



The Effectiveness of Psychotherapeutic Interventions for Young Children with Internalizing Disorders: A Meta-analysis



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Internalizing Disorders

- Internalizing disorders are among the most common reasons for referral to community mental health services (Verhulst & van der Ende, 1997)
- Anxiety and Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) are highly comorbid in children (Angold, Costello, & Erkanli, 1999)
- Without intervention, these children are at an increased likelihood to develop new psychopathologies (Last, Perrin, Hersen, & Kazdin, 1996)
- Estimated prevalence rates of anxiety and MDD in preschoolers range from 0.3-11.5% and 0.2-2.7%, respectively (McDonnell & Glod, 2003)
- Anxiety is characterized by the presence of excessive fear and behavioural disturbances (APA, 2013)
- MDD is characterized by feelings of sadness, emptiness, or irritability in addition to cognitive and physiological changes that impair everyday functioning (APA, 2013)

Psychotherapeutic Interventions

- Treatment based on dialogue and relationship between the client and the therapist with the intended goal of changing behaviours, cognitions and emotions (Norcross, 1990)

Objective

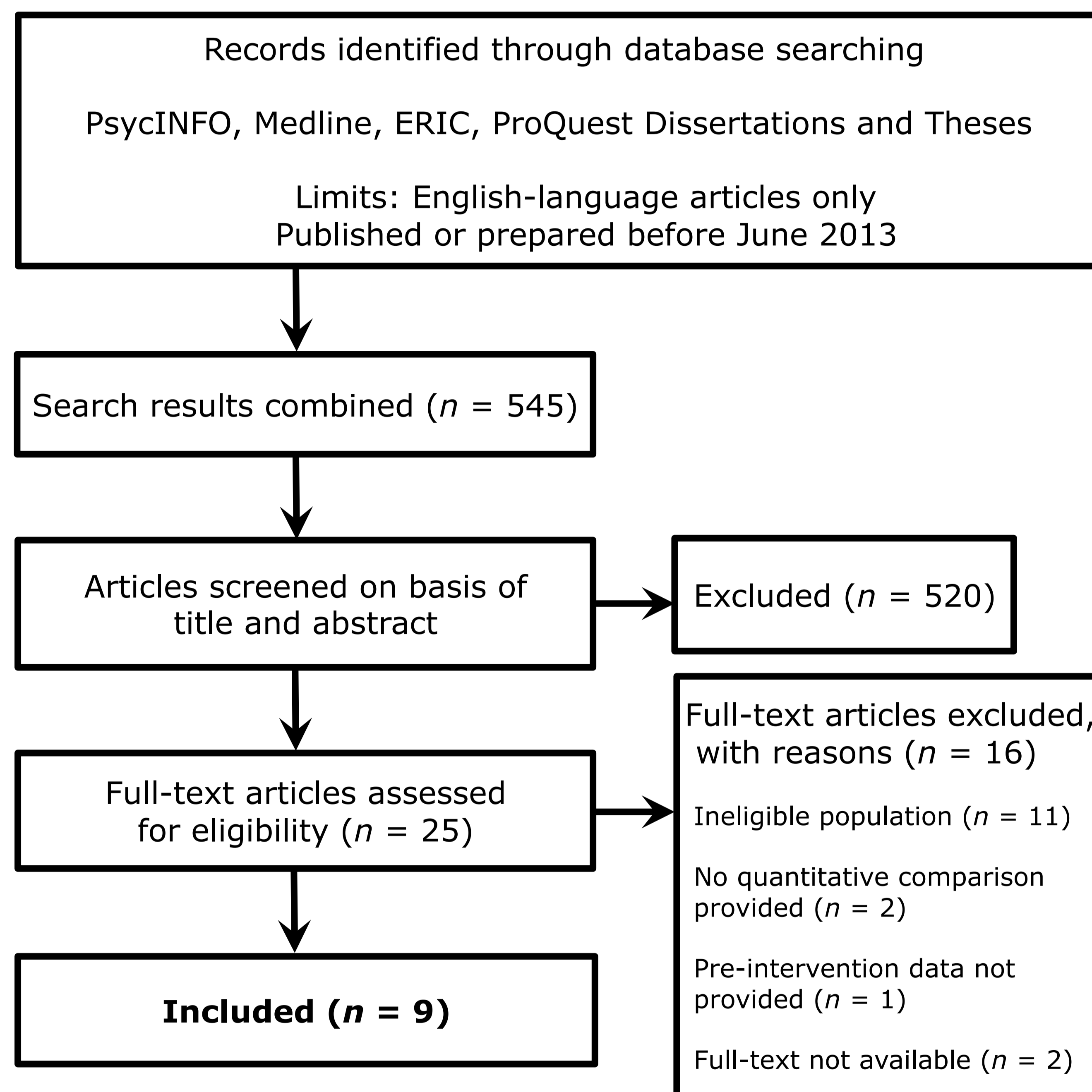
To determine the efficacy of psychotherapeutic interventions for young children with internalizing disorders

Research Questions

1. Are psychotherapeutic interventions effective for reducing overall symptoms of internalizing disorders? If yes, how effective?
2. Are psychotherapeutic interventions effective treatments for reducing symptoms of anxiety? If yes, how effective?
3. Does the style of the intervention (group treatment vs. individual family) moderate the effectiveness of the intervention?
4. Does the age of the child moderate the effectiveness of the intervention?
5. Does the provider of the intervention (professional psychologists vs. psychology graduate students) moderate the effectiveness of the intervention?

Methods

- A meta-analysis was conducted *



- 9 published studies met eligibility criteria
- Year of publication ranged from 1997 to 2012
- Age range of participants: 2 to 5 years old
- Number of participants
- Total (n = 521)
- Treatment (n = 264)
- Control (n = 257)

- Each study was coded following a coding manual
- Inter-coder reliability for all variables was 100%
- Data was entered and analyzed through the Comprehensive Meta Analysis (CMA) program (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2005)
- An array of effects were determined

*Modified version of the PRISMA Flow Diagram (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009)

Results

1. Based on eight effect sizes, psychotherapeutic interventions were found to be an effective treatment for reducing overall symptoms of internalizing disorders ($d = 1.1$).
2. Five effect sizes indicated that psychotherapeutic interventions reduced symptoms of anxiety ($d = 0.9$).
3. Individual interventions were associated with a larger effect compared to group based interventions ($Q = 5.04, p = .025$).
4. An older child mean age was associated with a larger effect ($Q = 4.35, p = .037$), the children's ages ranged from 46 to 56 months.
5. Interventions that were implemented by a psychology graduate student were more effective compared to those implemented by a psychologist ($Q = 4.79, p = .029$).

Discussion

- No unpublished studies were included
- Possible publication bias
- Interventions were most effective when implemented:
- With individual families
- With older children
- By psychology graduate students
- Few studies examined interventions for young children with internalizing disorders
- Clinicians should be addressing this further

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Acknowledgments

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