

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and nonsuicidal self-injury in a clinical sample of adolescents: the role of comorbidities and gender.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

The aim of the present study was to investigate the possible association between attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) with special focus on the role of comorbidities and gender in a clinical sample of adolescents with both a dimensional and a categorical approach to psychopathology.

METHODS:

Using a structured interview, the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview Kid and a self-rated questionnaire, the Deliberate Self-Harm Inventory, the authors examined 202 inpatient adolescents (aged: 13-18 years) in the Vadaskert Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital and Outpatient Clinic, Budapest, Hungary. Descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U test, chi-square test and mediator model were used.

RESULTS:

Fifty-two adolescents met full criteria for ADHD and a further 77 showed symptoms of ADHD at the subthreshold level. From the 52 adolescents diagnosed with ADHD, 35 (67.30%) had NSSI, of whom there were significantly more girls than boys, boys: $n = 10$ (28.60%), girls: $n = 25$ (71.40%) ($\chi^2(1) = 10.643$ $p < .001$ $\phi = .452$). Multiple mediation analyses resulted in a moderated mediation model in which the relationship between symptoms of ADHD and the prevalence of current NSSI was fully mediated by the symptoms of comorbid conditions in both sex. Significant mediators were the symptoms of affective and psychotic disorders and suicidality in both sexes and the symptoms of alcohol abuse/dependence disorders in girls.

CONCLUSIONS:

ADHD symptoms are associated with an increased risk of NSSI in adolescents, especially in the case of girls. Our findings suggest that clinicians should routinely screen for the symptoms of ADHD and comorbidity, with a special focus on the symptoms of affective disorders and alcohol abuse/dependence psychotic symptoms to prevent NSSI.