Objective: The assessment of cognitive functions of adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) comprises self-ratings of cognitive functioning (subjective assessment) as well as psychometric testing (objective neuropsychological assessment). The aim of the present study was to explore the utility of these assessment strategies in predicting neuropsychological impairments of adults with ADHD as determined by both approaches.

Method: Fifty-five adults with ADHD and 66 healthy participants were assessed with regard to cognitive functioning in several domains by employing subjective and objective measurement tools. Significance and effect sizes for differences between groups as well as the proportion of patients with impairments were analyzed. Furthermore, logistic regression analyses were carried out in order to explore the validity of subjective and objective cognitive measures in predicting cognitive impairments.

Results: Both subjective and objective assessment tools revealed significant cognitive dysfunctions in adults with ADHD. The majority of patients displayed considerable impairments in all cognitive domains assessed. A comparison of effect sizes, however, showed larger dysfunctions in the subjective assessment than in the objective assessment. Furthermore, logistic regression models indicated that subjective cognitive complaints could not be predicted by objective measures of cognition and vice versa.

Conclusions: Subjective and objective assessment tools were found to be sensitive in revealing cognitive dysfunctions of adults with ADHD. Because of the weak association between subjective and objective measurements, it was concluded that subjective and objective measurements are both important for clinical practice but may provide distinct types of information and capture different aspects of functioning.