

Child Psychiatric Characteristics and Course of Elective Mutism: An Analysis of 40 Cases from Bahrain

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Objective: Forty children with elective mutism (EM) were clinically assessed to ascertain their characteristics.

Methods: The sample consisted of referred cases to the child unit, psychiatric hospital, Bahrain in the period between 1992 to 1999 and fulfilled ICD diagnostic criteria for EM. Data was collected by detailed clinical assessment and interview of parents with the Conner's Parents Rating Scale. (C.P.R.S).

Results: EM typically manifested at preschool age, was more common in boys, seen in all social classes and early developmental risk factors were common. Three quarters of children with EM had pre-morbid speech and language abnormalities and one third had behavioral problems in terms of oppositional and aggressive behavior. Shyness and excessive anxiety were the most common personality features. Co-morbid diagnoses with enuresis and encopresis were frequent. School and unfamiliar people created the social context in which children with EM most frequently did not speak. EM was persistent in nearly 29% of cases.

Conclusion: The clinical features and course of EM were similar to those reported recently by others in different cultures.