The use of multimethod impulsivity assessment in the prediction of ADHD, conduct problems, and callous-unemotional symptoms

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between multiple forms of behavioral and trait impulsivity and the externalizing symptoms of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), conduct problems (CP), and callous-unemotional (CU) traits. Participants were 182 elementary school age children (142 boys and 40 girls) ranging in age from 5.6 to 12.5 years, recruited through a university-based ADHD clinic. Data showed that symptoms of ADHD were characterized by playing fewer trials on the Reward Dominance task, UPPS Urgency, and UPPS lack of perseverance. Symptoms of conduct problems were characterized by playing fewer trials on the Reward Dominance task and UPPS urgency. In contrast, callous-unemotional traits were characterized by only UPPS urgency and not by performance on either of the behavioral tasks. These results indicate some convergence in terms of trait impulsivity across externalizing syndromes, as well as divergence in terms of behavioral impulsivity and perseverance on tasks. The implications of these findings are discussed with particular emphasis on the importance of different facets of impulsivity characterizing different childhood externalizing syndromes.