This presentation describes my ongoing research for my dissertation in social work and the tool (SDQ) for assessing children’s psychosocial problems.

- The focus of this study is to compare teacher and parent assessments to child’s self-report.

Introduction

- Research on identification of children’s socioemotional problems is necessary because their emotional disorders and mental health problems frequently go unnoticed.

- Early identification and treatment of physical illnesses are cornerstones of health care systems all over the world but assessment of children’s social and psychological well-being is not as clearly defined and uniform - due in part to the lack of appropriate screening mechanisms.

Children with sensory processing disorder

- often also suffer from socioemotional issues.
- run a high risk of inability to make friends or to be a part of a group.
- suffer from poor self-concept, and they are uncooperative and/or “out of control”.

- Early identification and treatment of physical illnesses are cornerstones of health care systems all over the world but assessment of children’s social and psychological well-being is not as clearly defined and uniform - due in part to the lack of appropriate screening mechanisms.
That is why it is so important to also identify their possible socioemotional problems.

Children as informants
- parents and teachers have valuable information about the behaviour of the child
- children are probably the most reliable informants as far as their own emotions and thoughts are concerned
- children are capable of answering both written and verbal questions about themselves, their life, thoughts and feelings (e.g. Barret et al 1991, Kashani et al 1997, Puura 1998)
- children reported more symptoms of anxiety and depression in interviews than their parents (Edelbrock et al. 1986)

The aim of this study
The focus of this study is to find out whether parents and teachers recognize how children themselves experience their socioemotional difficulties:
1) emotional symptoms and
2) peer relation problems?

Studies on the agreement among teachers and children on internalizing and externalizing problems
- Agreement is low on internalizing problems and good on externalizing problems. There was no sex difference on the Internalizing scale, but males rated significantly higher than females (Stanger & Lewis, 1993)
- Teachers are more concerned about vignettes of children displaying a behavioral disorder compared to children displaying an emotional disorder. (Loades & Mastroypopoulou, 2010)
- Indeed, several researchers report greater discrepancies across informants for internalizing, compared with externalizing, disorders (DiBartolo & Grills, 2006)
- Children were the best predictors of their self-reported anxiety during a behavioral task of reading aloud in front of a video camera (DiBartolo & Grills, 2006)
Material and methods

- My study focused on a municipality in western Finland, more specifically on 11-12-year-old pupils (N=129) in nine different classrooms and six different schools.

- The selection of schools and classes was based on voluntariness of pupils, teachers and parents.

- The pupils (N=129), their teachers (N=9), and parents (N=129), filled in a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

Measure

SDQ – Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire

- Is one of the most widely used tools for assessing children’s mental well-being.

- It has been widely used in large epidemiological studies.

- It has been translated in many languages, (also in Finnish).

- It is a standardized measure (the SDQ has been completed by nearly 100,000 children and adolescents in community-based studies, as well as in clinical samples (Obel et al.2004).

- The results showed that the psychometric properties of the SDQ-Fin are adequate and provide additional confirmation of the usefulness of the SDQ-Fin for, e.g. screening, epidemiological research, and clinical purposes. (Koskelainen 2008)

- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire about 3-16 year olds. 25 items on psychological attributes.

- (It is also demonstrated in the website of National TOIMIA network in Finland)

- www.sdqinfo.org
You get everything about the questionnaire from the website of sdqinfo, it is free

**What is it?**

**Questionnaires etc.**

**View & Download**

**Scoring the SDQ**

**SDQ vs other Q’s**

**Uses**

**Norms**

- All versions of the SDQ ask about 25 attributes, some positive and others negative. These 25 items are divided between 5 scales:
  - **Emotional symptoms (5 items)**
  - **Conduct problems (5 items)**
  - **Hyperactivity/inattention (5 items)**
  - **Peer relationship problems (5 items)**
  - **Pro-social behavior (5 items)**

Analysed for this presentation

The same 25 items are included in questionnaires for completion by the parents or teachers of 4-16 year olds (Goodman, 1997).

Questionnaires for self-completion by adolescents ask about the same 25 traits, though the wording is slightly different (Goodman et al, 1998). This self-report version is suitable for young people aged 11-16, depending on their level of understanding and literacy.
Analysis

- In the analysis of the SDQ Questionnaire, the pupils' self-reports were compared to the Teachers' Questionnaire using a non-parametric Wilcoxon test.

### Results

#### Emotional Symptoms

The analysis indicated a significant discrepancy between the assessments of pupils and those of teachers as far as emotional symptoms were concerned (0.000<p<0.05).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item of the questionnaire</th>
<th>Answers of Pupils (F)</th>
<th>Answers of Teachers (F)</th>
<th>Assessment of teachers versus assessment of pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness</td>
<td>82 (89) 45 (46) 0 (3) 127 (107) 107 (120) 35 (35)</td>
<td>114 (118) 38 (38) 9 (9) 126 (126) 126 (126) 2 (2)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -4.084, <em>p</em> &lt; 0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry a lot</td>
<td>80 (46) 46 (2) 126 (103) 20 (2)</td>
<td>116 (113) 31 (31) 18 (18) 129 (130)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -3.683, <em>p</em> &lt; 0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am often unhappy, downhearted or tearful</td>
<td>105 (22) 129 (110) 16 (16)</td>
<td>118 (104) 52 (52) 10 (10) 126 (126)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -1.177, <em>p</em> = 0.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am nervous in new situations</td>
<td>51 (76) 129 (95) 27 (27)</td>
<td>87 (52) 52 (52) 10 (10) 129 (129)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -5.085, <em>p</em> &lt; 0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have many fears, I am easily scared</td>
<td>95 (31) 129 (120) 5 (5)</td>
<td>113 (26) 25 (25) 8 (8) 126 (126)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -4.271, <em>p</em> &lt; 0.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis indicated a significant discrepancy between the assessments of pupils and those of parents in three items of the emotional symptoms (0.000<p<0.05).

#### Peer Problems

The analysis indicated a significant discrepancy between the assessments of pupils and those of teachers in two items of the peer problems (0.000<p<0.05).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item of the questionnaire</th>
<th>Answers of Pupils (F)</th>
<th>Answers of Teachers (F)</th>
<th>Assessment of teachers versus assessment of pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am usually on my own</td>
<td>97 (27) 3 (3) 127 (107)</td>
<td>107 (107) 20 (20) 129 (129) 22 (22)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -1.543, <em>p</em> = 0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have one good friend or more</td>
<td>2 (7) 117 (126) 2 (23)</td>
<td>104 (104) 19 (19) 126 (126)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = 0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people my age generally like me</td>
<td>1 (54) 70 (60) 57 (57)</td>
<td>60 (60) 38 (38) 129 (129) 38 (38)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -1.650, <em>p</em> = 0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other children or young people pick on me</td>
<td>110 (13) 4 (4) 127 (116)</td>
<td>116 (116) 11 (11) 129 (129)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = 1.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get on better with adults than with people my age</td>
<td>73 (41) 13 (13) 129 (113)</td>
<td>113 (113) 0 (0) 129 (129)</td>
<td><em>z</em> = -2.785, <em>p</em> &lt; 0.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis indicated a significant discrepancy between the assessments of pupils and those of parents for one item of the peer problems (0.000<p<0.05).
Peer Problems

The analysis indicated a significant discrepancy between the assessments of pupils and those of parents in three items of the peer problems (0.000<p<0.05) —Teachers recognize little better peer problems than parents. (they spend more time with children in a group than parents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Problems Scale</th>
<th>Assessments of Parents</th>
<th>Assessments of Pupils</th>
<th>Assessment differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am usually on my own</td>
<td>Not true</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have one good friend</td>
<td>Some what true</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people my age generally like me</td>
<td>Certainl y true</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other children or young people pick on me</td>
<td>Not true</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get on better with adults than with people my age</td>
<td>Some what true</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis indicated a significant discrepancy between the assessments of pupils and those of parents in three items of the peer problems (0.000<p<0.05) —Teachers recognize little better peer problems than parents. (they spend more time with children in a group than parents)

Conclusions

- The children’s self-reports are vital in the recognition of emotional problems in order to help support them while there is still time.
- Recognition at a personal level and at an institutional level is needed
- Since children’s emotional problems are not identified and recognized sufficiently early, it is vital to find out how children themselves experience their emotional problems. The SDQ Questionnaire is a good tool to this end. (Of course we need other measurements also like f. ex. interviews)

THANK YOU!

Literature: