

Maternal Depression in Families of Children with ADHD: A Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

Although research has demonstrated a relationship between maternal depression and child attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); the strength of the relationship is currently unclear. The results of some studies have found a strong association between maternal depression and child ADHD, while other studies have found little or no association. A meta-analysis was conducted to clarify the strength of the association between maternal depression and child ADHD. The current study included 51 published and unpublished studies that included a quantitative comparison between maternal depression and child ADHD. Mothers of children with ADHD had significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms than mothers of children without ADHD ($d = 0.58$; 95% CI [0.43, 0.74]; $p < .001$; $k = 18$). The relationship between maternal depressive symptoms and child ADHD symptoms was moderate ($r = .22$; 95% CI [.17, .28]; $p < .001$; $k = 21$). 17.11% of mothers of children with ADHD currently met criteria for a depressive disorder (95% CI [11.95, 23.89], $p < .001$, $k = 19$). The DSM version used to evaluate child ADHD status was the only moderator that was statistically significant ($p = .021$, $k = 15$). Specifically, studies that used the DSM-III or DSM-III-R were associated with larger effect sizes than studies that used the DSM-IV or DSM-IV-TR. The results suggest that clinicians should screen for the possible co-occurrence of maternal depression when working with families of children with ADHD.