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Constructing a Prospective Model of Psychosocial Adaptation in Young Adolescents with Spina Bifida: An Application of Optimal Data Analysis

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Objective To examine how individual- and family-level predictors in late childhood and preadolescence relate to psychosocial adaptation (i.e., scholastic success, social acceptance, and positive self-worth) in early adolescence.

Method This prospective longitudinal study includes 68 families of children with spina bifida and 68 comparison families of healthy children. Multimethod, multiinformant data were evaluated via optimal data analysis (ODA) and classification tree analysis (CTA) techniques. **Results** Factors best predicting psychosocial adaptation in early adolescence included (a) intrinsic motivation, (b) estimated verbal IQ, (c) behavioral conduct, (d) coping style, and (e) physical appearance. There were no significant group (spina bifida vs. able-bodied) effects. **Conclusions** The final classification model correctly classified 77.8% of the total sample, indicating that this model had significant predictive capabilities. Results suggested that processes leading to psychosocial adaptation may be similar for youth with and without chronic illness.

Key words: adaptation; adolescence; optimal data analysis; psychosocial; spina bifida.

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