Executive Functioning Predicts Academic But Not Social Adjustment to University

Whitley A. Sheehan; Grace Iarocci

Journal of Attention Disorders November 3, 2015
DOI: 1087054715612258

Objective: Adjusting well academically and socially has been associated with enhanced academic performance and student retention. The purpose of this study was to examine subthreshold levels of ADHD symptoms such as inattention, hyperactivity, and executive functioning as potential predictors of academic and social adjustment in a healthy sample of university students.

Method: Participants were 135 undergraduate university students who completed self-report questionnaires.

Results: Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that metacognition (an aspect of executive function), gender, and age were significant predictors of academic adjustment beyond hyperactivity, inattention, and depression. Depression was the only significant predictor of social adjustment.

Conclusion: The BASC–College form may identify depression symptoms predictive of social adjustment, but symptoms of inattention or hyperactivity are not sufficiently sensitive to predict academic adjustment. Measures of executive function that include metacognition such as the BRIEF-A may be most promising in identifying skills predictive of academic adjustment.