

A new method to measure childhood stress

January 13 2010



The daily assessment of stress in children has gained importance over the last 20 years. Credit: Megan Skelly (Creative Commons, Reconocimiento, No comercial, No derivados).

Researchers from the University of Malaga have created the 'Inventory of Daily Stressors', a method aimed at schoolchildren. According to experts, worrying about physical appearance, taking part in numerous extracurricular activities and being alone a lot are some of the factors that increase the risk of suffering from childhood stress.

"The figures endorse the need for specific tools to assess daily stress amongst [schoolchildren](#)", María Victoria Trianes, the main author of the study and professor at the University of Malaga, explains to SINC. That is why her team devised the 'Childhood Inventory of Daily Stressors' (IIEC [Spanish acronym]).

The report, published in the Spanish journal *Psicothema*, lists 25 daily situations in the fields of health, school, family and peer relationships, all relevant to childhood development. The inventory is also validated by other sources such as teaching staff and parents.

The IIEC is linked to school grades and health problems. Some of the most influential factors are worrying about physical appearance, taking part in too many extracurricular activities and being alone a lot. The inventory is also associated with a hormonal indicator (cortisol levels on waking up) and enables 'socio-emotional change' in children to be predicted.

"The IIEC provides valuable information for the development of psychoeducational intervention guidelines to improve school interaction and encourage children to develop the appropriate tools to manage daily stress throughout their lives", states the researcher.

1,094 children (533 boys and 561 girls), aged between 8 and 12 and from 17 different educational institutions across Malaga, took part in the study. "It is important to create tools to assess daily childhood stress, as this is an area which lacks resources specific to these age groups", Trianes points out.

The assessment of daily stress in childhood has become increasingly important over the last 20 years. Experts claim that stress leads children and teenagers to develop symptoms of depression and anxiety, sleep disorders, eating disorders, disruptive behaviour and academic underperformance. There can also be consequences for their physical health. Therefore "prevention and effective treatment will have positive consequences for mental health and development in childhood and adolescence", concludes the professor.

More information: Trianes, M. V., Blanca, M. J., Fernández, F. J.,

Escobar, M., Maldonado, E. F. y Muñoz, A. M. "Evaluación del estrés infantil: Inventario Infantil de Estresores Cotidianos (IIEC)".
Psicothema, 21, 598-603, Nov 2009.

Provided by FECYT - Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology

Citation: A new method to measure childhood stress (2010, January 13) retrieved 17 April 2024
from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-01-method-childhood-stress.html>

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