Models of child–parent attachment in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Links to executive functions

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Abstract

This study explored multiple attachment relationships and examined four conceptual models of child–
mother/father attachment—monotropy, hierarchy, independence, integration—to explain executive functioning
(EF) in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) versus typical development (TD; n = 50 each; age: M =
11.45, SD = .50). Significant ADHD versus TD differences emerged on all EF measures and on distribution into
four clusters (secure attachment to both parents, neither parent, only father, only mother). For both groups, results
supported two attachment models: (a) monotropy: child–mother attachment predicted all EF measures; child–
father attachment predicted none and (b) integration: clusters differed significantly on all EF measures. Children
with ADHD comprised ∼74% of the high-risk cluster (concordant insecure attachment, highest EF difficulties).
Discussion focused on unique risk/protective roles played by each parental attachment for understanding EF in
children with ADHD or TD.