Defining and measuring adaptive behaviour in deaf adults
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Overview
- Background/aims
- Methods
- Results
- Discussions
- Conclusions
- Clinical implications
- Limitations
- Future research

Background
Adaptive behaviour – what is it?
- Used to identify intellectual disability (ID) and behavioural goals
- Different definitions of adaptive behaviour – evolving construct
- Lack of agreement about "unifying theoretical foundation"1
- Culture under-emphasised in available measures

Aims
1. To develop a working definition, through collation of existing theory, generation of theoretically coherent items, and subsequent expert input, of adaptive behaviour for Deaf people
2. To develop empirically-derived guidelines for standardised practice in the assessment of adaptive behaviour in Deaf people
Methods

- 15 expert participants consented (25.5% of overall sample)
- Rated 309 items on Likert scale and provided written feedback
- Very little consensus achieved
- Quality of written feedback so comprehensive TA was conducted
- Working definition constructed and feedback report provided
- Re-rating of items in terms of normative adaptive functioning in Deaf and hearing contexts

Results

Cultural differences:
Negotiating balance: what is adaptive for deaf people and adherence to cultural norms vs hearing world
- Capturing someone who tries to fit in with the hearing world and rejects deafness might be within the identity of attempting to "pass" as a hearing person
- A culture of "passing" has been shown to be the least adaptive in recent studies (participant 2)
- Strategies used to achieve goals (e.g., through working with interpreters)
  - "Does shop assistant the necessary amount of money when purchasing items" – if it can be seen on a visual display: most deaf people give larger denominations and get change as they can't hear how much the cashier is asking for (Participant 3)
  - "Finding conversations inappropriate...there are differences in hearing ways of doing this and deaf ways...might need an example" (Participant 3)
  - Items lacking face validity

Accessibility
Conflation of literacy with higher order skills
- Literacy issues reflect educational opportunity and access rather than LD (participant 4)
- Deaf people do not have same access to phone, internet, literacy etc...which list of these skills depend (participant 4)
- Lack of opportunities impedes development
  - People offer do not do things they 'would' do due to others doing it for them
  - Sometimes they 'can' but are not given the opportunity
  - Sometimes that lack of opportunity means they do not develop the skill and cannot (participant 6)

Developmental factors
Impact of early experiences and setbacks
- Deaf people generally give up making complaints – process is usually hearing oriented and they seem learn not to bother
- It is adaptive not to bother to complain as it takes up too much energy and doesn't change anything (participant 7)
- Confidence mediated by context – different behaviour with other deaf vs hearing people
  - Journey by public transport is by default more complex for a deaf person (participant 2)
- Requires more planning > greater risk if something goes wrong

A working definition
- 'a collection of skills that are used day-to-day based upon a person's prior learnt knowledge and access to opportunities, enabling the individual to draw upon a variety of resources to achieve their full potential within both Deaf and hearing contexts, in a manner consistent with their values and identified cultural norms and appropriate to their age. Any deficits in adaptive behaviour should be considered in light of cultural, accessibility, and developmental factors, and which cannot be better accounted for by other causes before making diagnostic determinations of LD.'
Guidelines for practice:
- Selection of knowledgeable informants and triangulation
- Gathering developmental history
- Assess at multiple time points prior to diagnosis
- Language assessment (deaf-specific norms)
- Explore use of compensatory mechanisms

Clinical implications
- Use of working definition specific to Deaf people
- Assessment of both Deaf and hearing contexts
- Interim use of the ABAS-III
- Generation of Deaf-specific norms and culturally sensitive questionnaire development

Limitations
- No service-user involvement
- Small sample size
- Lack of consensus obtained
- BUT
- Useful adaptation of Delphi process
- Draws together theory and contributes to development of working definition
- Development of guidelines for practice

Clinical implications
- Refinement of guidelines (case-based approach)
- Test hypotheses raised by guidelines
- Pursue further development of proposed items for assessment tool

Future Research
- Any questions?

References