

A Preliminary Investigation into the Use of a Multi-Gated Universal Screening Instrument to Estimate the Prevalence Rates of the Students' Academic, Emotional and Behavioral Problems in Greek Primary Schools

Eleni Didaskalou (Ph.D)

Associate Professor, Department of Special Education, University of Thessaly, Greece

Abstract

Recently, educational institutions in many systems have been facing an increase in the prevalence rates of students displaying behavioral and emotional problems with a significant percentage of these students remaining undetected and consequently underserved by their school's mental health services. Researchers and professionals endorse the use of proactive universal screening in schools, as a means of eliminating existing delays between early detection and identification of student difficulties and ensuring timely provision of support. Given the dearth of technically adequate universal screening tools in the Greek language, the current study sought to investigate the use of a multi-gated universal screening instrument (i.e. Integrated Teacher Rating Form; ITRF), to estimate the prevalence rates of Greek students' academic, emotional and social problems. The universal screener which was originally developed in American English and then adapted to Greek primary schools incorporates four constructs (i.e., Disorganized / Academic Performance Problems, Disruptive behavior, Anxious / Depressed behavior and Socially Withdrawn behavior). The sample consisted of 38 teachers appointed in 35 public primary general schools that were serving urban and suburban areas in central Greece. The participants reported the highest level of concern being their students' academic performance problems, followed by oppositional/disruptive behaviors, anxiety / depression problems and finally socially withdrawn behaviors.

