The Protective Effects of Social Factors on the Academic Functioning of Adolescents With ADHD.

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Abstract
There is considerable evidence that externalizing disorders such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) put youth at risk for a range of adverse academic outcomes. It is importantly to note that some youth avoid these negative outcomes, yet there is a gap in our understanding of these resilient youth. The purpose of this study was to longitudinally evaluate social acceptance and social skills as potential protective factors of the associations between inattentive, hyperactive/impulsive, and oppositional defiant behaviors with academic outcomes. Participants included a sample of 93 middle school students comprehensively diagnosed with ADHD. Parents and adolescents completed ratings of social skills and perceived social acceptance. School grades and teacher-rated academic impairment were assessed 18 months later as longitudinal academic functioning outcomes. Inattention and social acceptance were associated with academic outcomes 18 months later. Regression analyses revealed that parent- and adolescent-rated social acceptance demonstrated promotive effects for grades and against teacher-rated academic impairment. Further, social acceptance significantly interacted with inattention in predicting school grades, such that high parent- and adolescent-rated social acceptance significantly attenuated the relationship between inattention and poor grades, even after controlling for baseline grades and intelligence. The presence of social acceptance was especially critical for adolescents with high levels of inattention. Specifically, adolescents with high inattention and high social acceptance had a mean grade point average of 2.5, and adolescents with high inattention and low social acceptance had a mean grade point average of 1.5. These findings demonstrate that social acceptance may be an important intervention target for improving academic outcomes among adolescents with ADHD.