History of ADHD traits related to general test and specific math anxiety in college students

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Learning and Individual Differences, Volume 58, August 2017, Pages 56-63

Abstract

College students with ADHD are considered to be “high-functioning” when compared to other ADHD populations, yet tend to experience higher general test anxiety when compared to non-affected students. Research has also shown Math Computation performance of students with ADHD to be impaired. However, no published study has examined the connection between ADHD and specific math anxiety. Undergraduates with retrospectively reported ADHD traits and an existent diagnosis (n = 40) and peers without ADHD (n = 163) completed a battery of self-report measures tapping general, test, and math anxiety, as well as a standardized math achievement test and measures of current emotional state. Controlling for current trait anxiety, those with ADHD traits experienced higher specific math anxiety and negative affect after completing the math task, versus peers without ADHD. Mathematics may pose a specific risk for anxiety in college students with clinically-elevated ADHD symptoms, one that future academic and clinical interventions should take into consideration.