Parent Perceptions of Awareness of Children with ADHD


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Abstract

- Examined parents’ perceptions of the self-awareness of their child with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- Past research demonstrates children with ADHD exhibit positively biased self-perceptions (e.g., Henker et al., 2008).
- This is the first study to explore whether these biased self-perceptions are apparent to caregivers, and what aspects of self-awareness and response to feedback are most notable to parents.
- Results suggest that level of awareness depends on the circumstances in which the child is confronted with evidence of impairment.

Background, Rationale, & Purpose

- Despite noticeable difficulties, children with ADHD have been shown to overestimate their abilities compared to parent and teacher ratings (Owens et al., 2007).
- Some authors suggest that these biased self-perceptions are a product of adult bias (Strain et al., 2012) and of problematic measurement (Owens et al., 2007).
- Positively biased self-perceptions are associated with defensiveness, decreased ability to adjust behavior in response to feedback (McCue & Hsu, 2008; Whalen & Henker, 1992), and decreased response to behavioral intervention (Mikenas, Calhoun, & Abboud, 2003).
- There is limited understanding about why students with ADHD fail to report their difficulties, and the extent to which this failure to report impairment is observed in day-to-day situations.
- The purpose of this study was to use grounded theory methodology to fully investigate parents’ perceptions of the processes involved in their child understanding and reporting of their areas of difficulty, as well as their response to feedback. This provides insight about whether this bias is observable (and therefore not likely to be due to measurement), and how this affects the child and individuals around them.

Method

Participants

- Mothers (n = 12) of children with ADHD (grades 4-8, mean age 11.76)

Procedure

- Modified version of the Impaired Self-Awareness and Denial of Disability Scale (Peppler & Klief, 1990) used to guide a “think aloud” cognitive interview
- Engaged in grounded theory data analysis (Harry et al., 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)
- Began with open coding to generate initial coding framework; found commonalities across transcripts to develop axial and selective codes with the goal of generating a cohesive grounded theory to guide our understanding of parent perspectives.

Table Notes

- ISA = Impaired Self Awareness and DD = Denial of Disability Scale, calculated from a modified Impaired Self Awareness and Denial of Disability Scale (Peppler & Klief, 1990) used to guide cognitive interviews.
- Scores range from 1 (low impairment/denial) to 6 (high impairment/denial).
- PIB = Positive Illusory Bias, a difference score calculated by subtracting a parent's rating of their child's competence from the child's rating of competence. Can be interpreted as < -17 indicating child's underestimation, > .17 as child's overestimation (PIB), and -17 to .17 as indicating no discrepancy.

Results

Child Info | Indicators of Awareness | PIB | Domain of Impairment | Level of Awareness | Responses to Evidence of Impairment
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Charlotte (F) | 12.75 yrs | Combined | ISA = 3.27 | Academic: -0.17 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Makes Excuses External Feedback
Amelia (F) | 11.25 yrs | Inattentive | ISA = 4 | Academic: 1.0 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Argues/Bargains/Persuades Blames Others Improves Awareness Can’t see others perspectives Negative Reaction Doesn’t Care
Olive (M) | 10 yrs | Inattentive | ISA = 4.91 | Academic: 0.67 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Liam (M) | 11.08 yrs | ADHD-NOS | ISA = 2.82 | Academic: -0.33 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Violet (F) | 13.75 yrs | Inattentive | ISA = 2.27 | Academic: 0.33 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Benjamin (M) | 11.67 yrs | Inattentive | ISA = 2.55 | Academic: 0.17 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Jackson (M) | 9.75 yrs | Combined | ISA = 5.55 | Academic: -0.33 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Gabriel (M) | 12.25 yrs | Combined | ISA = 2.27 | Academic: -0.33 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Ethan (M) | 13.58 yrs | Combined | ISA = 3.27 | Academic: -0.67 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Noah (M) | 12.75 yrs | ADHD-NOS | ISA = 3.18 | Academic: 0.17 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Isaac (M) | 10.92 yrs | ADHD-NOS | ISA = 4.09 | Academic: 0.17 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness
Scarlet (F) | 11.33 yrs | Combined | ISA = 2.73 | Academic: 1.33 | Limited Awareness | Discounting Confused Makes Excuses Improves Awareness

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