Child maltreatment and ADHD symptoms in a sample of young adults.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: The present study investigated the relationship between different types of childhood maltreatment (emotional, sexual, overall abuse, and no abuse) and the symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in young adulthood.

METHOD: Data were collected from a Danish national study conducted by The Danish National Centre for Social Research in 2008 and 2009. A sample of 4,718 young adults (24 years of age) were randomly selected using the total birth cohort of children born in 1984. Structured interviews were conducted with a response rate of 63%, equating to a total sample size of 2,980 participants.

RESULTS: Chi-square analyses revealed significant relationships between child maltreatment groups and a probable diagnosis of ADHD using the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS). Binary logistic regression analysis showed that the overall abuse class was more strongly associated with probable ADHD (OR=5.08), followed by emotional abuse (OR=3.09) and sexual abuse (OR=2.07).

CONCLUSIONS: The results showed that childhood maltreatment was associated with increased risk of ADHD symptoms in young adulthood. The findings of this study are discussed within the existing literature and suggestions for future research are outlined in order to replicate these findings in other adult populations.