

O-15 - LATENT CLASS ANALYSIS OF PTSD SYMPTOMS AMONG 6,733 NEW YORK CITY STUDENTS EXPOSED TO 9/11

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Introduction: The heterogeneity in the manifestation of PTSD symptomatology has never been described in a developmental period spanning from middle childhood through adolescence. The examination of developmental influences on PTSD symptomatic expression is a high priority for DSM-V and could inform research on the etiology and treatment of PTSD.

Objectives: To examine the symptom structure of PTSD across different age, gender, and exposure groups, and in association with impairment and other disorders.

Aims: To identify homogeneous latent classes of PTSD symptoms in children and adolescents.

Methods: Latent class analysis (LCA) was applied to 6,733 New York City students (4th-12th grades) exposed to 9/11-related potentially traumatic events. LCA was first applied to PTSD symptoms only, stratified by age, gender and empirically defined exposure groups, and then in combination with impairment indicators. The resultant classes were studied in association with other disorders.

Results: LCA identified 4 classes that vary in severity and symptom configuration. Only the most severe profile, qualitatively characterized by the presence of traumatic memories in combination with avoidance and sleep-related problems, showed high levels of impairment and high rates of other disorders. Girls after puberty and subjects indirectly exposed to 9/11 are at increased risk of severe disturbance.

Conclusions: The 4-class model describes quantitative and qualitative differences in the structure of PTSD across age, gender and exposure. These findings support the inclusion of developmental considerations into DSM-V PTSD diagnostic criteria and suggest that also gender and the nature of traumatic exposure influence PTSD phenomenology in children and adolescents.