Mentalization: Assessment and clinical importance in psychotherapy

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Is a self-rated instrument appropriate to assess mentalization in patients with mental disorders? Development and first validation of the Mentalization Questionnaire (MZQ)

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Psychometric evaluation of the German version of the Brief Reflective Functioning Interview (BRFI-D)

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Assessment of Mentalization: the Brief Reflective Functioning Interview (Rudden et al., 2005)

- Based on the AAI but intend to reduce administration time by focusing on the questions which prompt for reflection about attachment relationships (Rutiman & Meehan, 2012)

For example:

(1) Can you tell me about one of your parents? What is that parent like? How do you think your parent came to be that way?

(2) Can you tell me about your relationship? Can you tell me about a specific memory of that relationship or about that parent from childhood (ages 5-12)?
Method: Design

Screening MZQ: low – middle – high scores in self-reported reflective functioning

3 – 14 days

\[ n = 30 \]

BRFI

AAI

\[ n = 30 \]

AAI

BRFI

\[ N = 60 \]

+ other questionnaires (Brief Symptom Inventory. Inventory of Interpersonal Problems. adverse early childhood experiences. defense style questionnaire)
Results: Relationship between BRFI and AAI

- $r = .877$ (n = 60, $p < .001$)
- $M_{BRFI} = 4.3$ (SD = 1.8)
- $M_{AAI} = 4.7$ (SD = 1.8)
Relationship between attachment, mentalization and early childhood traumatic experiences

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Method 1/4: Design

Clinical sample (n = 89)
- Treatment
  - t0 → t1 → t2
  - pre → post → 6-month follow-up

Student sample (n = 60)
- t0
- AAI, BRFI
- MZQ, ECR-S, APK-S, IIP-32, RQ, BSI
Results 4/4: path model

Fit indices
Chi² = 4.24, df = 4, p = .374
Cmin/DF = 1.06
CFI = 0.99
RMSEA = 0.02

Good fit
Discussion

- Expected: medium correlations between mentalization, attachment and aversive and positive childhood experiences

- (Surprising: negative correlation between mentalization and positive childhood experiences and no significant difference between clinical and student sample related to attachment anxiety)
Other research projects

- Reflective functioning as a mediator or moderator in psychotherapy: a systematic review
- Intersession activities of patients and the ability to mentalize (depression and anxiety)
- Relationship between mentalization, attachment and interpersonal behaviour in patients with depression and anxiety