

If only I could tell...

Measuring predictors for challenging behaviour in people with both intellectual disability and hearing impairment

Meindert Buskermolen

Behavioural problems in individuals with both hearing impairments or deafness (HI/D) and an intellectual disability (ID) are common. With one exception little research on behavioural problems in people with a combination of both disabilities was found. Prevalence rates in both other groups (HI/D and ID separately) vary among the studies.

Although several risk factors for these behavioural problems are reported, empirical research is needed to gain more insight into direct relations between certain internal and environmental factors and behavioural problems. For this purpose we developed our own Individual Behaviour Observation and Recording Scale (IBORS) which is based on eight dimensions of behaviour and five levels of severity which results in a unique behavioural repertoire of each individual person. With this scale it is possible to define behavioural problems more accurately.

Several environmental factors were included in our study. A computer-program was developed to do reliable recordings over longer periods of time of such factors as well as behaviour according to the IBORS-method, by varying care professionals with different backgrounds.

Data were obtained by recording behaviour on a daily basis during one year for 21 participants with both ID and HI/D. It was found that 100% of the participants in this study showed challenging behaviour, although this was not observed every day in each participant. Prevalence rates of episodes with challenging behaviour during a year varied from 1.8% to 77.3% of the recording time. On average, the prevalence rate was 28.9% of the recording time.

The likelihood of challenging behaviour appears to increase proportionally with a decrease in communicative skills as well with a lower level of social independence. We also found that in people with autism spectrum disorder, the prevalence of challenging behaviour was significantly higher than in people without autism spectrum disorder. Furthermore we found a negative correlation between challenging behaviour and age. The level of intellectual disability as well as the level of hearing impairments was not related to the prevalence of challenging behaviour.

For almost each participant several environmental factors were found. This showed that the interaction between factors plays an important role, which makes it difficult to isolate the individual influence of separate factors.