The study of automatic and controlled processes in ADHD: a reread and a new proposal

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Abstract

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is described as a persistent or an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that gets in the way of daily life or typical development. Most research in ADHD shows that the core symptoms are related to deficits in executive functions. Only a few works show that deficits in ADHD are also related to automatic processes. The shortsightedness of past studies is that they are in focus when looking at the closer object of executive function deficits, but they are out of focus when they fail to include a larger context beyond the focus such as the inextricable relationship between automatic cognitive processes and executive functions deficits. The aim of the present work is to summarize data on automatic and controlled processes in ADHD subjects. Another purpose is to show that the executive functions alone cannot explain the ADHD symptoms, they have been reinterpreted and integrated into the light of new evidence. The new evidence comes from both cognitive and neurophysiological research. Finally, based on new evidence, the Cumulative and Emergent Automatic Deficit model (CEAD) is proposed, its theoretical implications of emerging patterns and key directions for future work are discussed.