

Interoceptive awareness in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Wiersema JR, Godefroid E.

PLoS One. 2018 Oct 12;13(10):e0205221.

doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0205221. eCollection 2018.

Abstract

ADHD is considered a disorder of self-regulation. Recent research has shown that awareness of bodily states, referred to as interoceptive awareness, crucially contributes to self-regulatory processes. Impaired self-regulation in ADHD has been explained in terms of arousal regulation deficits in ADHD (the state regulation deficit (SRD) account). There is now ample support for the SRD account, however the exact reason for arousal regulation difficulties is not yet known. The SRD account explicitly refers to the ability to monitor one's momentary bodily state as a prerequisite for effective state regulation. However, surprisingly, no study to date has tested the ability to become aware of bodily signals, i.e. interoceptive awareness, in ADHD. In the current study, we therefore compared interoceptive awareness between 24 adults with ADHD and 23 controls by means of both an objective (heartbeat perception task) and subjective measure (questionnaire) of interoceptive awareness. Results revealed a strikingly similar performance for both groups on both measures, suggesting preserved interoceptive awareness in adult ADHD.