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DOMAINS THAT MAY BE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) IN YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

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ABSTRACT: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) begins in childhood and its manifestations must be present in more than one environment. Meta-analyses involving samples from several countries show that around 2.5% of adults have ADHD. ADHD can lead to numerous adverse consequences in many areas of adult life, such as impairments in academic and professional performance and social relationships.

KEYWORDS: ADHD; impacts of ADHD; young people and adults.

INTRODUCTION

Scientific advances since the 1990s have contributed to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) not being classified as a disorder only in children (Barkley, 2023).

Despite all the scientific advances in recent decades regarding attention and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in adults, there is still a lot of work to be done by health professionals and researchers. Correct diagnosis and management can help reduce the possible impacts caused by ADHD.

In a study carried out by Newark, Elsassner and Stieglitz (2012), researchers identified that adults with ADHD showed lower levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy when compared to the control group.

We propose to discuss in this article possible impacts of ADHD on the lives of adults. To this end, in addition to this introductory section, this article presents evidence-based statements about the impacts of ADHD on the lives of adults and, finally, final considerations will be presented.

IMPACTS OF ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

Impacts of ADHD are related to school performance, academic and professional success below average. Academic deficits and school-related problems tend to be associated with marked symptoms of inattention. Young adults with ADHD tend to have less job stability and adults to show decreased job performance, achievement, and attendance and a greater likelihood of unemployment, as well as a propensity for interpersonal conflicts (APA, 2023).

Still on the impacts, a meta-analysis of seven studies with more than 5,000 young people and their parents reported major deficiencies in the quality of life of young people with ADHD in relation to their typically developing peers, regardless of whether they were evaluated by the young people themselves or by their parents. Physical functioning was only moderately impaired, but emotional functioning and social functioning were severely impaired. The functioning of the school was severely hampered. As youth with ADHD have aged, their quality of life compared to typically developing peers has worsened across physical, emotional, and academic domains (Faraone et al. 2021).

Results indicate that ADHD negatively affects a child or adolescent's quality of life with a moderate effect on the physical domains and a severe effect on the psychosocial domains (i.e., emotional, social, and academic) (Lee, Yang, Chen, Lee, Teng, Lin, & Gossop, M. (2016).

Continuing, another impact stands out that can be seen in the study of more than 8,600 young people from the US National Health Interview Survey that found that those with ADHD were six times more likely to have a high level of emotional, conduct and of peers, and nine times more likely to manifest a high level of impairment,

including interference with home life, friendships, classroom learning, and leisure activities (Strine, Lesesne, Okoro, McGuire, Chapman, Balluz & Mokdad (2006).

Regarding emotional regulation (ER), Shaw, Stringaris, Nigg & Leibenluft (2014) define it as an individual's ability to modify an emotional state to promote adaptive and goal-oriented behaviors. Therefore, ER encompasses the processes that allow the individual to select, attend to and evaluate emotionally exciting stimuli, and to do so in a flexible way. These processes trigger behavioral and physiological responses that can be modulated according to objectives, on the other hand:

Emotional dysregulation (ED) arises when these adaptive processes are impaired, leading to behavior that defeats the individual's interests. Covers 1) emotional expressions and experiences that are excessive relative to social norms and are context inappropriate; 2) rapid, poorly controlled changes in emotion (lability); and 3) the anomalous allocation of attention to emotional stimuli. Here, we focus on the clinical expression of emotional dysregulation as irritability, which is often linked to reactive aggression and temper outbursts (Shaw, Stringaris, Nigg & Leibenluft (2014, p.276)

A meta-analysis, combining twelve studies with more than 1,900 participants, found that adults with ADHD had very high levels of emotion dysregulation (ED) compared to typically developing controls (Beheshti, Chavanon, & Christiansen, 2020). The results of this meta-analysis revealed that compared to healthy controls, adults with ADHD revealed significantly higher levels of emotional dysregulation (ED) overall (Hedges' $g = 1.17$, $p < .001$; Hedges' g is the effect size adjusted). With regard to the intermediate dimensions of ED, emotional lability exhibited the strongest weighted effect (Hedges' $g = 1.20$, CI [0.57, 1.83], $p < 0.001$).

The study also demonstrated that symptom severity and overall, ED were significantly correlated ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$). Regarding the intermediate dimensions of ED, negative emotional responses were closely correlated with the severity of ADHD symptoms ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$) and emotional lability ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). Regarding the dimensions of ED, emotional lability and negative emotional responses play a more definitive role in the psychopathology of adults with ADHD.

Finally, in a study conducted by Newark, Elsässer & Stieglitz (2016), which aimed to shed light on factors relevant to therapy, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy and resources in adults with ADHD compared to a healthy control group, the authors found that adults with ADHD showed lower levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy when compared to the control group. The results have important implications for the treatment of adult ADHD and suggest that specific therapy programs should include resource-oriented modules to improve self-esteem, self-efficacy, and promote strengths.

CONCLUSION

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can cause harm in the daily lives of young people and adults. The losses include dropping out of studies, procrastination, emotional dysregulation, relationship problems and health risks. Correct diagnosis and appropriate management can help reduce lifelong losses for people with ADHD.

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