
Negative Social Preference in Relation to Internalizing Symptoms Among Children with ADHD Predominantly Inattentive Type: Girls Fare Worse Than Boys.

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Despite distinct peer difficulties, less is known about the peer functioning of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) predominantly inattentive type (ADHD-I) in comparison to the peer functioning of children with ADHD combined type. Our purpose was to examine whether child sex moderated the relations between negative social preference and internalizing/externalizing problems in children with ADHD-I. Participants included 188 children diagnosed with ADHD-I (110 boys; ages 7-11; 54% Caucasian). Teacher ratings of the proportion of classmates who "like/accept" and "dislike/reject" the participating child were used to calculate negative social preference scores. Children, parents, and teachers provided ratings of anxious and depressive symptoms, and parents and teachers provided ratings of externalizing problems. Boys and girls did not differ on teachers' negative social preference scores. As hypothesized, however, the relation between negative social preference and internalizing symptoms was moderated by sex such that negative social preference was consistently and more strongly associated with internalizing symptoms among girls than in boys. In terms of externalizing problems, negative social preference was associated with teacher (but not parent) ratings, yet no moderation by child sex was found.

Negative social preference is associated with teacher-report of externalizing problems for both boys and girls with ADHD-I, whereas negative social preference is consistently associated with girls' internalizing symptoms across child, parent, and teacher ratings. Implications for future research and interventions are discussed.

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