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Characteristics of Treatment Completers and Non-Completers in a Residential Programme for Severe Conduct Disorder

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology
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ABSTRACT

The study centres on a long-term residential programme for the treatment of severe conduct disorder. A number of young people leave the programme before completion of treatment. The focus of the study is to examine existing data from psychometric tests to determine whether the data can provide material which delineates a completer profile and a non-completer profile. The data was originally collected as part of the assessment and diagnostic process for entry to the programme. All of the young people met criteria for a diagnosis of severe conduct disorder with early onset.

Secondary data analysis was used, to delineate a profile of each group. Differences between the two groups were found in the areas of resilience factors, internalising and externalising characteristics, and comorbidity with a range of disorders. Comorbidity with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder was particularly prevalent.

As the data samples were small the current study is exploratory and descriptive, rather than predictive or inferential. Gender and ethnicity affect both the manifestation of conduct disorder and response to treatment. However, the small sample size did not allow separate analysis along gender or ethnic lines. Both of these areas warrant further research.

Conduct disorder is a complex disorder, which affects every domain of the young person's life including family, individual development, educational achievement, peer relations, social relations, criminal history, and physical and mental health. Ecological models have explanatory utility in terms of aetiology, symptomatology, and treatment rationale covering all domains and are used as a framework for this study.

This study reviews relevant literature, gives a brief outline of the specific programme, describes the method and results of the secondary analysis of the test data, and concludes with a discussion about the implications of the findings, and some suggestions for the design of further programmes and for future research in this area.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a tribute to those people who spend their days with the batto boys and girls trying to keep them away from the barbed wire. It is also a tribute to the young people themselves struggling to make their way.

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While very appreciative of the support I have received, I take full responsibility for the final result.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Abstract                      | ii  |
| Acknowledgements              | iii |
| Table of Contents             | iv  |
| List of Tables                | vii |
| List of Figures               | ix  |
| Foreword                      | x   |

### Chapter 1. Introduction

1.0 Conduct Disorder
1.1 Symptomatology or Behaviour  2
1.2 Diagnosis  4
1.3 Aetiology
   1.3.1 Biological Factors  7
   1.3.2 Social Learning Factors  8
   1.3.3 Developmental Factors  9
1.4 Epidemiology  10
   1.4.1 Persistence  13
1.5 Subtypes of Conduct Disorder  13
   1.5.1 Early Onset  14
   1.5.2 Later or Adolescent Onset  15
   1.5.3 Anti-social Personality Disorder
      Trajectory  16
   1.5.4 Gender as Subtype  18
1.6 Comorbidity  20
   1.6.1 Comorbidity with ADHD  21
   1.6.2 Anxiety Disorders  22
   1.6.3 Mood Disorders  23
   1.6.4 Substance Abuse  23
   1.6.5 Learning Disorder  24
   1.6.6 Neurological Deficits  24
   1.6.7 Findings From Examination of Selected Psychometric Tests  25
1.7 Treatment  27
   1.7.1 Treatment Principles  28
   1.7.2 Community Based Treatments  30
   1.7.3 Residential Treatments  31
   1.7.4 Treatment Foster Care  31
   1.7.5 Early Intervention/Prevention  32
1.8 General Factors Influencing Early Termination of Treatment for Children With Behaviour Problems  33
1.9 The Severe Conduct Disorder Programme

1.9.1 Programme Design
1.9.2 Target Group
1.9.3 Residential Needs
1.9.4 Exit From The Programme
1.9.5 Demographics
1.9.6 Gender
1.9.7 Education
1.9.8 Leisure
1.9.9 Mentors
1.9.10 Family
1.9.11 Other Components of the Programme
1.9.12 Monitoring of the Programme: Funding & Reporting

1.10 Summary and Reasons For This Study

Chapter 2. Method

2.0 Method
2.1 Ethics Approval
2.2 Profiling
2.3 Defining the Groups
2.4 Data
2.4.1 Data Selection
2.4.2 Psychometric Test Information
2.4.3 Data From Other Sources
2.4.4 Accessing the Data
2.4.5 Missing or Incomplete Data
2.4.6 Quality of Data
2.4.7 Data Analysis
2.4.8 Limitations of Data Sets

Chapter 3. Results

3.0 Results
3.1 Results Comparing Groups on the Level of Severity of Symptoms
3.1.1 Conners’ Rating Scales: CPRS: Atypical Type G & Type P Profiles
3.2 Results Comparing Groups on Means and SDs for CPRS, CDI, STAI, SIQ and Piers-Harris
3.2.1 Conners’ Rating Scales
3.2.2 Children’s Depression Inventory
3.2.3 State-Trait Anxiety Inventory
3.2.4 Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire
3.3 Results Comparing Group Means and SDs on Clusters of Subscales Providing Specific Information from Conners’ Rating Scales
3.3.1 Conners’ Rating Scales
3.3.2 CPRS Internalising Subscales 57
3.3.3 CPRS Externalising Subscales 59
3.3.4 CPRS Global Index 60
3.3.5 CPRS DSM-IV Index 61
3.4 Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-III) Results 62

Chapter 4. Discussion
4.0 Discussion 66
4.1 Conners' Rating Scales 66
4.2 Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children 68
4.3 Children's Depression Inventory 70
4.4 State-Trait Anxiety Inventory 70
4.5 Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire 70
4.6 Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale 70
4.7 Characteristics of Young People in the Severe Conduct Disorder Programme 71
4.7.1 Social and Emotional Factors 71
4.7.2 Physical and Emotional Health Factors 71
4.7.3 Psychological Factors 71
4.8 Profiles 72
4.8.1 Non-completer Profile 72
4.8.2 Completer Profile 72
4.9 Other Factors Which May Have Contributed to Non-completion of Treatment 73
4.10 Summary and Limitations 74

Chapter 5. Conclusion
5.0 Conclusion 75
5.1 Implications for this Programme 76
5.2 Interagency Co-operation 77
5.3 Research Implications 77

References 79
Appendix A. Summary of Psychometric Test Properties 103
Appendix B. Glossary of Abbreviations 107
Appendix C. Ethical Issues Raised in this Study 109
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Correlates of antisocial behaviour in adolescence (Borduin, 1999)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Risk and resilience factors considered to be influential in the development of Conduct Disorder (Steiner &amp; Wilson, 1999)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Sets of data available for completers and non-completers for each assessment</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Comparison of completers and non-completers who match Type G and Type P profiles on Conners’ Parent Rating Scale (CPRS)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>CPRS-Individual T-scores above 70: percentage of each group falling in the markedly atypical range</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>CPRS subscales: summary scores comparing completers and non-completers on median, mean and SD</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Comparison of group mean scores and SDs on subtests of Children’s Depression Inventory (CDI)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>Above average scores on each subtest of the CDI: groups compared</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Comparison of group means and SDs on State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Comparison of group means and SDs on Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale: comparative group means and SDs on Piers-Harris subscales</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Conners’ Rating Scales: comparison across rating scales on common subscales, of completers’ and non-completers’ means</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Comparison of completers’ and non-completers’ mean T-scores on internalising subscales of CPRS</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>Comparison of completers’ and non-completers’ mean T-scores on externalising subscales of CPRS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>CPRS comparison of group mean T-scores and SDs on Conners’ Global Index</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>CPRS comparison of group mean T-scores on DSM-IV Index</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17</td>
<td>Summary of comparison of WISC-III results on all subscales and summary scores</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18. Psychometric Tests: standardisation, reliability, and validity information
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Graph of CPRS Subscales comparing completers' and non-completers' means as in Table 6.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Graph of the comparative means for the completers and non-completers for CDI subscales as in Table 7.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Graph of comparative means on Piers-Harris Subscales</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Graph of comparative group means on CPRS internalising items as in Table 13.</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comparative group means on CPRS externalising items, as in Table 14.</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Graph of comparative group means on CPRS Global Index as in Table 15.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Graph of comparative group means on CPRS DSM-IV Index as in Table 16.</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>WISC-III Results Verbal Subtests: Comparative group means</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>WISC-III Results Performance Subtests: Comparative group means</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>WISC-III Summary Scores: Comparative group means</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>WISC-III Index Scores: Comparative group means</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

Of all the boys on the beach batto was the biggest brave. best swimmer best diver
best floater he was the shark of the sea-egg season and he ducked every boy he was
sure he could beat any time any place without reason.

he was the shake of their cake the stone of their bush. he was the boast of the
beach-boys gang

batto came from the tumbledown village of low wooden houses overlooking the
bay which stood on their stilts like a crab on its claws. where they nevvah had
bottles rounn their garden beds

cause they nevvah had gardens an bottles were fuh fights an they was plenty fights
in de hickey. They could curse yuh mudder and ax fuh yuh faddah cause they didnt
have mothers like the land-boys had an you couldnt curse they fathers who were
fishermen

batto never had a mother like the land-boys had and hed never even had to go to
school. but hed been to dodds and hoped one day to go to a proper prison for the
man who would cross his path so the beach-boys said

dodds was the place with the high barbed wire and the cat-o-nine tails far far away
in the country. but your parents were vague if you asked where it was what it
meant. you were told it was the place where the bad boys went

when he was he didnt know how much then, batto had burss another boy eye in a
fight

it was so:


Conduct disorder is associated with bad boys. This overlooks a significant number
of girls with conduct disorder. The bad boy epithet takes a moral stance in relation
to what will be discussed here as a mental health disorder, with attempts to provide
appropriate treatment for that disorder.

Like batto, many conduct disordered youth have low socioeconomic status, and the
disadvantages which attend that status. Like batto, many have divided and
conflicted families. Like batto, their horizons may be restricted to a future behind
barbed wire where the bad boys go.