Risky decision making in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder: A meta-regression analysis

Tycho J. Dekkers, Arne Popma, Joost Agelink van Rentergem, Anika Bexkens, Hilde M. Huizenga

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Abstract
ADHD has been associated with various forms of risky real life decision making, for example risky driving, unsafe sex and substance abuse. However, results from laboratory studies on decision making deficits in ADHD have been inconsistent, probably because of between study differences. We therefore performed a meta-regression analysis in which 37 studies (n ADHD = 1175; n Control = 1222) were included, containing 52 effect sizes. The overall analysis yielded a small to medium effect size (standardized mean difference = .36, p < .001, 95% CI [.22, .51]), indicating that groups with ADHD showed more risky decision making than control groups. There was a trend for a moderating influence of co-morbid Disruptive Behavior Disorders (DBD): studies including more participants with co-morbid DBD had larger effect sizes. No moderating influence of co-morbid internalizing disorders, age or task explicitness was found. These results indicate that ADHD is related to increased risky decision making in laboratory settings, which tended to be more pronounced if ADHD is accompanied by DBD. We therefore argue that risky decision making should have a more prominent role in research on the neuropsychological and biological mechanisms of ADHD, which can be useful in ADHD assessment and intervention.