

05 - Methodology for studying development

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© SPMM Course □ Toxic stress response - strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body's stress response in the absence of the buffering protection from supportive adults. e.g., child abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse, and maternal depression. Toxic stress disrupts the developing brain circuitry during sensitive developmental periods forming the precursors of later physical and mental illness. Methodology for studying development Children of different ages can be compared on a given behaviour in order to determine agespecific developmental features (cross-sectional design). But, in this case, inter-individual variations can distort the true picture. Longitudinal designs are often employed where the same children are studied twice or more over a prolonged period of time with respect to a developmental feature. This provides more reliable estimates of development though this can be time-consuming. As in other scientific disciplines, in developmental psychology, the identification of a risk factor does not necessarily imply causation as the relationship could be mediated by a third variable (mediator), the putative risk factor may indeed be the outcome (reverse causality) or due to the presence of multivariate relationships. Such multivariate factors that partially account for the relationship between a risk factor and a disorder are termed mediators. The mediator could be a protective factor or a buffer that reduces the risk in an individual.

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