

# SELF-PERCEPTION OF CHILDREN WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

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## ABSTRACT

Self perception refers to the attributes or characteristics people have about themselves. Children's self perception evolves during early childhood and is shaped by their early experiences and interactions with others. Their self perception is related to their behavioural and academic adjustment. Research shows that children with ADHD have a poorer self perception when compared to Non ADHD children. This study is an attempt to explore the difference between ADHD children and Non ADHD children on various domains of Self perception, such as Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical appearance, Behavioural conduct, Global Self worth. The difference between the two groups in Self perception is highlighted and the need to enhance Self perception among children with ADHD is discussed in this paper.

**Key Words: Self Perception, ADHD children, Non ADHD children.**

## INTRODUCTION

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neuro behavioural disorder affecting 5% to 8% of school going population. It is more common among boys than girls. The main symptoms of ADHD are inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. These children find it difficult to pay attention to a task and sustain it for a period of time. During early and middle childhood, all children show some hyperactivity, but the degree of restlessness and disruptive behaviour is much more in children with ADHD. They are perpetually corrected for their misbehaviour and inattention by their parents and teachers. They are reprimanded and punished more often by their caregivers. They need to be constantly reminded to behave appropriately as they have inadequate executive functions. Often parents need to perform the task of executive functions till their own executive functions develop. This constant parental warnings and punishment takes a toll on their self image and many of these children begin to have a poor self esteem. Research shows that children with ADHD have poor self perception on all areas when compared to children with Non ADHD. However there are also studies which show how these children have inflated self perceptions, especially when their ratings are compared with their parents or teachers. Therefore they have

distorted self perceptions which eventually will not help them in their academic achievement and behavioural adjustment. Inaccurate self perceptions and poor self perceptions among children with ADHD lead to poor behavioural adjustment and therefore there is a need to enhance their self perception.

**Dumas and Pelletier, L(1999)** studied the self perceptions of ADHD children and Non ADHD children between 6 to 11 years. The Self-Perception Profile for Children was used to assess his or her self-perceptions in a number of dimensions including perceived scholastic competence, social competence, behavioural competence, and athletic competence. Children's score on each of these dimensions reflects how competent they perceive themselves to be. The results indicated that as a group, children with ADHD perceived themselves to be less competent than children without ADHD in all areas except athletic competence. Thus, the self-perceptions of children with ADHD were lower than those of other children with regard to how they felt about their behaviour, their ability to get along with others, and their ability to succeed in school. As in any study that compares children in different groups, not every child with ADHD rated their competence in these areas as being low. On an average, however, children with ADHD perceived themselves as less competent than the other counterparts.

Pisecco, Wresters, Swank, Silva, Baker (2001) studied the effect of academic self concept on ADHD and Antisocial Behaviours in early adolescence. Using structural equation modelling techniques, the researchers, evaluated the effect of Academic Self-concept (ASC) on the development of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and antisocial behaviours in early adolescence. The results indicated that ASC is an important construct that directly contributes to the development of antisocial behaviours rather than to symptoms of ADHD. The results also indicated that children's early history of behavioural problems and academic performance contribute to the development of a more robust understanding of the impact of ASC on the development of disruptive behaviours in early adolescence.

After reviewing the literature in this field, an attempt has been made to assess the self perception of Children with ADHD and compare them with Non ADHD children.

## **PROBLEM**

The present study aims to find the difference between children with ADHD and children without ADHD on the different domains of Self Perception, namely, Scholastic area, Social area, Athletic competence, Physical Appearance area, Behavioural conduct and Global self worth.

## **TEST MATERIAL**

1. Conner's Abbreviated Rating Scale to screen children for ADHD (Conners, 1973)
2. Self Perception Profile for Children (Susan Harter, 2012)

## HYPOTHESIS

There is a significant difference between ADHD children and Non ADHD children in their perception of their Scholastic competence, Social acceptance, Athletic competence, Physical Appearance area, Behavioural conduct and Global self worth.

## SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 100 children, which included 50 children with ADHD and 50 without ADHD. The age range of children was between 9 and 10 years. There were 40 boys and 10 girls in each group.

## PROCEDURE

The children were screened for ADHD using Conner's Abbreviated Rating Scale (1973) with the help of their class teachers. Children with a score of 15 and above were included in the sample. A consent letter was obtained from their parents and with the help of their parents the children were rated on the symptoms of ADHD using DSM IV-TR. These children were then matched with Non ADHD children for age, gender and socioeconomic status. Self perception was assessed by administering Susan Harter's Self Perception Profile for children (SPPC) to each child.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Mean and t values of ADHD children and Non ADHD children on Self perception.**

Self perception	ADHD			Non ADHD			t value		p
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	t value	P value	
Scholastic competence	2.86	0.64	50	3.09	0.54	50	1.94	0.057	
Social acceptance	2.82	0.51	50	3.06	0.53	50	2.3	0.021*	
Athletic competence	2.95	0.54	50	2.84	0.65	50	0.92	0.383	
Physical Appearance	2.81	0.56	50	3.09	0.58	50	2.45	0.017*	
Behavioural conduct	2.64	0.53	50	2.92	0.48	50	2.76	0.005**	
Global self	2.83	0.67	50	3.09	0.54	50	2.13	0.034*	

worth							
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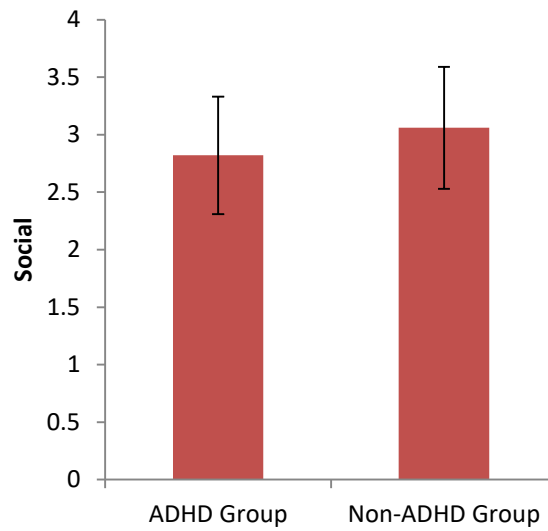
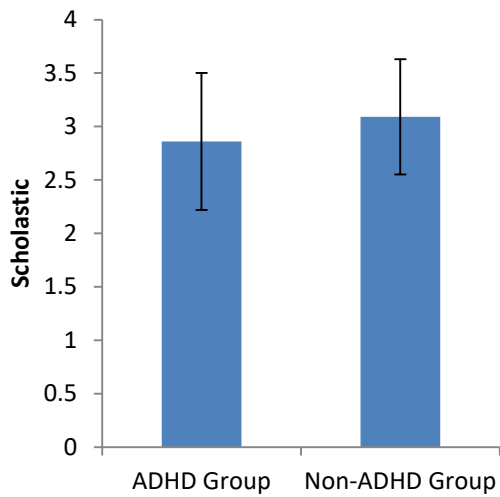
\*\* t significant at 0.01 level

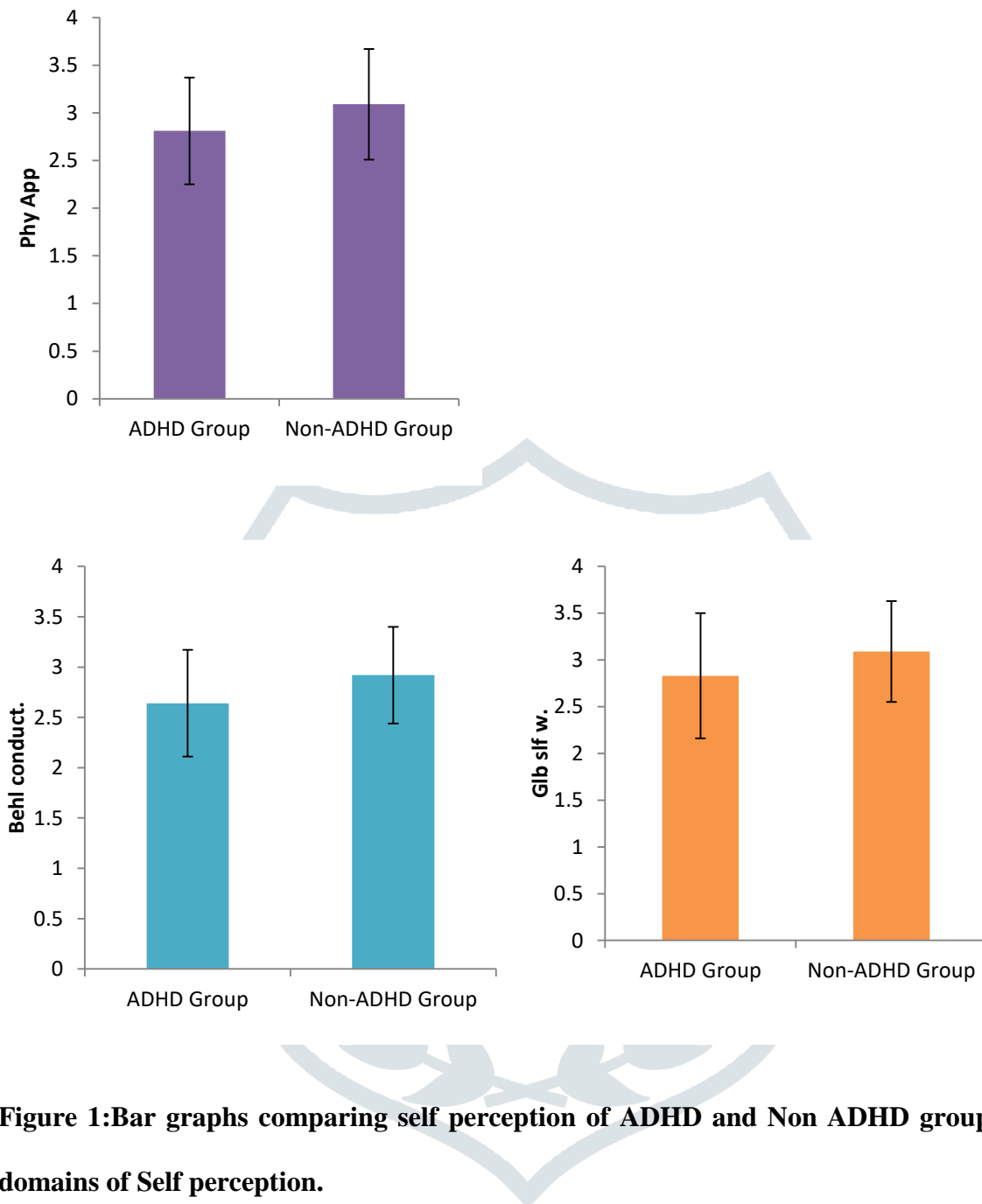
\* t significant at 0.05 level

The results in above show that the children with ADHD differ from Non ADHD children in four out of the six domains of Self perception. In the self perception of their Scholastic Competence, the children with ADHD perceive themselves as being less competent than the Non ADHD children. However the difference is not significant ( $t=1.94$ ,  $P=0.057$ ). In the Self perception of their Social acceptance, which caters to the child's social behaviour and acceptance from the peer group, the ADHD children express poorer acceptance and inadequate social behaviour. There is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, in this area, ( $t=2.3$ ,  $P=0.021$ ). In the Self perception of Athletic competence, the two groups (ADHD and Non ADHD) do not differ significantly ( $t=0.92$ ,  $P=0.383$ ). In the Self perception of Physical appearance, the children with ADHD have a poor self perception than Non ADHD children ( $t=2.45$ ,  $p=0.017$ ).

In the Self perception of their Behavioural conduct, the children with ADHD show a significantly poorer self perception than the Non ADHD children, ( $t=2.76$ ,  $p=0.005$ ). In the Self perception of global self worth, there is a significant difference between ADHD and Non ADHD children ( $t=2.13$ ,  $p=0.034$ ).

The bar graphs confirm the results that ADHD children have a poorer self perception than the Non ADHD children in Self perception of Social acceptance, Physical appearance, Behavioural conduct and Global self worth.





**Figure 1: Bar graphs comparing self perception of ADHD and Non ADHD groups on the six domains of Self perception.**

Self perception refers to attributes or characteristics of the self that are consciously acknowledged by the individual through language that is how one describes oneself. (Susan Harter, 1999). It refers to the child’s domain-specific judgements of his/her competence as well as global perception of his/her worth or esteem as a person. Several research studies show that children with ADHD differ from Non ADHD children on self perception. The present study also shows similar results.

In the Scholastic Competence area, the children with ADHD perceive themselves as being less competent than the Non ADHD children. However the difference is not significant. To a certain extent they feel they are somewhat good at school work, they think they are somewhat slow in finishing their school work and they often forget what they learn.

In the Social Acceptance area, which measures child's social behaviour and acceptance from the peer group, the ADHD children express poorer acceptance and inadequate social behaviour. They find it more difficult to make friends and feel they don't have the social skills to make friends. In the Athletic competence area, the two groups do not differ. The hyperactive nature of the children with ADHD probably keeps them agile and physically active and these children do well in sports and outdoor activities thus probably making them have a good image about themselves.

In the Physical appearance area, the children with ADHD have a poor self perception than Non ADHD children. Their clumsy physical movements draw parental criticism which probably leads to a poorer image of themselves. They often wish their hair or face looked different and they wish they were better looking.

In the Behavioural conduct area, the children with ADHD show a significant difference in These children often feel they don't do the right thing and get into trouble because of the things they do. They wish they don't do certain things but cannot help themselves.

In the Global Self Worth area, they are not happy with the way they do a lot of things, they are only somewhat happy with the kind of person they are. There is a significant difference between ADHD and Non ADHD.

The findings of the present study confirm that children with ADHD differed from Non ADHD children in the various domains self perception. The two groups differed significantly in four areas, namely Social acceptance, Physical appearance, Behavioural conduct and Global self worth. In the self perception of their Social acceptance, which caters to the child's social behaviour and acceptance from the peer group, the ADHD children expressed poorer acceptance and inadequate social behaviour. The two groups (ADHD and Non ADHD) did not differ significantly in the self

perception of Athletic competence. Probably, the hyperactive nature of the children with ADHD keep them agile and physically active and these children did well in sports and outdoor activities thus probably leading them have a good image about themselves. The children with ADHD have a poor self perception of Physical appearance when compared to Non ADHD children, which could be due to clumsy physical movements that ADHD children show and for which they are often criticised by their parents leading to a poor image of themselves. A low self perception of their Behavioural conduct among ADHD children can be considered as a positive sign as it shows that these children have a realistic view of their behaviour and actions and can be motivated to improve their behaviour. On Global Self Worth, the children with ADHD are not happy with the way they do things, and the associated problems of their hyperactive behaviour have probably lead these children to develop a poor self perception. Several research findings confirm that children with ADHD differ from Non ADHD children on self perception. One such study was carried out by Maia, Guardiano, Viana, Almeida, Guimaraes (2011) who compared the self perception of ADHD children with a control group, and found that the group of children with ADHD showed lower values in the different domains of self-perception, with a statistically significant difference in scholastic and behaviour self-perceptions. The findings of this study reaffirms that, children with ADHD have a scholastic and behavioural self-perception statistically inferior to other children of the same age, needing every possible support for a healthy perception of self.

## IMPLICATIONS

A healthy self perception or self image is positively correlated with personal happiness and success. Children with high self esteem do well in academics and other interpersonal activities. Children with poor self esteem do poorly in curricular and co curricular activities. Children with ADHD generally show poor self perception and poor adjustment in school and home. If left untreated, these children suffer from academic failure and behavioural disorders. Therefore there is a need to enhance their self perception



through appropriate counselling or psychotherapy. With improvement in self perception, they will show better behavioural adjustment.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The children with ADHD and Non ADHD do not significantly differ in their self perception of Scholastic competence.
2. The children with ADHD and Non ADHD differ significantly in their self perception of Social Acceptance.
3. The children with ADHD and Non ADHD do not differ significantly in their self perception of Athletic competence.
4. The children with ADHD and Non ADHD differ significantly in their self perception of Physical appearance.
5. The children with ADHD and Non ADHD differ significantly in their self perception of Behavioural conduct.
6. The children with ADHD and Non ADHD differ significantly in their self perception of Global self worth.

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