

Original Contribution | Published: 31 May 2014

Justice and rejection sensitivity in children and adolescents with ADHD symptoms

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Abstract

Justice sensitivity captures individual differences in the frequency with which injustice is perceived and the intensity of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to it. Persons with ADHD have been reported to show high justice sensitivity, and a recent study provided evidence for this notion in an adult sample. In 1,235 German 10-to 19-year olds, we measured ADHD symptoms, justice sensitivity from the victim, observer, and perpetrator perspective, the frequency of perceptions of injustice, anxious and angry rejection sensitivity, depressive symptoms, conduct problems, and self-esteem. Participants with ADHD symptoms reported significantly higher victim justice sensitivity, more perceptions of injustice, and higher anxious and angry rejection sensitivity, but significantly lower perpetrator justice sensitivity than controls. In latent path analyses, justice sensitivity as well as rejection sensitivity partially mediated the link between ADHD symptoms and comorbid problems when considered simultaneously. Thus, both justice sensitivity and rejection sensitivity may contribute to explaining the emergence and maintenance of problems typically associated with ADHD symptoms, and should therefore be considered in ADHD therapy.

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