

International Journal of Advanced Research

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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57299

Title: La somatisation chez l'enfant et l'adolescent : une approche développementale et biopsychosociale des facteurs de risque et des mécanismes,

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bilqees Hamza

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The research article titled "Somatization in Children and Adolescents: A Developmental and Biopsychosocial Approach to Risk Factors and Mechanisms" provides a comprehensive and necessary synthesis of a complex clinical phenomenon where psychological distress is expressed through physical symptoms. The author establishes from the outset that somatization should not be perceived as a mere absence of organic pathology, but as a real clinical entity resulting in major functional impairment and increased healthcare utilization. By adopting a biopsychosocial framework, the study explores how genetic vulnerabilities, environmental influences, and developmental processes articulate to transform emotional stress into bodily pain. The narrative successfully argues that understanding somatization in young people requires moving beyond mind-body dualism to consider the child within the entirety of their relational and biological system.

The initial phase of the analysis focuses on individual and biological risk factors. The author evaluates the role of temperament, specifically behavioral inhibition and emotional lability, as precursors to somatization. The study highlights that certain children exhibit "central sensitization" or somatic hypervigilance, where the nervous system processes normal sensory stimuli as signals of pain or discomfort. This neurobiological perspective is handled with significant academic rigor, suggesting that somatization rests on a real physiological basis, often linked to a dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The author notes that this biological vulnerability is often exacerbated by alexithymia—the difficulty in identifying and expressing emotions—thereby forcing the body to become the sole vehicle for communicating psychic suffering.

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A primary focus of the research involves the determining influence of the family environment. The author explores the mechanisms of "social learning" and "modeling," where a child adopts illness behaviors by observing their parents. The evaluation of attachment styles is particularly enlightening; the study reveals that children with insecure attachment are more likely to develop somatic symptoms as a means of seeking proximity or attention from caregivers. The concept of "reinforcement of illness behaviors" is analyzed with finesse, showing how an overly anxious parental response or, conversely, an exclusive focus on physical symptoms to the detriment of emotions, can unintentionally anchor somatization in the adolescent's behavioral repertoire.

The discussion then moves to psychosocial and environmental risk factors, including the role of school-related stress and adverse early life experiences. The author evaluates how traumas, such as maltreatment or bullying, can be "embodied" and manifest years later as somatoform disorders. The transition to adolescence is identified as a period of increased vulnerability due to pubertal changes and rising social demands. The study highlights that in adolescents, somatization is often a distress signal in the face of feelings of helplessness or cognitive overload. The narrative effectively links these external pressures to the pathophysiology of stress, illustrating how the social environment literally sculpts the somatic response of the young subject.

Furthermore, the paper addresses the diagnostic challenges and the need for multidisciplinary management. The author explores the necessity of a solid therapeutic alliance to avoid "medical wandering" and the multiplication of invasive examinations that reinforce the patient's anxiety. The evaluation suggests that integrative approaches, combining cognitive-behavioral therapy, family therapy, and sometimes cautious pharmacological management, yield the best results. The author emphasizes the importance of "re-conceptualizing" the symptom with the family, moving from a search for a single organic cause to a global understanding of stress mechanisms. The narrative concludes with a call for the destigmatization of somatization, positioning it not as a fabrication of the mind but as a complex adaptive response of a developing organism facing a perceived threatening or overwhelming environment.

In summary, this article offers a robust and multidimensional inquiry into a crucial subject of contemporary child psychiatry. It successfully bridges the gap between fundamental research in neurosciences and the realities of clinical practice. The author's ability to articulate the biological, psychological, and social dimensions makes this work a significant contribution for pediatricians, psychologists, and social workers. It is an essential read for anyone seeking to understand the "languages of the body" in children and adolescents, providing a clear evidence base for the development of more effective and humane prevention and early intervention protocols.

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Recommendations

- The author should consider including a specific section on the impact of social media and digital life on somatic hypervigilance in adolescents, exploring whether constant social comparison exacerbates the perception of physical pain.
- To strengthen methodological rigor, it is recommended to add a comparative analysis of gender differences in the expression of somatization to determine if sociocultural factors orient boys and girls toward different types of symptoms.
- The paper would benefit from a deeper discussion on potential biomarkers of somatization, such as salivary cortisol levels or C-reactive protein, to support the hypotheses regarding stress axis dysregulation mentioned in the text.
- It is suggested that the author propose a clinical decision algorithm to help frontline pediatricians identify the appropriate time to transition from an organic investigation to a biopsychosocial management plan.
- Future research should explore the efficacy of mindfulness-based practices in school settings as a primary prevention tool to help children better regulate their somatic reactivity to daily stressors.

Recommendation: Recommend for publication with minor revision.