

Experiences of physical and relational victimization in children with ADHD: The role of social problems and aggression.

McQuade JD, Breslend NL, Groff D.

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Abstract

The social risk factors for physical and relational peer victimization were examined within a mixed-gender sample of children with and without attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Participants were 124 children (ages 8-12 years; 48% boys), with 47% exhibiting sub-clinical or clinical elevations in ADHD symptoms. ADHD and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) symptom counts were assessed based on parent- and teacher-reports; parents rated children's social problems and teachers rated children's use of physical and relational aggression and experiences of physical and relational victimization. A multiple mediator model was used to test whether there were indirect effects of ADHD or ODD symptoms on physical and relational victimization through social problems, physical aggression, or relational aggression. At the bivariate level, ADHD and ODD symptoms were both significantly associated with higher rates of physical and relational victimization. In the mediational model, there were significant indirect effects of ADHD symptoms on relational victimization via social problems, of ODD on relational victimization via relational aggression, and of ODD symptoms on physical victimization via physical aggression. Results suggest that there are distinct risk factors implicated in the physical and relational victimization of youth with ADHD and that the co-occurrence of ODD symptoms is important to assess. Clinical implications for addressing victimization in children with ADHD are discussed.