

ATTRIBUTION BIAS IN EARLY-ONSET-SCHIZOPHRENIA: RELATIONSHIP TO CLINICAL FEATURES

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Introduction: Attribution style bias, such as a greater tendency to perceive hostility, has been reported to be presented in multi-episode and chronic schizophrenia patients.

Objectives and aims: The aim of this study was to investigate whether adolescents with Early-Onset-Schizophrenia (EOS) exhibited a perceived hostility bias and whether this bias was correlated with adolescents' clinical characteristics (positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, self-esteem) and social competence (social behavior, communication, imagination).

Methods: Thirteen adolescents with EOS (mean age: 14.7) and 17 healthy adolescents (mean age: 14.2), matched on age and total IQ, completed the Ambiguous Intentions Hostility Questionnaire (AIHQ) and several clinical measures of anxiety, depression, social competences and self-esteem. The AIHQ is a self-report questionnaire about negative outcomes that varied intentionality in different situations (i.e., ambiguous, intentional and accidental situations). The perceived hostility, composite blame and aggression bias scores were calculated.

Results: In comparison with healthy adolescents, adolescents with EOS attributed more hostile intentions to persons in accidental situations (hostility bias); they also exhibited a higher level of negative emotions (blame bias) toward persons in accidental situations. Both, hostility bias and blame bias were associated with a higher level of anxiety and a lower self-esteem in EOS adolescents.

Conclusions: These results suggest that cognitive and emotional biased attribution style in EOS may constitute an important factor of vulnerability to social impairments in adolescents with EOS and suggest that these attributional biases should constitute the targets of early psychotherapeutic intervention with these patients.