Do the Different Subtypes of ADHD Affect Pragmatic Language Differently?

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Background

- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is a common, chronic, neurodevelopmental disorder that results in inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.
- ADHD typically begins in childhood and may continue into adulthood.
- ADHD is known to have negative effects on pragmatic language (language skills used to communicate appropriately in social situations).
- Challenges may include the following:
  - Difficulty interpreting sarcasm
  - Difficulty interpreting facial cues and facial expressions
  - Poor eye contact
  - Social isolation
  - Social passivity
  - Higher vulnerability to peer pressure
- ADHD can affect school life, work life, and social life.
- ADHD can be separated into 2 main subtypes:
  - Primarily hyperactive
  - Primarily inattentive

References

(Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2010; Ludlow, Chadwick, Morey, Edwards, & Gutierrez, 2017; Semrud-Clikeman, 2010; Sinzig, Morsch, & Lehmkhu, 2008; Westby, 2011)

Objectives

- This literature review was completed to determine if inattentive symptoms of ADHD affect pragmatic language in different ways.
- Knowledge of the different pragmatic effects of each subtype could help SLPs determine what pragmatic areas to focus on during therapy with individuals who display these symptoms. Determining the source of the problem is always helpful for a successful treatment.

Methods

- A literature review was conducted of presently available research pertaining to what aspects of pragmatics ADHD affects and research focusing on the difference between hyperactivity and interactive symptoms and their effect on the affected areas of pragmatic language.
- This was done to answer the following question: do the different subtypes of ADHD affect pragmatics differently?
- There was not much literature, so the review was divided into 3 sections:
  - Link between ADHD and Pragmatic Language
  - Difference between ADHD subtypes
  - How different pragmatic skills are related to language development in general
- I came to my conclusions through a synthesis of these literatures.

Results

- Pragmatic skills often affected by ADHD, regardless of subtype, include the following:
  - Difficulty with topic initiation and maintenance
  - Difficulty with eye contact
  - Excessive talking
  - Interupting
  - Difficulty organizing language
  - Difficulty understanding sarcasm
  - Peer rejection
  - Difficulty with social perception

(Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2010; Leonard, Milich, & Lorch, 2011; Ludlow et al., 2017; Semrud-Clikeman, 2010; Sinzig, Morsch, & Lehmkhu, 2018)

Inattentiveness and hyperactivity affect pragmatic language differently.

Pragmatic Difficulties More Predictable by ADHD Subtypes

ADHD

- Social isolation
- Social passivity
- Shyness
- Difficulty interpreting nonverbal cues
- Difficulty interpreting emotions via facial expression

Inattentive

Hyperactive

Overall, predominantly inattentive symptoms of ADHD seem to play a larger role in negatively affecting one’s pragmatic language skills.

The reason for this being that difficulty attending to important social cues during social exchange results in deficits in social perception and social performance. Inattention during social interactions can often lead to missed social cues, resulting in misinterpretation of the communication partner’s message as well as inappropriate response (Semrud-Clikeman, 2010).

Future Research Recommendations

- It is recommended that further research be done to determine the most successful approach for treating these pragmatic challenges those with each subtype of ADHD.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the different subtypes of ADHD do affect pragmatic language differently.
- After careful review of the literature, I found that primarily inattentive ADHD is a greater predictor of social isolation, withdraw, social passivity, shyness, difficulty interpreting nonverbal cues, and difficulty interpreting emotions via facial expression (Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2010; Semrud-Clikeman, 2010; Sinzig, Morsch, & Lehmkhu, 2010).
- Primarily hyperactive ADHD is a greater predictor of problem behavior and difficulty with social performance (Semrud-Clikeman, 2010).

In addition, it is suggested that those with ADHD do possess appropriate pragmatic knowledge, however, properly applying that knowledge in real life situations is where difficulty arises (Green, Johnson, & Bretherton, 2013).

Knowing the root of these pragmatic issues can help guide future treatment for those with ADHD.

Ultimately, improving these social pragmatic skills can be beneficial to decreasing peer rejection of those with ADHD.

References


(References and links available upon request)