

Understanding the Cause(S) of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties of Adolescents with ADHD and Its Implications for the Successful Implementation of Intervention(S)

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Abstract : Due to the interplay of different genetic and environmental risk factors and its heterogeneous nature, the concept of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has shaped controversy and conflicts, which have been, in turn, reflected in the controversial arguments about its treatment. Taking into account recent well evidence-based researches suggesting that ADHD is a condition, in which biopsychosocial factors are all weaved together, the current paper explores the multiple risk-factors that are likely to influence ADHD, with a particular focus on adolescents with ADHD who might experience comorbid social, emotional and behavioural disorders (SEBD). In the first section of this paper, the primary objective was to investigate the conflicting ideas regarding the definition, diagnosis and treatment of ADHD at an international level as well as to critically examine and identify the limitations of the two most prevailing sets of diagnostic criteria that inform current diagnosis, the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) diagnostic scheme, DSM-V, and the World Health Organisation's (WHO) classification of diseases, ICD-10. Taking into consideration the findings of current longitudinal studies on ADHD association with high rates of comorbid conditions and social dysfunction, in the second section the author moves towards an investigation of the transitional points –physical, psychological and social ones– that students with ADHD might experience during early adolescence, as informed by neuroscience and developmental contextualism theory. The third section is an exploration of the different perspectives of ADHD as reflected in individuals' with ADHD self-reports and the KENT project's findings on school staff's attitudes and practices. In the last section, given the high rates of SEBDs in adolescents with ADHD, it is examined how cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), coupled with other interventions, could be effective in ameliorating anti-social behaviours and/or other emotional and behavioral difficulties of students with ADHD. The findings of a range of randomised control studies indicate that CBT might have positive outcomes in adolescents with multiple behavioural problems, hence it is suggested to be considered both in schools and other community settings. Finally, taking into account the heterogeneous nature of ADHD, the different biopsychosocial and environmental risk factors that take place during adolescence and the discourse and practices concerning ADHD and SEBD, it is suggested how it might be possible to make sense of and meaningful improvements to the education of adolescents with ADHD within a multi-modal and multi-disciplinary whole-school approach that addresses the multiple problems that not only students with ADHD but also their peers might experience. Further research that would be based on more large-scale controls and would investigate the effectiveness of various interventions, as well as the profiles of those students who have benefited from particular approaches and those who have not, will generate further evidence concerning the psychoeducation of adolescents with ADHD allowing for generalised conclusions to be drawn.

Keywords : adolescence, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cognitive behavioural theory, comorbid social emotional behavioural disorders, treatment

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