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Brief Report: Testing the Factorial Invariance of the CBCL Somatic Complaints Scale as a Measure of Internalizing Symptoms for Children with and without Chronic Illness

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Abstract

Objective To examine the factorial invariance of the Somatic Complaints subscale of the Child Behavior Checklist as a measure of Internalizing Behavior Problems across a sample of children with and without spina bifida. **Methods** Multisample confirmatory factor analysis was used to compare mother and father report on the Somatic Complaints subscale across a sample of children with spina bifida and a matched comparison sample of able-bodied children ages 8 through 11 years ($N = 68$ for mother report in each group; $N = 54$ for father report in the spina bifida group and 53 for the able-bodied group). **Results** Although there were no significant between-group differences in the


magnitude of factor loadings, significantly more variance in scores on the Somatic Complaints scale was unrelated to Internalizing Behavior Problems for the spina bifida group, compared to the able-bodied group. There were no between-group differences when father data were analyzed, but the latent variable of Internalizing Behavior Problems explained little variance in the Somatic Complaints scale for either group. **Conclusions** Maternal report of Somatic Complaints on the CBCL does not appear to measure Internalizing Behavior Problems in the same manner across groups of children with and without spina bifida. This suggests that the Somatic Complaints subscale should be interpreted with caution when measuring Internalizing Behavior Problems within this population.

Key words: internalizing; SEM; somatic complaints; spina bifida.

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