Korean adults' beliefs about and social distance toward attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, and autism spectrum disorder

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Abstract

Given the scarcity of studies examining public beliefs regarding multiple neurodevelopmental disorders, this study compared lay beliefs regarding the etiology of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette syndrome (TS), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and attitudes toward individuals with the disorders. We recruited 673 participants aged 20-64 years via an online panel survey in South Korea. Participants completed questionnaires regarding perceived causation of each disorder. Preferred social distance from people with the disorders was measured using a modified version of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale. Four causal factors were revealed: dietary/physical, social-environmental, biological, and volitive/religious. ADHD causes were considered more social-environmental relative to TS and ASD causes, while ASD causes were considered more dietary/physical and biological relative to ADHD and TS causes. Preferred social distances for ASD and TS were the highest and lowest, respectively. Greater social distance from individuals with ADHD and TS was associated with older age; having close family members, relatives, or friends with the disorder; and beliefs regarding biological etiology. Greater social distance from individuals with ASD was associated with beliefs regarding biological etiology. Beliefs regarding ADHD, TS, and ASD causes and attitudes toward the disorders differed, and beliefs regarding etiology affected preferred social distance.