Characterizing adult attention-deficit/hyperactivity-disorder and comorbid borderline personality disorder: ADHD symptoms, psychopathology, cognitive functioning and psychosocial factors

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Abstract

Objective
To characterize adults with comorbid attention-deficit/hyperactivity-disorder (ADHD) and borderline personality disorder (BPD) with regard to ADHD symptoms, psychopathology, cognitive functioning and psychosocial factors.

Method
A between-group design compared a group of individuals diagnosed with ADHD (n = 40) with a group diagnosed with BPD and who also met the criteria for ADHD (ADHD + BPD) (n = 20).

Results
Significant differences were observed for both childhood and current impulsivity symptoms, whereby ADHD + BPD exhibited increased impulsivity; no differences on self-report and cognitive measures of impulsivity were reported. The ADHD + BPD group scored significantly higher on measures of depression, anxiety and numerous other axis I and II conditions. The ADHD + BPD group scored significantly lower on most measures of intellectual functioning and attention, however largely not on those relating to response inhibition. Furthermore, group differences were observed for psychosocial factors, including education, substance use and criminal record.

Conclusion
Comorbid ADHD and BPD is characterized by more symptoms of impulsivity, additional psychopathology, comparatively lower intellectual and attentional functioning and increased psychosocial difficulties.