ABSTRACT

With a history primarily focused on the deficits that accompany Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), research is beginning to highlight the positives these children may possess. Researchers have provided an optimistic outlook by examining the strengths and resources that support children in becoming resilient, well-adjusted individuals. The current project will focus on the relationship between adaptiveness and resiliency in children with ADHD by comparing parent-report data (specifically mothers) on the Adaptability subscales of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004) with each of the subscales from the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (Prince-Embry, 2007). A descriptive analysis of the results of these measures along with targeted interventions and recommendations will be provided. This work preliminarily sets the stage for a better understanding of 8-11 year-old children with ADHD and expands our knowledge of their ability to adapt in the face of adversity.

BACKGROUND

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- ADHD is characterized by impaired abilities to sustain attention and inhibit impulsive hyperactive behavior (Barry, 2003).
- Prevalence rates estimated at 3-7% of school-aged children (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).
- Children presenting with this disorder are at high risk for a range of negative short- and long-term outcomes including peer rejection, academic failure, substance use, and numerous comorbid psychological disorders (Barry, 2003).

Adaptiveness

- Adaptiveness can be described as the behavioral skills required for everyday functioning (Buelow, et al., 2012).
- Adaptive functioning has not been specifically examined in ADHD populations, however, the characteristic behaviors observed in this disorder are often signs of adaptive dysfunction such as excessive talking and disinhibition. (Modesto-Lowe, Yelunina, & Hanjan, 2011).

Resilience

- Defined as a multidimensional construct connoting the maintenance of positive adaptation by individuals despite experiences of significant adversity (Herman et al., 2011; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).
- Resiliency levels can influence the outcomes of many disorders such as ADHD.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the relationship between Adaptiveness and Resiliency in children with ADHD-C as reported by their mother?

METHOD

- Participants were 68 8-11 year-olds (M=9.8, SD=1.16) and their mothers.
- All children had a previous diagnosis of ADHD-combined type (diagnosis confirmed by Conners-3 Rating Scale).
- Recruits through community newsletters and events, local media, community organizations, school boards.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASC-2 PARENT REPORT (Mother)</th>
<th>Adaptability</th>
<th>Social Skills</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Activities of Daily Living</th>
<th>Functional Communication</th>
<th>Adaptive Skills Composite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSA – Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>-.267</td>
<td>-.012</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.253</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>-.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA – Relatedness</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>.301*</td>
<td>-.135</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA – Sense of Mastery</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>-.144</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA – Resource</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.296*</td>
<td>-.212</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA – Vulnerability</td>
<td>-.288*</td>
<td>-.239</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>-.343*</td>
<td>-.268</td>
<td>-.319*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05  **p < .01.

- Mothers’ ratings of their child’s social skills on the BASC-2 was positively correlated with the child’s own ratings of emotional reactivity and resilience on the RSA.
- Mothers’ ratings of their child’s adaptability, activities of daily living and composite adaptive skills were negatively correlated with ratings of vulnerability on the RSA.
- Although not significant, emotional reactivity on the RSA was also negatively correlated to mothers’ ratings of adaptability and activities of daily living on the BASC-2.

DISCUSSION

- Having resources such as close relationships and interests can contribute to positive social skills in children.
- Being vulnerable to adversity may put children at risk of being less adaptive (in skills and overall), as well as less engaged in day to day life. This could have adverse effects on children’s functioning in areas such as home, school, and community.
- Additionally, being quick to over-react to adverse events could be detrimental to those aforementioned areas.
- Mothers support these findings in their view of how their children interact with others and adjust to different situations. Having children and mothers being able to recognize these risk factors could lead to personalized interventions for children with ADHD to increase their resiliency and adaptiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Close bonds between the child and at least one other person is recommended to foster resiliency.
- Both nurturance and trust are familial factors that can help children adapt to situations with adversity. Parents can strengthen bonds by being actively present in their children’s lives and encouraging attachment to siblings.
- Daughters can be encouraged to be autonomous while sons can be encouraged to express their feelings (Daniel & Wassek, 2002).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Children who are at risk of being non-adaptive and non-resilient may benefit from the following (Newman, 2004):

- Strong social support networks or a committed mentor outside of the family.
- Positive school experiences.
- Sense of mastery of new skills or encouragement in showcasing own talents.
- Believing their own efforts and choices can make a difference.
- Extra-curricular activities.
- Ability to reframe adversities so that they can recognize the benefits as well as the damaging effects.

REFERENCES


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