Cloninger's personality dimensions and ADHD: A meta-analytic review

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Abstract

A meta-analysis of up to 20 datasets is reported that examined the relationships between Cloninger's personality dimensions and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Cloninger's model comprises four temperament (Novelty-Seeking, Harm-Avoidance, Reward Dependence, and Persistence) and three character (Self-Directedness, Cooperation, and Self-Transcendence) dimensions. Major findings were that all personality dimensions, except Self-Transcendence, were significantly associated with ADHD. These associations had different directions and magnitudes of relationship with ADHD. The associations were especially strong for Novelty-Seeking and Self-Directedness, being positive for Novelty-Seeking and negative for Self-Directedness. In addition, the association between ADHD and Persistence was moderated by age (stronger in children than adults) and source (stronger in clinical samples than community samples). Further, the association between harm avoidance and ADHD was moderated by age (strong and significant in adults, but not significant in children). Findings are discussed in relation to past work and the different strengths of the associations found between Cloninger's personality dimensions and ADHD, developmental differences in these relationships, implications for theoretical models of ADHD, the influence of biological and environmental factors in the expression of ADHD, implications for treatment and diagnosis, and the underlying processes for the relationships between personality and ADHD.