

ABSTRACT

Examining the Sociodemographic and Sociopsychological Risk Factors:
Implications for Understanding the Developmental Pathways of Conduct Disorder
in Trinidad

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Conduct disorder is the most serious and frequently diagnosed psychiatric disorder in childhood. It has been found to engender deleterious effects on children and adolescents as well as on their parents and society, and can lead to antisocial personality disorder and further criminality in adulthood. The purpose of this study was to examine whether the sociodemographic (age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and residence) and sociopsychological (cognitive functioning and parenting styles) factors placed children and adolescents in Trinidad at increased risk for developing conduct disorder psychopathology. The study also sought to determine whether the sociopsychological characteristics mediated the relation between the sociodemographic characteristics and conduct disorder. Potentially, demonstrating a more comprehensive understanding of the integrated developmental pathways through which conduct disorder may develop. Also, the study explored the factor structure of the standardized test instruments to validate their use with the cultural context of Trinidad.

The study examined 240 participants (120 residential and 120 non-residential) ranging in age from 8-16 years, randomly selected from residential

care facilities, and primary and secondary schools across Trinidad. The test instruments utilized, demonstrated adequate to good reliability and validity in the Trinidad context. Results from ANOVAs indicated that the variables of age, gender, ethnicity and residence were significant risk factors, which is consistent with research conducted in developed countries. No significant differences were noted between the groups on socioeconomic status, cognitive functioning and parenting styles. In addition, regression analyses suggested that parenting styles partially mediated the relation between the sociodemographic variables and conduct disorder behaviour patterns, but cognitive functioning was not a significant mediator. Overall, the results seem to suggest that conduct disorder may emerge through multifaceted developmental pathways. The interpretation of the findings and implications for prevention and intervention, as well as, future research are discussed within the sociocultural context of Trinidad.

Keywords: Natasha Shastra Dass, conduct disorder, children, adolescents, residential care, community sample, mediation, Trinidad