



The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Depressive Symptoms in Children with ADHD

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Strengths in ADHD Lab

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INTRODUCTION

- Approximately 20-30% of children with ADHD experience depression. Many functional consequences of ADHD, such as impairments in peer relationships and academic performance, contribute to the development of depressive symptoms (Barkley et al., 2008).
- Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize, understand, and use emotions to solve problems (Denham et al., 1990).
- Ability EI refers to the ability to perceive, integrate, understand, and regulate emotions to promote personal growth (Mayer et al., 2001) while Trait EI refers to one's interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and adaptability to the environment (Bar-On & Parker, 2000).

CURRENT STUDY

- This study examines the relationship between EI and depressive symptoms in children with ADHD and investigates EI as a mediator of any association between depressive symptoms and ADHD.
- We hypothesize that ADHD is a significant predictor of depressive symptoms, and that this relationship is mediated by EI.

RESULTS

Depressive symptoms and EI in children with and without ADHD	Variable	ADHD M (SD)	Controls M (SD)	t	Cohen's d
	Depressive Symptoms	63.18 (14.55)	51.79 (10.38)	3.18**	.90
Trait EI	86.68 (8.98)	98.50 (14.21)	-3.47**	.99	
Ability EI	102.41 (12.85)	101.87 (11.09)	.16	.04	

** indicate $p < .05$

EI predicting levels of depressive symptoms	Predictor Variable	F	β	p
	Trait EI Total Score	15.53	-.47	< .001
Ability EI Total Score	.47	-.10	.496	

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

$n = 56$ families of children between the ages of 8 to 12.

Participants		ADHD	Controls
Age	M (SD)	10.51 (1.29)	10.00 (1.32)
Male	n (%)	13 (59.10)	20 (58.80)
Total	(n = 56)	22	34

MEASURES

ADHD	Conners-3 Rating Scale, Parent Short (Conners-3P[S])
Ability EI	Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test - Youth Research Version (MSCEIT-YRV)
Trait EI	Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version, Short (BarOn EQ-I:YV[S])
Depressive Symptoms	Children Depression Inventory-Second Edition, Self-Report Short Version (CDI2:SR[S])

PROCEDURE

Participants participated in a 3-hour session at the University of Calgary in exchange for a \$25 gift card.

DISCUSSION

- Children with ADHD reported lower Trait EI but comparable Ability EI to controls, suggesting that children with ADHD demonstrate age-appropriate knowledge of emotional abilities, but struggle with applying it to real-life situations.
- Behavioural and social-emotional interventions for children with ADHD may shift their focus from knowledge acquisition to skill implementation.
- Trait EI, but not Ability EI, significantly predicted depressive symptoms.
- ADHD significantly predicted level of depressive symptoms in children, and this relationship is significantly mediated by Trait EI, suggesting that EI may be considered as either a protective factor that helps children cope with adversity and negative experiences, or a global risk factor for internalizing symptoms and psychopathology.
- As ADHD and depression share many clinical correlates, EI may be conceptualized as a crucial transdiagnostic mechanism that predicts or explains the relationship between ADHD and depression.

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Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between ADHD and depressive symptoms as mediated by Trait EI

