

Neurodevelopmental disorders among Spanish school-age children: prevalence and sociodemographic correlates.

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RESUMEN

BACKGROUND

Prevalence estimates of neurodevelopmental disorders (ND) are essential for treatment planning. However, epidemiological research has yielded highly variable rates across countries, including Spain. This study examined the prevalence and sociodemographic correlates of ND in a school sample of Spanish children and adolescents.

METHODS

The Child Behaviour Checklist/Teacher's Report Form/Youth Self-Report and the Conners' Rating Scales were administered for screening purposes. Additionally, teachers provided information on reading and writing difficulties. Subjects who screened positive were interviewed for diagnostic confirmation according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders criteria. The final population comprised 6834 students aged 5-17. Multivariate analyses were performed to determine the influence of gender, age, educational stage, school type, socioeconomic status (SES), and ethnicity on the prevalence estimates.

RESULTS

A total of 1249 (18.3%) subjects met criteria for at least one ND, although only 423 had already received a diagnosis. Specifically, the following prevalence rates were found: intellectual disabilities (ID), 0.63%; communication disorders, 1.05%; autism spectrum disorder (ASD), 0.70%; attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), 9.92%; specific learning disorder (SLD), 10.0%; and motor disorders, 0.76%. Students of foreign origin and from low SES evidenced higher odds of having ID. Boys were more likely to display ASD or a motor disorder. Age, SES, and ethnicity were significant predictors for SLD, while communication disorders and ADHD were also associated with gender.

CONCLUSIONS

The prevalence of ND among Spanish students is consistent with international studies. However, a substantial proportion had never been previously diagnosed, which emphasise the need for early detection and intervention programmes.

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