

Editorial

Cognitive behaviour therapy across the life span

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Mental disorders both in adults as well as in children and adolescents are highly prevalent (e.g., Merikangas et al., 2010; The WHO World Mental Health Survey Consortium, 2004). Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is recommended as first-line treatment in an array of emotional and behaviour disorders, due to its vast empirical support (e.g., National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE], 2020; Tollin, 2010; Walter et al., 2020). More recent third-wave approaches, namely Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), are also showing their effectiveness across disorders and age ranges (Fang & Ding, 2020; Gloster et al., 2020). Nevertheless, like every other scientific discipline, CBT is in constant evolution, awaiting new and innovative developments. Humans are so complex, and suffering in its multiple shapes is so prevalent that there is always room to develop new theories, to refine already existent theories, to improve practices and to increase dissemination.

In this special issue of the journal *Psychologica*, several researchers and clinicians made valuable contributions, aiming at different populations (children, adolescents and adults), different phases of the life course (preschool, secondary school, expecting a first child), different approaches of CBT (second or third wave therapies), and different levels of action (developing assessment instruments, refining conceptualizations, building programs, developing new delivery formats, and disseminating knowledge). Let us give you a short-guided tour through the headlines of this special issue.

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Starting with children and adolescents, two papers contribute to our knowledge on two different conditions: behavioural inhibition and test anxiety. Taking into account that behavioural inhibition is seen as a behavioural marker of a biological vulnerability to develop anxiety disorders, its early detection is crucial. Given that most research examining socioemotional and behavioural characteristics of behaviourally inhibited children come from mothers, the study of Lourdes Espinosa-Fernández and colleagues aimed to fill this gap, using a multi-informant approach where mothers, fathers and teachers of preschool children completed the same assessment instruments. Results demonstrated that children classified as behaviourally inhibited showed lower levels of socioemotional and behavioural adjustment, when compared with uninhibited peers, and that shyness was the variable more strongly associated with behaviour inhibition, regardless of the context or informant. This study provides a more comprehensive overview of behaviourally inhibited children in different contexts.

The second paper, by David Putwain and Wendy Symes, fills another important gap. Despite the fact that test anxiety is highly prevalent and interfering among adolescents, literature on this topic is seldom found compared to other psychological conditions. In their paper, Putwain and Symes reviewed and discussed several topical points: the concept of test anxiety and its importance; the Self-Regulatory Executive Function Processing Model (S-REF) to understand it; and test anxiety interventions for adolescents, focusing on the program Tackle Exam Pressure and Stress (STEPS) as an effective therapeutic intervention for secondary students. This is an important paper on what test anxiety is, why it is important, how to understand it, and how to cope with it.

Still focusing on younger populations, the following two papers support the advantages of transdiagnostic approaches for adolescents with internalizing and externalizing disorders, considering that these disorders are frequently comorbid, and that they may have common risk factors and underlying processes.

First, Sharon Allan and colleagues examined the efficacy of the Super Skills for Life – adolescent version (SSL-A), a transdiagnostic prevention program, in a sample of adolescents with internalizing and/or externalizing problems, in two types of school settings. Results showed that the SSL-A was effective in reducing internalizing and externalizing problems, and that males, younger adolescents and being in a mainstream school had significantly higher reductions. This is the first study to have used the SSL transdiagnostic prevention program in one mainstream school and one pupil referral unit, and to have focused on internalizing and externalizing problems. In another paper, Jose Piqueras and Daniel Rama-Victor reviewed the literature on neuropsychological characteristics and deficits in internalizing and externalizing disorders in children and adolescents, as well as the evidence favouring neuropsychological-based strategies

that may target these deficits. The authors propose an integrative neuropsychological and transdiagnostic perspective, defending that the effectiveness of empirically-supported CBT for children and adolescents may be improved with the inclusion of neuropsychological or neurocognitive strategies. Considering current knowledge of the brain, this is an innovative proposal to improve children and adolescents' mental health and well-being.

The three following articles target a specific population: adults on the process of becoming parents. Becoming a parent is a stressful experience for the individual but also for the couple as a unit (i.e., is a context of dyadic stress), therefore pointing to the importance of interrelated and reciprocal coping strategies, which is commonly termed as dyadic coping. In line with this rationale, Marco Pereira and colleagues' study explored and confirmed the mediating role of dyadic coping in the relationship between internalizing symptoms and dyadic adjustment in parents expecting their first child. Additionally, this mediation was found within person and across partners and both for women and men, indicating that both members of the couple experience considerable psychological distress in this phase of life course. These findings suggest that effective prevention should assess the couple's emotional state and coping resources, and that both partners may benefit from dyadic-coping-enhancing CBT-based programs that help them respond sensitively to their partners' psychological distress, therefore contributing to more positive marital adjustment.

In the following paper, Ana Fonseca and colleagues discuss how e-mental health tools, namely web-based interventions, based on CBT principles can be an effective and useful option to face-to-face interventions to increase population's access to mental health services. To illustrate such a program, the authors provide the example of the *Be a Mom*, a program developed by the authors and designed to prevent postpartum depression that integrates second and third-wave constructs. This innovative format of treatment delivery may contribute to increase the accessibility of CBT interventions.

The third paper on this topic is a psychometric study. Although mindful parenting research is growing in samples of school aged children and adolescents, the research on mindful parenting during the postpartum period is scarce, and includes the lack of adequate measures for assessing this construct in this period. Brígida Caiado and colleagues aimed at filling this gap by studying the factor structure and the psychometric properties of an adapted version of the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting scale for parents of infants up to 12 months old (the IM-P-I). Results showed that the IM-P-I is a psychometrically sound measure of mindful parenting in the postpartum period. The existence of a validated assessment instrument with this specific population will promote the development of this field of study.

The last paper of this special issue is related to the importance of disseminating current knowledge, namely, knowledge on CBT for sleep disorders. Given the high prevalence of sleep disorders and the recognized efficacy of cognitive behavioural interventions in sleep problems, disseminating knowledge on these interventions amongst professionals is of surmount importance. In line with this, the paper by Ana Allen Gomes, further expanded from a presentation in the congress of the World Sleep Society, summarizes the syllabus of the recent course unit Psychological Interventions on Sleep Disorders, introduced in the master degree in clinical psychology, and analyses the students' perceptions regarding this course unit in its three first editions, concluding that the students' evaluations of the course were rather promising. Other course units could also be organized to deepen future professional's knowledge on other CBT related fields of study.

As stated before, CBT is dynamic and ever learning. The advantages of CBT are countless. The existence of psychometrically sound assessment instruments opens the way to new fields of knowledge. Greater knowledge on the aetiology of psychological disorders will allow an early detection of vulnerability factors, and timely prevention and intervention. Understanding maintenance factors will inform theories and contribute to the development of effective therapeutic strategies. Uncovering shared processes will lead to transdiagnostic models and programs. Access to effective interventions may rely on innovative formats of delivery. Dissemination of knowledge amongst professional needs to be insured. Touching all these subjects, this special issue represents our modest contribution to the vast CBT field, disseminating the research with which our authors kindly collaborated. More awaits to be unravelled and shared. That is the only way to do science.

Our profound acknowledgement to all our authors. Our sincere hope that our readers will learn as much as we did. And our deep desire that many other authors across the world may join us in the future.

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