

The Function of Reward Sensitivity and Temporal Discounting in the Relationship between Risk and ADHD in Adults

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Objective:

To explore risk behaviours in adults with ADHD, testing the possible mediating role of reward sensitivity and temporal discounting.

Method:

66 adults (43 men, 23 women; 18-65 years) completed clinical interviews and self-report measures of ADHD symptoms, risk-taking behaviours/risky experiences and experimental measures of temporal discounting and reward sensitivity.

Results:

ADHD symptom severity in adults was significantly associated with self-reported lifetime histories of risk-taking behaviours, including alcohol abuse, nicotine abuse, illicit drug abuse, and perpetration of violence; as well as the experience of risky sexual situations and violence victimisation (all p values < 0.05). The relationships between violence, nicotine use and ADHD symptom severity were significantly and differentially mediated by motivational variances (p values $< .05$), including temporal discounting and reward sensitivity.

Conclusions:

The results of this study suggest that motivational variances (reward sensitivity; temporal discounting) may provide a mechanism for understanding the greater risk of harm to adults with ADHD.