

Child Behavior Checklist/4-18

Achenbach, T. M.

1991

Description of Measure

Purpose

To obtain caregiver reports of a child's competencies and behavior problems in a standardized format.

Conceptual Organization

The Child Behavior Checklist/4-16 (CBCL/4-16) was the first of what has become a multiaxial empirically based set of measures for assessing children from parent, teacher, and self-reports. In 1991, The CBCL/4-16 was renormed to include children up to 18 years of age (becoming CBCL/4-18), and eight cross-informant constructs were identified to facilitate direct comparison between problem behavior scores on the CBCL, the Teacher Report Form (TRF), and the Youth Self-Report Form (YSR) (Achenbach, 1991). All three instruments include measurement of the following eight constructs or syndromes: Withdrawn, Somatic Complaints, Anxious/Depressed, Social Problems, Thought Problems, Attention Problems, Delinquent Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior. The CBCL alone contains the Sex Problems scale.

In addition to focusing on a child's behavior as defined by one of the eight syndrome scales, the CBCL, TRF, and YSR also allow the examination of two broad groupings of syndromes, Internalizing Problems and Externalizing Problems. Internalizing Problems combines the Withdrawn, Somatic Complaints, and Anxious/Depressed scales, while Externalizing combines the Delinquent Behavior and Aggressive Behavior scales (Achenbach, 1991).

The three corollary instruments also contain sections addressing the area of social competence in order to discriminate between those children who are adapting successfully and those who are not. The CBCL/4-18 contains competence items grouped into 3 scales (Activities, Social, and School) (Achenbach, 1991).

A version of the CBCL/4-18, for 2 to 3 year olds (CBCL/2-3) has also been developed (see CBCL/2-3) (Achenbach, 1992; Achenbach, Edelbrock, & Howell, 1987).

Item Origin/Selection Process

Items were derived from research and consultation with professionals and parents, and revisions were based on the findings of numerous pilot studies. The "cross-informant" syndromes (CBCL, TRF, YSR) were obtained from evaluation of multiple principal components analyses using 89 items common to all three forms. For a complete description of item derivation for the CBCL, see the *Manual for the Child Behavior Checklist/4-18 and 1991 Profile* (hereafter referred to as the Manual) (Achenbach, 1991).

Materials

Manual, forms, and computerized scoring programs, available from the publisher.

Time Required

Twenty-five to thirty minutes.

Administration Method

The CBCL is designed to be completed independently by the caregiver. It requires a fifth grade reading ability. The form can also be administered orally by an interviewer who records the caregiver's answers. There are several items for which the respondent is asked to elaborate about an endorsed behavior in

order to avoid improper scoring.

Training

Administration requires thorough familiarity with the Manual, especially with the cautions related to commonly misinterpreted items (Manual, p. 13, pp. 249-250). The author recommends “skills commensurate with at least the Master’s degree level in psychology, social work, or special education, or two years of residency in psychiatry” for clinical use of this measure.

Scoring, score interpretation, norms & comparative data, and psychometric support

Please refer to the Manual for information on scoring, score interpretation, norms and comparative data, and psychometric support.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

For descriptive statistics of the Age 4 -8 Child Behavior Checklist, please refer to the 1st and 2nd volumes of the measures manuals (Hunter et al., 2003). Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for some of the CBCL scales from the Age 12 interview, by child’s gender and study site. Almost 16% of the sample was considered to be borderline/clinical on the aggression subscale. A higher percentage of boys (14.5%) were considered borderline/clinical on the social problems subscale than girls (11%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Age 12 Child Behavior Checklist T scores by Gender and Site

	N	Aggression		Attention Problems		Anxious/ Depressed		Delinquency		Social Problems	
		%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)
<i>Overall</i>	934	15.5	57.6 (8.9)	14.1	57.3 (8.8)	7.1	54.4 (6.7)	14.1	56.6 (7.6)	12.6	57.1 (8.2)
<i>Gender</i>											
Male	460	16.4	57.8 (9.0)	13.8	57.3 (8.5)	7.8	54.9 (6.9)	14.0	56.7 (7.5)	14.5	57.3 (8.4)
Female	474	14.7	57.5 (8.7)	14.3	57.3 (9.0)	6.5	53.9 (6.4)	14.1	56.4 (7.6)	10.7	56.8 (8.1)
<i>Study Site</i>											
EA	184	10.7	56.4 (7.7)	7.0	55.0 (7.1)	4.3	53.4 (5.5)	12.3	55.9 (7.1)	5.4	55.8 (6.4)
MW	159	6.3	54.3 (6.3)	6.9	54.0 (7.1)	2.5	53.0 (5.0)	13.2	54.9 (7.0)	9.4	54.8 (7.4)
SO	172	15.0	57.4 (9.0)	12.1	57.4 (9.1)	7.5	54.0 (6.5)	9.8	55.7 (7.4)	13.9	57.9 (8.7)
SW	228	21.8	60.1 (10.0)	22.7	59.9 (9.2)	9.6	55.4 (7.6)	15.7	57.6 (7.0)	16.2	58.4 (9.0)
NW	191	20.9	58.9 (9.2)	18.3	59.1 (9.3)	10.5	55.8 (7.5)	18.3	58.0 (7.7)	16.7	57.9 (8.6)

Source. Based on data received at the Coordinating Center through January '07.

% represents youth who had a T score that is borderline/clinical (>= 67) at age 12.

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for the CBCL total scales from the Age 12 interview, by gender and study site. As seen on Table 2 below, overall T scores are highest on the externalizing problems scale (NW and SW sites had higher mean scores and higher percentage of children considered borderline/clinical than the other sites for externalizing problems). Girls had higher mean scores for the total problems and externalizing problems than boys.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Age 12 Child Behavior Checklist T scores by Demographics

	N	Internalizing Problems		Externalizing Problems		Total Problems	
		%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)
<i>Overall</i>	934	22.4	51.1 (11.0)	34.0	54.8 (11.4)	31.7	53.7 (11.9)
<i>Gender</i>							
Male	460	27.0	51.8 (11.2)	32.6	54.8 (11.6)	34.1	54.2 (12.0)
Female	474	18.9	50.4 (10.8)	35.3	54.8 (11.1)	29.4	63.3 (11.8)
<i>Study Site</i>							
EA	184	18.7	48.9 (11.2)	30.0	53.4 (11.1)	25.7	51.7 (11.5)
MW	159	18.2	48.6 (10.2)	20.1	49.8 (10.9)	17.6	48.7 (11.7)
SO	172	21.4	51.5 (10.7)	30.6	54.7 (10.9)	30.1	54.2 (11.4)
SW	228	25.3	52.2 (11.4)	43.2	57.8 (11.2)	41.9	56.4 (12.0)
NW	191	28.8	53.5 (10.5)	41.3	56.9 (10.9)	38.7	56.2 (11.3)

Source. Based on data received at the Coordinating Center through January '07.

% represents youth who had a T score that is borderline/clinical (≥ 67) at age 12.

Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for some of the CBCL subscales from the Age 14 interview, by child's gender and study site. Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for some of the CBCL scales from the Age 14 interview, by child's gender and study site. 14% of the sample was considered to be borderline/clinical on the delinquency and aggression subscales. A higher percentage of boys (13%) were considered borderline/clinical on the social problems subscale than girls (8%).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Age 14 Child Behavior Checklist T scores by Demographics

	N	Aggression		Attention Problems		Anxious/Depressed		Delinquency		Social Problems	
		%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)
<i>Overall</i>	830	14.8	57.7 (9.1)	13.3	57.0 (8.9)	7.5	54.5 (6.8)	14.0	57.1 (8.2)	10.4	56.5 (8.0)
<i>Gender</i>											
Male	408	13.1	57.2 (9.1)	13.4	57.3 (8.9)	7.8	54.5 (6.7)	14.0	57.0 (7.7)	13.0	56.9 (8.0)
Female	422	16.4	58.2 (9.2)	13.1	56.7 (8.9)	7.3	54.5 (7.0)	14.1	57.3 (8.6)	8.0	56.1 (8.0)
<i>Study Site</i>											
EA	196	14.2	56.6 (9.3)	9.6	54.9 (7.9)	5.1	53.2 (5.9)	14.7	56.9 (8.4)	5.6	55.3 (7.3)
MW	82	12.0	55.7 (7.5)	6.0	54.2 (8.3)	2.4	53.4 (5.4)	7.2	55.6 (7.7)	6.0	54.4 (6.6)
SO	170	11.5	56.6 (8.5)	8.1	55.9 (7.6)	6.4	54.1 (6.5)	12.1	56.0 (7.9)	8.7	55.5 (7.4)
SW	205	15.5	58.9 (10.0)	19.4	59.0 (9.5)	10.2	55.5 (7.4)	15.0	57.7 (8.6)	14.1	57.8 (8.7)
NW	177	19.1	59.6 (8.8)	18.5	59.4 (9.6)	10.7	55.7 (7.7)	16.9	58.4 (7.8)	15.2	58.4 (8.6)

Source. Based on data received at the Coordinating Center through January '07.

% represents youth who had a T score that is borderline/clinical (≥ 67) at age 14.

Table 4 displays descriptive statistics for the CBCL total scales from the Age 14 interview, by child's gender and study site. Overall T scores are highest on the externalizing problems scale (36% of the sample was considered to be borderline/clinical). The two most maltreated sites (NW and SW) had higher mean scores and a higher percentage of kids considered borderline/clinical than the other sites for the internalizing, externalizing, and total problem scales. A higher percentage of girls (40%) were borderline/clinical for externalizing problems than boys (31%).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for the Age 14 Child Behavior Checklist T scores by Demographics

	N	Internalizing Problems		Externalizing Problems		Total Problems	
		%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)	%	M (SD)
<i>Overall</i>	830	23.5	50.7 (11.4)	35.7	55.0 (11.7)	32.1	53.4 (12.1)
<i>Gender</i>							
Male	408	26.0	51.0 (11.2)	30.9	54.4 (11.6)	33.6	53.5 (12.0)
Female	422	21.1	50.3 (11.6)	40.4	55.5 (11.9)	30.7	53.4 (12.3)
<i>Study Site</i>							
EA	196	17.8	47.7 (11.1)	29.4	53.4 (12.2)	23.8	50.4 (12.4)
MW	82	15.7	48.3 (11.5)	26.5	51.1 (12.3)	20.5	49.5 (12.5)
SO	170	21.4	49.5 (11.0)	30.1	53.9 (11.1)	24.3	52.2 (11.2)
SW	205	29.1	52.5 (11.6)	39.8	56.4 (12.1)	37.9	55.8 (12.0)
NW	177	29.2	54.0 (10.7)	37.9	58.2 (10.2)	47.7	57.0 (11.0)

Source. Based on data received at the Coordinating Center through January '07.

% represents youth who had a T score that is borderline/clinical (≥ 67) at age 14.

Reliability

As can be seen in Table 5, internal consistency for the Child Behavior Checklist scales using the LONGSCAN sample was good to excellent (ranging from .72 to .96).

Table 5. Cronbach Alphas for the Child Behavior Checklist T scores

	Aggression α	Attention Problems α	Anxious/ Depressed α	Delinquency α	Social Problems α	Internalizing Problems α	Externalizing Problems α	Total Problems α
<i>Age 12</i>	.91	.84	.83	.76	.72	.88	.92	.96
<i>Age 14</i>	.92	.85	.86	.84	.74	.88	.93	.96

Source. Based on data received at the Coordinating Center through January '07.

Validity

Table 6 provides correlations between the Age 12 Child Behavior Checklist T scores and other select Age 12 outcomes (i.e., T scores from the Trauma Symptom Checklist and Youth Self Report Form). There are significant correlations (ranging from .07 to .33) between Child Behavior Checklist T Scores and these outcome measures.

Table 6. Correlations between Age 12 Child Behavior Checklist T Total Scores & other Select Age 12 Outcomes

	N	Internalizing Problems	Externalizing Problems	Total Problems
<i>Trauma Symptom Checklist</i>				
<i>Anger</i>	822	.15***	.18***	.16***
<i>Anxiety</i>	822	.15***	.07*	.13***
<i>Depression</i>	822	.20***	.16***	.20***
<i>PTSD</i>	822	.14***	.09**	.14***
<i>Dissociation</i>	822	.16***	.12***	.16***
<i>Youth Self-Report</i>				
Internalizing Problems	844	.24***	.19***	.26***
Externalizing Problems	844	.20***	.31***	.29***
Total Problems	844	.26***	.29***	.33***

Source. Based on data received at the Coordinating Center through January '07.

* $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

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