The Characteristics and Age Effects of Emotional Lability in ADHD Children with and without Oppositional Defiant Disorder.


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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:
This study evaluated the concurrent validity of emotional lability (EL) in children with ADHD.

METHOD:
A total of 2,015 children with ADHD and 745 typically developed controls (TDCs) were assessed and compared on EL.

RESULTS:
ADHD participants expressed higher EL scores than TDCs, not influenced by gender or IQ. Higher levels of EL symptoms were found in children with comorbid oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and with ADHD-combined subtype. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) analyses showed a strong screening efficacy of EL symptoms on ADHD. The effect of developmental age on EL showed a desisting pattern in TDCs, as opposed to a persisting pattern in ADHD (not influenced by ODD comorbid status). ODD symptoms in ADHD showed an ascending pattern.

CONCLUSION:
EL can potentially serve as a sentinel index for the presence of ADHD, especially when the ADHD presentation is atypical. ODD may embody a developmental entity distinct from EL.