

Frequency and factors associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in patients with Sex Addiction

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Introduction: Sex addiction (SA) is excessive, uncontrolled sexual behavior that produces pleasure and/or relieves internal discomfort. Attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that begins in childhood and can lead to substance use disorders and behavioral addictions like gambling or gaming disorders. Little is known about the link between ADHD and SA. The objectives of our study were to determine the frequency of history of ADHD in a population of patients with AS, to explore factors associated with the presence of ADHD in this population and to compare patients with persistent ADHD in adulthood with those in whom ADHD was present only during childhood.

Methods: Sociodemographic, clinical, and SA data were collected in the EVALADD cohort through structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires. The sample used for the present study included 185 patients with SA. The presence of SA was assessed by the Sexual Addiction Screening Test and the presence of ADHD by the Wender-Utah Rating Scale Child and the Adult ADHD Self-report Scale.

Results: More than 35% of patients had a history of ADHD (66/185). Having an anxiety disorder, another addictive disorder, a high negative urgency score, a high novelty-seeking score, a high harm avoidance score, a low age of onset of SA, and a low education level were factors associated with a history of ADHD. Patients with persistent ADHD in adulthood had lower levels of self-directedness and perseverance.

Conclusion: The association between ADHD and SA is frequent. Factors associated with ADHD could alert the clinician on the presence of a dual disorder and prompt a search for ADHD when the patient initiates treatment for SA. Moreover, treatment strategies focused on the psychopathological characteristics associated with ADHD may also improve the symptomatology of SA, in the perspective of patient's recovery.

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