

Introduction

- Childhood experiences of neglect and abuse typically create a threat to the child's health and well-being: such experiences damage the possibility in the children to develop feelings of trust and acceptance toward the self and the interpersonal world. This lack of a secure base (Bowlby, 1988) in turn impairs the development of mentalization skills (Fonagy & Target, 1997) and the competent social behaviours (Patterson, 1982). Thus childhood experiences of neglect and abuse play an important, perhaps critical, role in the origins of psychological maladjustment and in the onset of psychiatric disorders.

A problem of method

- An effective and useful assessment of childhood experiences is necessary in developmental, psychosocial and clinical research.
- Widely used self-reports on childhood experiences such as Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et al., 1979) or even the Traumatic Experience Checklist (Nijenhuis et al, 2002) do not tell so much about details and characteristics of childhood experiences.
- More generally, the most used self-reports on childhood adversities lacks of construct definition and/or amplitude of investigated phenomena.

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Why CECA measures?

- The clinicians' and researchers' interest in CECA measures then lies in:
- a) the problems inherent at the assessment of childhood experiences of neglect and abuse through other measures, whose psychometric adequacy does not always coincide with their clinical and research usefulness;
- b) the need to use measures of such experiences that allow a more accurate and thorough study of the child-caretaker(s) relationship and the social arena in which it develops.

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Italian validation of the CECA

- To test the validity, the reliability and the psychometric properties of the Italian version of the CECA, after its translation and linguistic validation, the CECA was administered to 100 respondents aged between 19 and 50 years old from an Italian community sample. Statistical analyses show that the Italian version of the CECA is high on inter-rater reliability with a Cohen's K agreement of 0.66 to 1, and intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) ranging from .85 to .94. Statistical analyses also confirmed CECA's construct validity: statistically significant associations were found between related CECA scales, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed a bifactorial structure for the scales on lack of care versus abuse, consistent with the investigated construct and explaining over 57% of the sample variance. The convergent validity of the Italian version of the CECA was demonstrated through the presence of significant associations between the CECA scales and the Parental Bonding Instrument scales (PBI; Parker, Tupling and Brown, 1979). Other positive indicators of convergent, concurrent and predictive validity are discussed in the article consistent with the original UK validation.
- Giannone F., Schimmenti A., Caretti V., Chiarenza A., Ferraro A., Guarino S., Guarnaccia C., Lucarelli L., Mancuso L., Mulé A., Petrocchi M., Pruiti F., Ragonese N., Bifulco A. (2011). Validità, attendibilità e proprietà psicometriche della versione italiana dell'intervista CECA (Childhood Experience of Care and Abuse). *Psichiatria e Psicoterapia*, 30, 1, 3-21.

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SCALE	Present	Absent
<i>Core CECA</i>		
Antipathy	15	85
Neglect	8	92
Role reversal	19	81
Physical abuse	4	96
Sexual abuse	6	94
Psychological abuse	8	92
<i>Other Variables</i>		
Financial problems	15	87
Parental discord	28	72
Violence between parents	6	94
Parental psychiatric disorders	11	89
Discipline/supervision (harsh, lax or variable)	46	54
Low social involvement with peers	7	93

• Note: Every physical abuse inflicted by parents; no sexual abuse inflicted by parents.

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Inter-rater reliability, Intraclass coefficient correlation (ICC) of independent scores given by judges to Core CECA scales (N=20).			
Core CECA	ICC	F _{av}	p
Antipathy	0.85	17.66	0.000
Neglect	0.87	14.44	0.000
Role reversal	0.83	26.14	0.000
Physical abuse	0.93	26.60	0.000
Sexual abuse	0.94	36.00	0.000
Psychological abuse	0.85	17.03	0.000

Factor loading of Principal Component Analysis on Core CECA peak scores (N=100)		
Core CECA	Rotated (Varimax) Factors	
	Factor 1 - Maltreatment	Factor 2 - Abuse
Antipathy	0.725	0.161
Neglect	0.831	-0.058
Role reversal	0.736	0.166
Physical abuse	0.040	0.701
Sexual abuse	0.067	0.717
Psychological abuse	0.524	0.573

Note: Each component score >.30 in the two-factor, independent, solution.

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Convergent validity: Intercorrelations (Pearson's r) between mother's and father's care on Parental Bonding Instruments and related Core CECA scores (N=100).					
Core CECA Mother:	Antipathy	Neglect	Role reversal	Physical abuse	Psychological abuse
PBI Mother's Care	-0.50 **	-0.34 **	-0.23 *	-0.10	-0.18
Core CECA Father:	Antipathy	Neglect	Role reversal	Physical abuse	Psychological abuse
PBI Father's Care	-0.64 **	-0.65 **	-0.19	-0.24 *	-0.24 **

* = p<0.05, **p<0.01

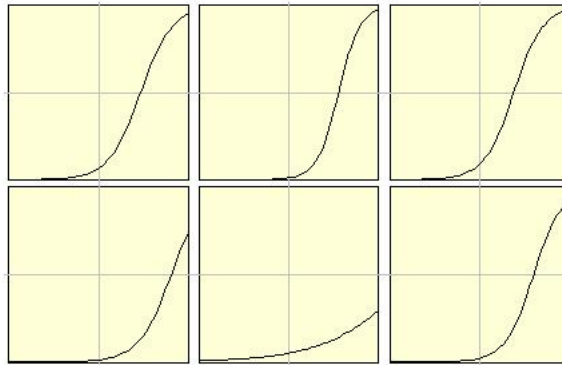
OTHER PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE CECA

Construct and convergent validity:

- Family discord associates with parental violence (chi-square=16.41; df=1, p=0.00)
- Parental psychiatric disorders predict neglect (t=2.52; df=98; p=0.01) and role reversal (t=2.74; df=98; p=0.01)
- Financial problems predict neglect (chi-square=4.62; df=1; p=0.03)
- Low social involvement with peers associates with psychological abuse (chi-square=4.11; df=1; p=0.04) and, at trend level, with high supervision by mother (chi-square=3.15, df=1; p=0.08)
- High supervision and high control predict PBI scales of "control" for both mother's and father's behaviors.

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Explorative IRT analysis (unpublished)



Sequence of Plots

Items are numbered from left to right. Item 1 is in the top left corner.

High Category marked red.

Zoom in or out

Click and drag the right mouse button to mark a region for zooming. Double click right mouse button to reset.

View more items

The maximum number of plots is 100. If the number of items exceeds 100, click the Next button to view the next set.

(122 case normal population; dichotomous analysis: peak score of high/moderate vs little/low-none)

From up left side corner: antipathy, neglect, role reversal;

From down left side corner: physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse

In this normal population, neglect best discriminates failures of care (larger a value); sexual abuse best discriminate abuses (larger b value)

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Differences among validation sample and a sample of people in residential care for drug abuse and/or violence

- A statistical comparison has been exploratory done between the Italian validation sample and a sample of 28 individuals in residential care because of drug abuse or being victim of severe violence. The level of symptomatology in the two group was measured using the Global Severity Index of the SCL-90), where scores less or equal to 0.60 identify mental health, scores between 0.60 and 1.20 identify moderate symptomatology, and scores above 1.20 identify a high and impairing level of symptoms (Schimtz et al., 2000). The two groups score different at the GSI, as expected.

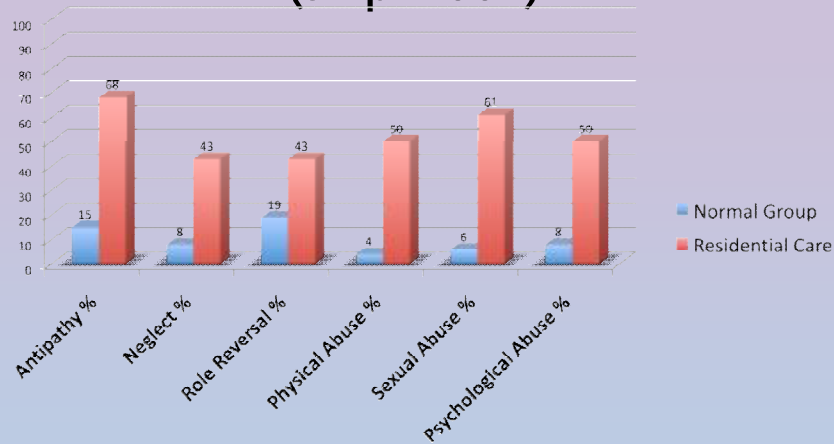
	Group		Total
	Normal Sample	Residential Care	
Healthy individuals (SCL-90 GSI <0.60)	61	5	66
Moderate symptoms (GSI between 0.60 and 1.20)	29	14	43
High symptomatology (GSI >1.20)	10	8	19
Total	100	28	128

$\chi^2= 17.99$ sig= .00

$V= .475$ sig= .00

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Differences between the two groups (all $p < .001$)



Giannone F., Schimmenti A., Guarnaccia C., Mancuso L. (2011). La versione italiana dell'intervista CECA (Childhood Experience of Care and Abuse): caratteristiche psicometriche su campioni clinici e non clinici. *AEPEA – 6° Congresso Europeo in Psicopatologia dell'Infanzia e dell'Adolescenza*, Bologna 2011.

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CECA Narratives

- CECA allows to identify narratives that clearly describe how childhood experience of abuse and neglect determined the development of internal working model and the eventual psychopathology, as in the following examples:

CASE 22, F, Residential Care (substance treatment): *I asked my mother to stop these behaviors (talking about sexual abuse perpetrated by a family friend when she was 11). She said that I was crazy and I'd make her die, that if true I was a bitch and actively searched for the abuse. She didn't do anything. Now I don't trust in anyone, if I have a problem I know it's my problem and no one will help me.*

CASE 12, F, Residential Care (violence by husband): *My father hate me. He always hated me, he said it was better if I had died in the car accident. He belittled me for everything, and humiliated me. I think I was bad, nasty, and no one would love me. So when my husband started beating me, I thought "it's ok, the only important thing is that he loves me, since no other one would like to be involved with me. As a child, I felt so alone...*

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- Case 12, M, Normal sample: *There was always arguments between my parents, and they often didn't speak between them and walked around at home remaining in silence. No one cared for me and my sister and we were often left alone, without possibility to invite some friends at home. When I grew up, I found that I was not so able in relating with others, and I was bullied as a teenager for this reason. Also now, I'm not sure I'm able to relate and I feel very ashamed and anxious when speaking with you.*
- Case 24, F, Normal Sample: *I was the one who ran the household, cared for my brothers, cooked, washed clothes, and so on. I didn't have any time for me. And today nothing is really changed: I run the household, I care for my sons, I cook, I wash clothes, and nothing else. My fate has always been written, sometimes I think this is the only reason why I'm here in this world.*

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CECA.Q

- We are in the process of the Italian validation of the CECA.Q
- More than 700 hundred questionnaires were administered to normal samples, and more than 150 questionnaires to clinical samples. Preliminary data analyses show good internal consistency of the scales and positive correlations with measures of insecure attachment, adult symptoms, affect dysregulation, dissociation, and personality disorders.
- Two explorative studies are described as example of the usefulness of the CECA.Q for the screening of child abuse/neglect.

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An explorative research on child abuse/neglect and psychotic episodes

- One of the recent study for the validation of the CECA.Q involved a seven-day consecutive recruitment at a Brief Hospitalization Center for Psychotic Episodes. Thirty-three cases entered the BHC in the time period, with thirty cases (19 females, 11 males, mean age 40.4 years, SD=10.5) eligible for data analysis.
- In this sample, 8 subject (26,7%) reported being physically abused by mother and 8 by father. Thirteen subjects (43,3%) reported being sexual abused, with 9 (29,9%) at a high level of intrusiveness. A singular correlation has been found, which linked physical abuse by father with DSM-IV-TR assessment of Global Functioning ($r=0.47$, $p<0.01$). Neither the other CECA scales nor SES variables and attachment showed significant correlation with global functioning. Considering the strong role played by genetic factors in psychotic episodes, this result seems to suggest that CECA.Q can be fruitfully used for differentiating childhood experiences that facilitate the onset of specific disorders.

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An explorative study on antisocial personality disorder

- A case-control explorative study with 11 male inmates diagnosed with ASPD and 11 paired controls (gender, age, SES, provenience) from normal population was performed in Piedmont.
- Male inmates reported significantly higher scores than control in every scale of the CECA.Q (all $p<.01$), except for the sexual abuse. Mean scores show that inmates experienced antipathy by both parents and neglect by father at a significant level (mean score > 25); the most of them (9/11) also experienced physical abuse.
- This result is in line with neurobiological (Perry, 1997) psychoanalytic (Winnicott, 1968) and social learning (Patterson, 1982) literature, suggesting that criminal behaviors and violence can have their roots in childhood experiences of neglect and abuse.

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Conclusion

- Childhood experiences of abuse and neglect dramatically impair the individual's possibility to live a good life. Such experiences can damage how people look at themselves, and lead to negative expectations toward the world.
- The use of measures that allow an in-depth study of such experience is then imperative for research, intervention and preventative policies.
- So, our conclusion is: CECA measures are useful, because they show good psychometric properties, and they permit avoiding to forget the main objective of researchers on child abuse/neglect, which is a wide and deep understanding of these phenomena, in order to choose the best practice for reducing or even preventing them.

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The unwelcome child and his death instinct

"All the indications shew that these children had observed the conscious and unconscious signs of the aversion or impatience of the mother, and that their desire to live had been broken by this" ...

"The 'life force' which rears itself against the difficulties of life has therefore not really any great innate strength, and becomes established only when tactful treatment and upbringing gradually give rise to progressive immunization against physical and psychical injuries."

(Ferenczi, Int. J. Psycho-Anal., 10:125-129)

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**Thank you for
your attention**

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