



# Pathways From ADHD to Delinquency: The Role of Interpersonal Relationships and Self-Perception

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## Introduction

- The relationship between Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and later externalizing behavior has yet to be fully understood within the context of interpersonal relationships and self-perception.
- This proposed study examined whether parent-child relationship quality, deviant peer influence, and poor self-perception that follow from childhood Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Problems (ADHP) explain why children with ADHP are at elevated risk for delinquency in adolescence.
- The study formally and comprehensively tested these pathways and addressed methodological limitations of past studies on this topic.

## Hypotheses

- ADHP will predict poorer self-perception, greater exposure to deviant peer influence, and poorer parent-child relationship quality.
- Deviant peer influence, negative self-perception, and poor parent-child relationship quality will predict greater levels of delinquency.
- Deviant peer influence, negative self-perception, and poor parent children relationship quality will mediate the link between ADHP in childhood and delinquency in adolescence.

## Method

- **Participants:** Offspring of a nationally representative sample, the Children of the National Survey of Youth (CNLSY), at three time points using maternal and child reports.
- **IV:** ADHP
- **DV:** Delinquency
- **Mediators:** Deviant peer influence, self-perception, and parent-child relationship quality
- **Analysis:** Multilevel path analysis to allow for sibling comparison, between family tests, and mediation.

## Results

- **Mediation:** None of the hypothesized variables mediated the relationship between ADHP and delinquency.
- **Deviant Peer Influence:** was predictive of later delinquency both when siblings were compared and when children from different families were compared;  $b = 0.74, p < .001$ ;  $b = 0.95, p < .001$ , respectively .
- **Self-perception:** low levels of self-perception were predicted by earlier ADHP at the between-family level ,  $b = -10.16, p = .001$ . Low self-perception predicted later delinquency at the within-family level ,  $b = -0.003, p = .032$ .
- **Parent-Child Relationship Quality:** was not related to either delinquency or ADHP on either the between- or within-family level.

## Discussion

- These findings did not support the hypothesized pathways from ADHP to delinquency via deviant peer influence, self-perception, and parent-child relationship quality
- These findings suggest that self-perception and peer delinquency are risk factors for adolescent delinquency even when confounding due to family background is addressed.
- Risk for delinquency may be reduced by interventions that reduce exposure to deviant peers and/or improve self-perception.

