Risk Factors for Depression in Adolescents With ADHD: The Impact of Cognitive Biases and Stress

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:
Youth diagnosed with ADHD are at heightened risk of depression. However, many do not develop depression. Individuals with specific cognitive biases are more likely to develop depression yet it remains untested whether these vulnerability-stress models apply to depression risk in youth with ADHD.

METHOD:
We examined whether interpretation and attention biases moderated the relation between stressful life events and depressive symptoms in a sample of adolescents (Mage = 14.42) with ADHD (n = 59) and without ADHD (n = 36).

RESULTS:
Youth with ADHD experienced more stressful life events compared with those without ADHD. Interpretation biases moderated the association between stress and depressive symptoms in youth with and without ADHD. Attention biases moderated the association between stress and depressive symptoms in the non-ADHD youth only.

CONCLUSION:
These results enhance our understanding of vulnerability for depression in adolescence with ADHD and inform targeted prevention and treatment models during this critical developmental juncture.