

RISK FACTORS FOR EMOTIONAL- BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS IN RESIDENTIAL-CARE AND LATE-ADOPTED ADOLESCENTS: A PILOT STUDY WITH NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS FOR ATTACHMENT AND ALEXITHYMIA.

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Abstract. Adolescents in residential-care and late-adopted ones resulted high-risk to emotional-behavioural problems, showing vulnerability to risk-factors as insecure/disorganized attachments and difficulties in emotional regulation, such alexithymia. Moreover, findings suggested higher risk for residential adolescents. However, there are no studies that investigated *jointly* the role of attachment and alexithymia with respect to emotional-behavioural problems displayed by *adolescents* in those high-risk groups, as we aim to do in a larger pilot study with a multi-method approach. In this preliminary report, we subsampled 20 adolescents (aged 13-17, $M = 14.95$, $SD = 1.4$; 80% boys) with traumatic past experiences, dividing 10 late-adoptees and 10 residential-care, equalling for age and gender. We used the *Child Behavior Checklist* (CBCL 6-18) to assess emotional-behavioral problems; the *Friends & Family Interview (FFI)* to assess attachment representations, in terms of classifications and scales; the *Toronto Structured Interview for Alexithymia* (TSIA) to detect the levels of alexithymia. U-Mann Whitney confirmed that residential showed higher levels of emotional-behavioral problems - especially externalizing ones ($p = .03$) - less security ($p = .003$) and more avoidance ($p = .03$) in attachment and higher levels of alexithymia ($p = .009$) than adoptees. In the total group, correlations were found between psychopathology, less security in attachment and higher alexithymia, which also showed associations each other ($p = .029$). However, a stepwise regression only accounted the poor attachment' security as predictor of 29.9% of the variance in externalizing problems ($adjusted-R^2 = .255$, $p = .019$). Larger samples are needed, but both variables seem correlated to high-risk adolescent's adjustment: in particular, attachment security resulted a key-feature to promote especially in residential-care contexts, where the adolescents seem more vulnerable than in adoptive families.