

Optimizing treatment for youth with behavior problems and mild intellectual disability

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1. Promotor(es):

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2. Department:

Developmental Psychology

3. Description of the research idea:

The main goal of this project is to optimize treatment for youth with behavior problems (BP) and mild intellectual disability (MID). Recently, the main supervisor designed an enhanced CBT protocol for BP-MID youth, incorporating strategies to cope with challenges (Meer zelfcontrole, minder boos: Liber & De Boo, 2018). This new protocol, combined with recent developments in methodology that provide innovative within-subjects repeated measures designs along with qualitative research methods, allow in-depth study and mapping of the change process for single cases and small samples.

4. Research problem:

Youth with co-occurring behavior problems (BP) and mild intellectual disability (MID) are at a much greater risk to develop persistent maladaptive pathways than youth with either BP or MID only. Treatment using regular, standardized CBT programs proves difficult for MID youth, due to their lower cognitive abilities, and often diverse psychological and environmental risk factors. Moreover, there is limited understanding of 1) the efficacy of CBT for BP-MID youth, 2) how heterogeneous characteristics of BP-MID youth interact with CBT-characteristics and 3) the therapeutic process in relation to treatment outcome.

5. Research questions:

The PhD-candidate will test: a) if the newly developed enhanced CBT-program results in significant decreases in BP, b) how heterogeneous risk factors (e.g. variability in executive functioning) interact with treatment characteristics (i.e. cognitive restructuring, homework assignments), and c) how the therapeutic process (i.e. alliance, treatment comprehension) interacts with the change process in BP-MID youth.

6. Methods:

The PhD-candidate will 1) carry out an RCT to determine effectiveness, 2) conduct a review to address which within-subjects repeated measures designs optimally inform on questions b and c, and 3+4) carry out two within-subjects repeated measures design studies to empirically address questions b and c.

7. Rationale and approach: