

## Functional Impairment in South African Children with ADHD: Design, Implementation and Evaluation of a Targeted Intervention

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**Abstract :** Although Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most prevalent childhood neurobehavioural disorders, little empirical research has been published on its clinical presentation in Africa, and, globally, few studies evaluate ADHD intervention programs that emphasize parent training. Hence, Stage 1 of this research programme aimed to describe the functional impairment of South African children with ADHD, and also sought to investigate the influence of sociodemographic variables (e.g., sex, age, socioeconomic status, family environment) and clinical variables (e.g., ADHD subtype and comorbidity) on the degree of that impairment. We used the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview for Children and Adolescents as a diagnostic tool, and the Child Behavior Checklist, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, and the Impairment Rating Scale as measures of functional impairment. Results from this stage of the research indicated that South African children and adolescents who meet diagnostic criteria for ADHD experience most functional impairment in the school domain, as well as in the area of social functioning. None of the measured sociodemographic variables had a significant detrimental or protective effect on how ADHD symptoms impacted on functioning. In terms of comorbidity, the presence of Major Depressive Disorder, Conduct Disorder, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder were all associated with significantly impaired overall functioning. Stage 2 of the research programme aimed to design, implement, and evaluate a child-specific intervention that targeted the primary areas of impairment identified in Stage 1. Existing literature suggests that a positive parent-training programme, in the group format, is one of the best options for cost-effective and successful ADHD intervention. Hence, the intervention took that form. Parents were taught basic behaviour analysis concepts within a supportive group context. Evaluation of the intervention's efficacy used many of the same measures as in Stage 1, but also featured semi-structured interviews with participants and naturalistic observation of parent-child interaction. We will discuss preliminary results of that evaluation. Studying functional impairment and designing intervention plans in this way will pave the way for evidence-based treatment plans for children and adolescents diagnosed with ADHD.

**Keywords :** attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, children, intervention, parenting groups

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