

**Research project:** Prevent and overcome challenging behaviours in schools

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### **Abstract**

The theme of challenging behaviours has been studied through different approaches, starting from the clinical point of view, passing through the psychological one and finally reaching the pedagogical one. National and international studies show how challenging behaviours at school represent a framework in which the difficulties deriving from behaviours problem and Oppositional Defiant Disorder converge (Cerutti, 2018; Epstein et al., 2008; Esposito, 2011; Fedeli, 2020; Fontani, 2015; Henricsson, Rydell, 2006; Ianes, Cramerotti, 2002; Meazzini, Fedeli, Leoni, 2006; Trenta, Zoccolotti, 2012), as well as a series of disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct or disruptive behavior (Chiarenza, Bianchi, Marzocchi, 2004; Cornoldi, 2001; Di Pietro, Bassi, Filoramo, 2007; Macchia, 2013; Marzocchi et al., 2001; Rocca, Gatti, 2013; Vio, Marzocchi, Offredi, 1999). These processes have a clinical and psychological matrix that emerges in socially not accepted behaviours considered, in fact, challenging. A large literature on the subject has analysed the topic both in terms of theoretical reflections and practical interventions (Coleman et al., 2012; Farmer, Reinke, Brooks, 2014; Lyons, O'Connor, 2006; Lyons et al., 2007; Madden, Senior, 2018; Sobeck, Reister, 2020). However, beyond the cases of behaviours based on a recognized difficulty, there are situations where they emerge without a particular diagnosis or specific deficit. On this regard, there is still a strong need from the school context to identify concrete strategies to overcome these difficult situations within the classrooms.

The research project aims to create a model to combine the psychological point of view with the pedagogical one, where the starting point is the context, in order to identify and understand the different causes of all those pupils' complex behaviours

that are challenging inside the class. The final goal of the project is to build learning environments where it is possible to prevent the onset of challenging behaviours and to overcome them if they occur.

As regards methods, the model to prevent and to overcome situations related to challenging behaviours is proposed on the basis of a literature review and of some case studies in South Tyrol. Since these behaviours generally appear in early childhood and it is important to intervene at the root of the phenomenon, kindergarten and the first two classes of primary school will be involved. The transition process between these two levels also assumes a fundamental value because the structuring of the two contexts is different and the environmental factors can change considerably (for example barriers and facilitators).