

Abstract

Background: The present study examined the adult psychosocial sequelae of childhood conduct problems in a sample of Chinese psychiatric patients. **Method:** Participants in this study included 1,564 Chinese psychiatric patients from both mainland China and Hong Kong. Subjects completed measures assessing disordered personality features, psychosocial maladjustments and psychiatric symptoms. **Results:** Analyses based on Item Response Theory were conducted to examine the predictive utility of childhood conduct problems as specified in the DSM-VI-TR. Early conduct problems were found to be associated with increased risks of antisocial personality features and poor psychosocial adjustment in adulthood. Moreover, individuals who had a history of significant conduct problems before age 15 reported more substance abuse problems, psychotic symptoms, as well as internalizing psychiatric symptoms in adulthood. The associations between conduct problems and adult adverse psychosocial outcomes were similar for males and females. Findings from IRT analyses indicated that Forced Sex, Stealing with Confrontation and Fire Setting were among the most severe conduct disorder features. **Conclusions:** Childhood conduct problems were associated with a wide range of adverse psychosocial outcomes in adulthood. Different mechanisms linking early conduct problems and poor psychosocial adjustment in adulthood are discussed. Results of this

study highlight the importance of early intervention among individuals displaying childhood conduct problems in China.