The direct/indirect association of ADHD/ODD symptoms with self-esteem, self-perception, and depression in early adolescents

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The present study aimed to reveal the influences of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) symptoms on self-esteem and self-perception during early adolescence, and to clarify the spillover effect of self-esteem on depressive symptoms. ADHD symptoms in 564 early adolescents were evaluated via teacher-rating scales. Self-esteem and depressive symptoms were assessed via self-reported scales. We analyzed the relationships among these symptoms using structural equation modeling. Severe inattentive symptoms decreased self-esteem and hyperactive–impulsive symptoms affected self-perception for non-academic domains. Although these ADHD symptoms did not directly affect depressive symptoms, low self-esteem led to severe depression. ODD symptoms had a direct impact on depression without the mediating effects of self-esteem. These results indicated that inattentive symptoms had a negative impact on self-esteem and an indirect negative effect on depressive symptoms in adolescents, even if ADHD symptoms were subthreshold. Severe ODD symptoms can be directly associated with depressive symptoms during early adolescence.