

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Preschoolers – the Accuracy of a Short Screener

Kristin Romvig Overgaard, Beate Oerbeck, Svein Friis, Are Hugo Pripp, Guido Biele, Heidi Aase, Pål Zeiner

Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (2018)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2018.03.008>

Abstract

Objective

While early and accurate screening is required for the remediation of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), possible gender differences have not been extensively studied. We examined the classification accuracy of the parent and preschool teacher version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) hyperactivity-inattention (HI) subscale in girls and boys.

Method

The study was part of the Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study (MoBa). Parents and preschool teachers rated a total of 238 girls and 276 boys (mean age 3 ½ years) with the SDQ HI subscale. Blinded to the parent and teacher ratings, interviewers classified the children by ADHD diagnoses with the Preschool Age Psychiatric Assessment Interview.

Results

Areas under the curves for the parent HI subscale scores were good for both girls and boys (.87 and .80, respectively). Preschool teacher classifications were fair (.76) for girls and poor (.62) for boys, a significant difference ($p = .017$). The subscale accurately identified children without ADHD at low parent scores (≤ 4), and fairly accurately identified ADHD at high scores (≥ 9) with maximum probabilities of finding true cases were .75 in girls and .55 in boys. Intermediate scores gave the best balance between sensitivity and specificity with low probabilities of correctly identifying children with ADHD.

Conclusion

The parental SDQ HI subscale was useful for screening for ADHD in preschool girls and boys. For preschool teachers, the subscale was useful for screening girls.