Teachers' Experiences with and Perceptions of Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

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Journal of Pediatric Nursing, Volume 36, September–October 2017, Pages 141-48
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2017.06.010.

Abstract

Purpose
The purpose of this research was to examine teacher experiences with and perceptions of students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Teachers are integral in helping these children learn effectively and foster healthy relationships, yet little is known about their interactions with these children.

Design and Method
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of fourteen currently practicing or retired elementary and middle schools teachers in North Carolina and South Carolina. All interviews were audio-recorded then analyzed for common themes.

Results
Participants obtained ADHD information from in-services or peer interaction, rather than formal education. Culture and gender influenced teacher perceptions, and ADHD classroom strategies were based on anecdotal experience. Teachers experienced guilt and worry while negotiating student needs, school system constraints, and family issues.

Conclusions
While teachers have developed effective coping mechanisms through informal means, formal education and support will help teachers better serve students with ADHD.

Practice Implications
Pediatric nurses in many settings can benefit from better understanding how teachers perceive and interact with students who have attentional issues.