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TEST REVIEW

Assessment of Interpersonal Relations: A Test Review

STEPHANIE L. BROOKE

The Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (AIR) developed by Bracken (1993a) is designed to identify relationship difficulties with parents, peers, and teaching for children ages 9 to 19. Standardized scores can be used in the following areas: Mother, Father, Male Peers, Female Peers, and Teachers. This review provides an overall evaluation of AIR based on reliability and validity information provided by the test author.

Since relationship difficulties affect children's psychological adjustment, Bracken (1993a) created the Assessment of Interpersonal Relations (AIR) to evaluate the quality of relationships between a child and significant others. Interpersonal relations were "defined as the unique and relatively stable behavioral patterns that exist or develop between two or more people as a result of individual and extraindividual influences" (Bracken, 1993b, p. 6). This assessment considered a child's relationship with his or her parents, peers, and teachers. These vital relationships clearly have an impact on a child's sense of self. "Interpersonal relations might well be the single most important predictor of overall social-emotional adjustment in children, adolescents and adults" (Bracken, 1993a, p. 2). Furthermore, Bracken (1993a) cited research evidence demonstrating that the quality of childhood interpersonal relationships reliably predicted later psychological adjustment. In other words, aggressive behavior, peer rejection, psychological maladjustment, and insecurity correlated with poor interpersonal relationships (Achenback & Edelbrock, 1981; Dodge, Coie, & Brakke, 1982; Hartup, 1979; Parker & Asher, 1987). When using art therapy assessments, Rabinowitz and Eldan (1989) found that aggressive boys placed greater distance between figures than did nonaggressive boys. In a later study, Rabinowitz (1991) found that peer acceptance-rejection was a crucial factor when examining the quality of relationships, particularly for girls. Peer-accepted girls drew themselves closer to other figures compared with boys and peer-rejected girls (Rabinowitz, 1991). Clearly, early identification of relationship difficulties may be critical in preventing psychological maladjustment.

PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDED USE

Based on the child's perspective, the AIR was created to determine the quality of relationships with peers, parents, and instructors. The AIR was stan-

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standardized on a population of students ranging in age from 9 to 19 years. "The scale takes into consideration both gender and age differences in the relationship development of youth" (Bracken, 1993a, p. 1). The instrument was codeveloped and conformed with the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS; Bracken, 1993b). Bracken (1993a) recommended that the AIR be used in conjunction with other assessments, such as the MSCS, to provide an indication of social, competence, affect, academic, family, and physical functioning. Bracken (1993a) furnished a list of 60 psychoeducational instruments that may be used in conjunction with the AIR. Mental health professionals may use the AIR when conducting initial interviews or for planning treatment interventions. In addition, Bracken (1993a) expressed that the AIR might be used to facilitate a diagnosis of psychological maladjustment. Another recommended use of the AIR was to indicate neuropsychological problems as the result of head injuries, cardiovascular accidents, or learning disabilities. The AIR can be used for a variety of research applications when serving as a dependent measure.

DIMENSIONS THAT THE TEST PURPORTS TO MEASURE

The AIR provides an indication of relationship functioning by using five subscales. The Mother subscale examines children's perceptions of the quality of the behaviors shared between them and their mother. This scale includes any female who serves as the primary caregiver of the child. Similarly, the Father subscale determines the nature of children's relationship between themselves and the male figure who serves as the primary caregiver. The Male Peers subscale evaluates children's relationships with all male peers collectively. In other words, the child must rate this scale according to his or her typical rapport with males of the same age. The Female Peers subscale indicates children's overall relationship with girls of the same age. The Teachers subscale assesses children's perception of the nature of their concordance with their instructors. Bracken (1993a) suggested that administrators should note whether a single teacher was targeted or if the child collectively rated the relationship with several instructors.

ADMINISTRATION

Bracken (1993a) asserted that the AIR can be administered by people who have had previous training in group or individual test administration. Also, he suggested that the AIR may be completed in the examiner's absence. "Although the AIR can be administered by most professionals and para-professionals, interpretation of the scale requires more psychometric and clinical background, skill, and experience" (Bracken, 1993a, p. 17). Furthermore, these individuals should have training in psychometrics, developmental psychology, personality theory, and psychological adjustment. The following instructions were outlined for administration:

Please rate the following statements according to how well they apply to each of your parents, your male and female peers, and your teachers. Please rate each statement according to how you honestly feel. There are no right or wrong answers, so be sure you are honest with yourself as you rate each statement. You should rate only the parent(s) with whom you are currently living. If you rate only one of your parents (e.g., your mother, but not your father), please check the boxes to indicate the parent with whom you are not living and the reason. (Bracken, 1993a, p. 17)

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