Positive Peer Relationships Facilitate Adjustment in the Transition to University for Emerging Adults with ADHD Symptoms

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Abstract

Many emerging adults, particularly those with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms, struggle to manage the developmental and contextual changes that accompany the transition to university. We examined new students’ formation of positive peer relationships as facilitators of their good university adjustment and as buffers of their ADHD symptom levels. Participants were 571 new university students who had moved away from home to attend university. Sociometric procedures indexed participants’ social acceptance and reciprocated friendships with university peers. Participants completed questionnaires on ADHD symptoms, internalizing difficulties, and attachment to university. Academic transcripts were obtained from the registrar. Students with high ADHD symptoms displayed poorer adjustment overall. However, peer acceptance and reciprocated friendships incrementally predicted better attachment to university, while peer acceptance predicted higher year-end grade point average. Buffering effects of friendships on internalizing difficulties and attachment to university were strongest for those with high ADHD symptoms. Implications for service provision are discussed.