Is the Positive Bias an ADHD Phenomenon?
Reexamining the Positive Bias and its Correlates in a Heterogeneous Sample of Children

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Abstract

The goals of this study were to (a) evaluate the presence of the positive bias (PB) in elementary-school-aged children with and without ADHD when PB is defined at the individual level through latent profile analysis and (b) examine the extent to which several correlates (i.e., social functioning, aggression, depression, and anxiety) are associated with the PB. Participants were 233 youth (30% female; 8 to 10 years of age), 51% of whom met criteria for ADHD. During an individual evaluation, children and parents completed a battery of questionnaires to assess child competence, depression, anxiety, and aggression. Children also participated in a novel group session with same-sex unfamiliar peers (half of the group was comprised of children with ADHD) to engage in group problem-solving tasks and free play activities. After the group session, peers and staff completed ratings of each child's behavior (e.g., likeability, rule following). The best fitting LPA model for parent and self-ratings of competence revealed four profiles: High Competence/Self-Aware; Variable Competence/Self-Aware; Low Competence/Self-Aware; and Low Competence/PB, in which the PB was present across domains. Only 10% of youth showed a PB and youth with ADHD were no more likely to display the PB than their non-ADHD peers with similar levels of low competence. Lastly, the Low Competence/Self-Aware profile demonstrated higher levels of anxiety and depression than the Low Competence/PB profile; the profiles did not differ on aggression or peer or staff ratings of social/behavioral functioning. Implications for understanding the PB in children with and without ADHD are discussed.