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**SELF-DOUBT AND DIFFICULTIES IN
MAKING A VOCATIONAL CHOICE
IN ADOLESCENCE**

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Self-doubt and difficulties in making a vocational choice in adolescence

The aim of the present study is to confirm the existence of connections between guidance difficulties (according to their number, and internal or external nature) and the level or degree of stress experienced by 2042 pupils (boys and girls between 12 and 20 years of age) attending elementary and secondary school from 2nd to final year.

METHOD

Population

- 2042 adolescents
- Aged between 12 and 20 years
- 956 boys and 1086 girls
- Students from 2nd to final year
- From different sociocultural backgrounds

METHOD

Material (1)

Eleven different questions to know if the stress caused by the need to choose some guidance was due to:

- the lack of a clearly defined professional project by the pupils;
- school difficulties that prevent them from pursuing the desired route;
- financial difficulties;
- lack of information concerning guidance possibilities;
- of support on the part of those closest to them.

METHOD

Material (2)

Scale of stress from Toulouse

- Formulated on the basis of the scale called *Measure of Psychological Stress* - 54 items (Lemyre & Tessier, 1988)
- 30 items emphasize physical and psychological stress symptoms and the way that they are experienced by the subject
- It allows the comprehension of the nature and intensity of stress

METHOD

Material (3)

Scale of stress from Toulouse

Four dimensions

Physical manifestations of stress

Depressive mood

Feverishness/Tension

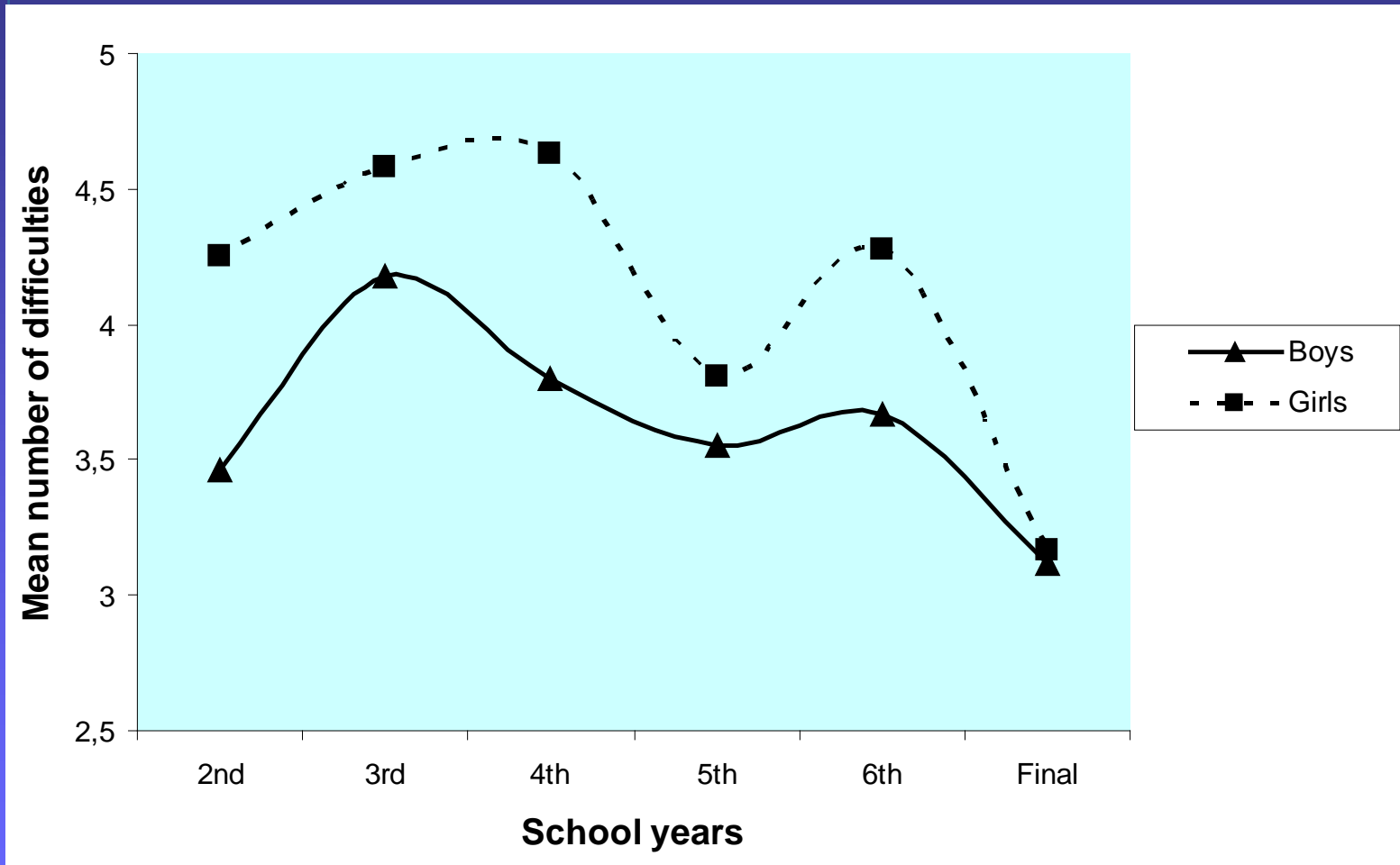
Lassitude

RESULTS

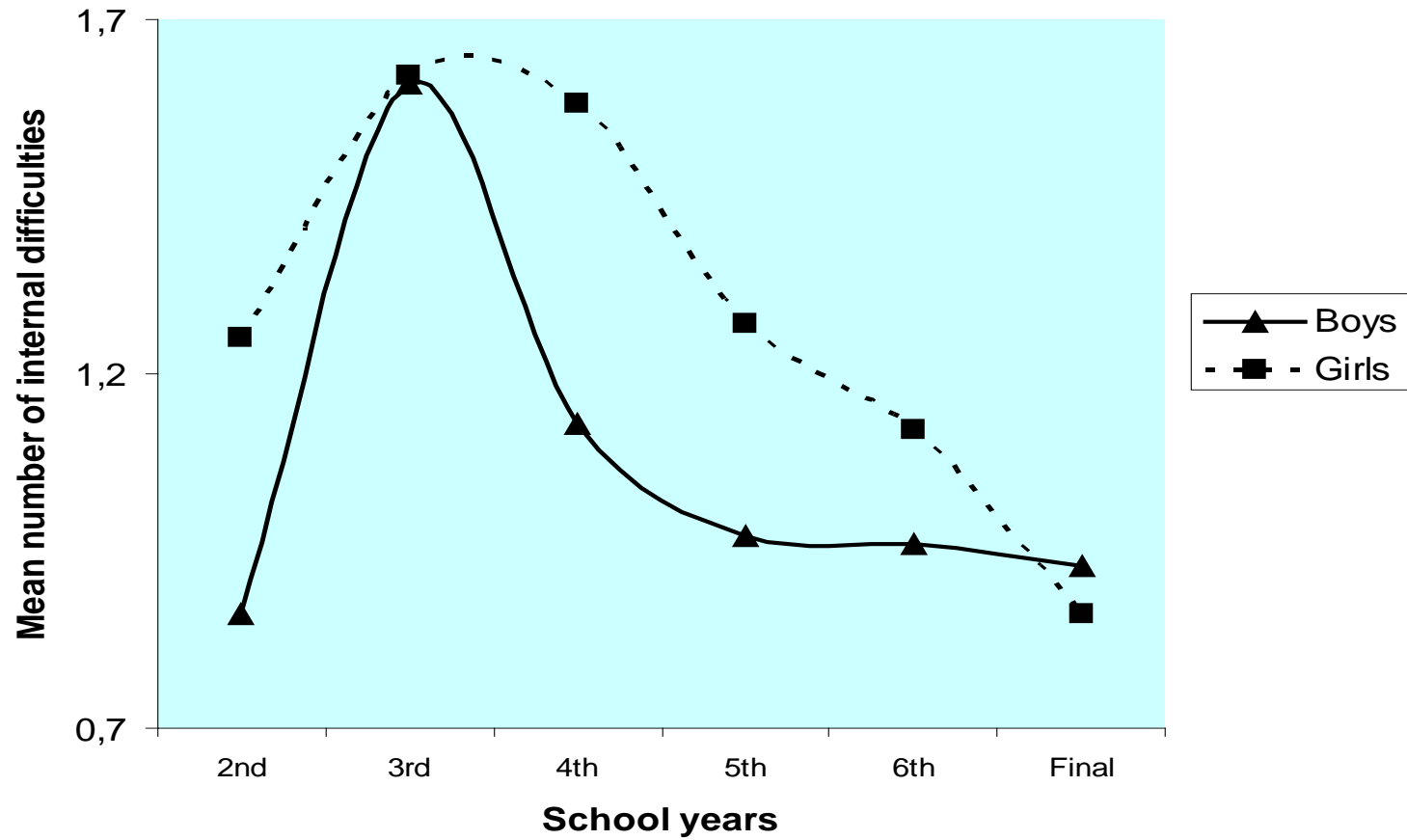
Scale of stress from Toulouse

- 1748 of the pupils are stressed mainly due to school guidance (85,6%)
 - That refers to 82,5% of boys and 88,3% of girls
- 17,5% (167) of boys and 11.7% of girls (127) said that they were stressed by external difficulties

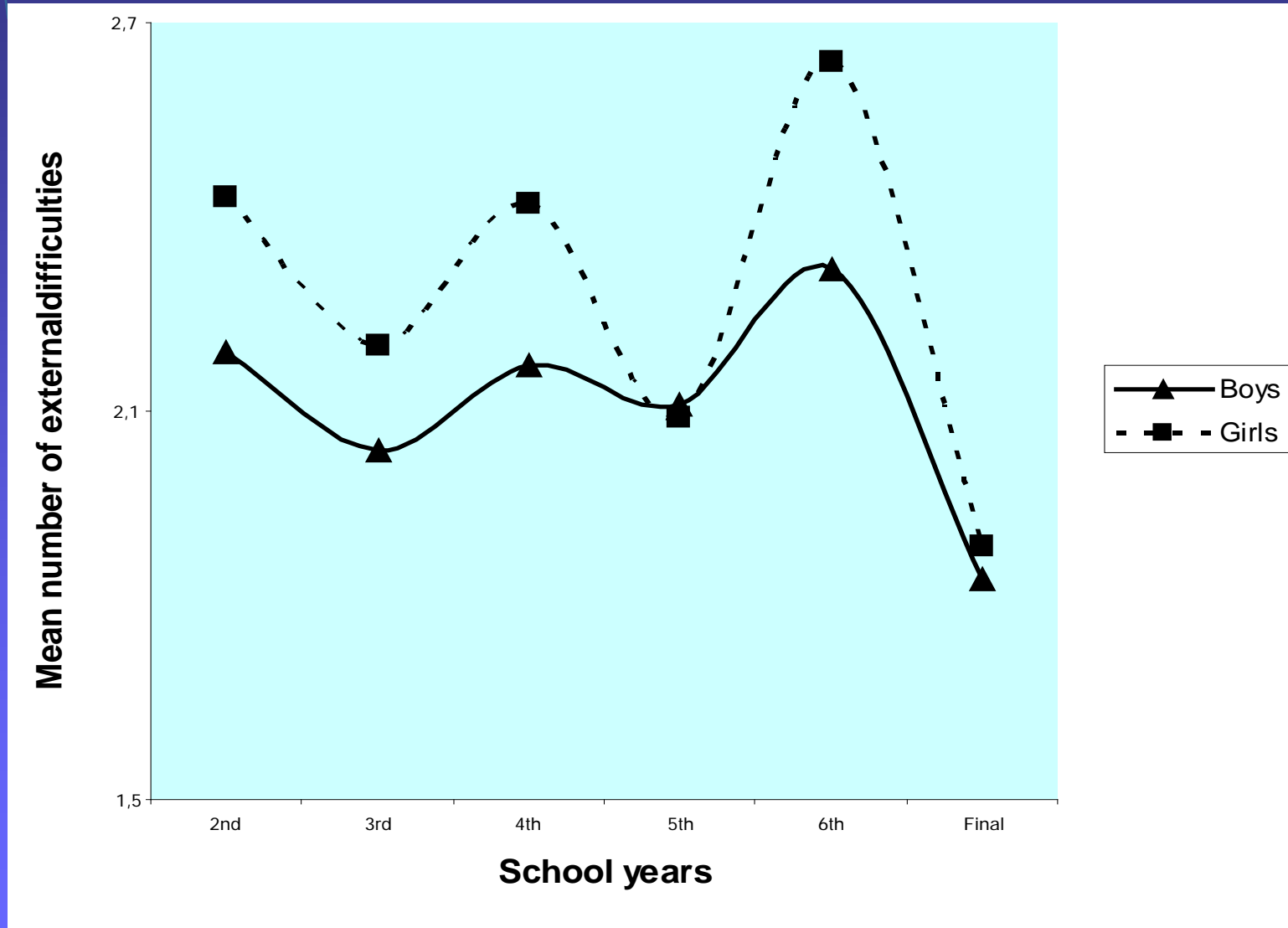
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The number of guidance difficulties and the level of perceived stress

- Difficulties associated with school guidance tend to translate into:
 - physical manifestations of stress* (F=122,68; p=.001)
 - feverishness and tension* (F=290,75; p=.001)
 - depressive mood* (F=301,34; p=.001)
 - lassitude* (F= 198,94; p=.001),and increase the overall perception of stress (F=310,99; p=.001)
[statistical analysis by linear regression step-by-step method]
- Elementary and secondary school pupils who recall the greatest number of guidance difficulties are the ones who feel more stressed.

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The influence of external difficulties on the stress perceived

Lack of information
support or help,
besides other types of difficulties,

lead to a feeling of stress, which translates into lassitude,
feverishness and tension
physical manifestations of stress
and depressive mood.

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The influence of external difficulties on the stress perceived

Internal guidance difficulties, resulting from motivation that is blocked by self-doubt, lack of competence or means, or pressure experienced by the pupils, have a marked influence on their stress ($F= 247,04$; $p=.001$) as well as on its various manifestations ($p=.001$ for the four dimensions of stress).

The influence of the nature of difficulties on perceived stress (1)

- Self-doubt ($p=.001$) results in a high stress level (mean score of 73,1) when compared with the level of those who do not experience that difficulty (65,5 on average).
- The feeling of not having adequate skills ($p=.001$) is also rather stressful (71,9 on average) when compared with those who do not experience such doubts about their competence (mean score of 66,7).
- Great pressure exerted by the people closest to the pupil for him or her to choose a career ($p=.001$) becomes a source of stress (mean score=72,0) when compared with those pupils who do not experience that kind of pressure (mean score=66,6).

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The influence of the nature of difficulties on the stress (2)

- The same happens when the help and support given are felt to be inadequate ($p=.001$) (mean score of 72,4 when compared with the others: 66,2).
- the absence of career prospects ($p=.001$; stress mean=70,9 when compared with those who do not feel to encounter that difficulty: 67,6), and difficulties ($p=.001$; stress mean=71,3 when compared with those who do not experience that difficulty: 69,1) are also particularly stressful.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS(1)

- The fact that 85.6% of pupils claim to have been troubled by at least one of the eleven proposed difficulties is in itself quite revealing.
- External guidance difficulties are more closely related to feverishness and tension whereas internal difficulties are more directly linked to depressive mood.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS(2)

Differences between boys and girls

- There is a higher number of girls who recall at least one difficulty (88,3% against 82,5%), whereas boys claim to have extra-school difficulties more often than girls do
- Girls more often than boys claim to experience or have experienced 10 of them
- Girls are more stressed than boys in terms of both the level and the nature of stress.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the correlations found between each difficulty and the level of stress emphasizes the strong connection that may be traced between internal difficulties and the level of stress in general, regardless of the school year pupils attend or of their sex.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The internal aspect, as revealed by the difficulties connected to self-doubt and inadequate skills, is the major factor influencing the level of perceived stress. Therefore, this kind of stress may not be considered to be linked to all difficulties. Instead, it is particularly associated with self-doubt.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Older pupils are the ones who more often externalize the source of their difficulties while considering themselves to be more stressed than others. Their tendency to deny self-doubt will be an unproductive defence mechanism.

