  - $P = .000$
  - Psychoticism: $\beta = -.397$, $P = .000$

- **Neuroticism**
  - $\beta = -.363$, $P = .000$

- **Hiperact Attention P.**
  - $R^2 = .425$
  - $P = .000$
  - Psychoticism: $\beta = .336$, $P = .000$

- **Cohesion**
  - $\beta = -.136$, $P = .025$

- **Lie**
  - $\beta = -.127$, $P = .015$
Discussion

Differences between groups

- **Sociodemographic characteristics**
  - Low socioeconomic status as priority intervention target
  - School level below what would be expected according to age
  - Along with differences in intellectual self-concept and in the family’s intellectual/cultural orientation – importance of academic/intellectual life on behaviour

- **Personality**
  - Higher impulsivity, aggressiveness, emotional unstability, tension in the institutionalized group
  - Higher openness to experience, sociability, energy in the school group

- **Social skills**
  - Hypothesis confirmed regarding self-control and empathy

- **Self-concept**
  - Importance of multidimensional approach
  - No differences in physical appearance and popularity: good physical condition to perform some types of antisocial behaviours (i.e. stealing, fighting) + peers’ reinforcement?

- **Family environment**
  - Relationship dimensions
  - Personal growth
Regarding differences between groups, it is not possible to establish causalities, that is, to conclude that significant differences reflect protective or risk factors for antisocial behaviours. In fact, regression analysis showed that not all variables that presented statistically significant differences were predictors of behavioural dimensions.
Conclusions

Considerable differences between groups [specificity of institutionalized group]

Individual perceptions + family environment

Adequate perceptions of behavioural maladjustment + indifference = needs to be further explored/worked in intervention

Impulsivity as an important difference/predictor
Limitations

- Occasional samples
- No control for psychological/developmental deficits neither for alcohol/drug consumption
- Closed environment (institutionalized group)
- Only males
- Self-report measures

Potentialities

- Statistic significance
- Explained variance
- Multidimensionality
- Prevention Clues
- Potential for replication in international contexts (due to research design) and cross-cultural comparisons
References


References


Publications related with this research


Thank you for your attention.

We welcome any questions/comments that may improve the next steps of this research

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