

Physical Activity Experiences of Boys With and Without ADHD

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Physical activity experiences of 12 age-matched boys with and without attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were explored by converging information from Test of Gross Motor Development-2 assessments and semistructured interviews. The knowledge-based approach and the inhibitory model of executive functions, a combined theoretical lens, enabled the description of similarities and differences in experiences that emerged during interviews. Skill assessments indicated boys with ADHD were not as proficient movers as their peers without ADHD. Thematic analysis revealed that boys with ADHD reported playing with friends, paid little attention to detail, possessed superficial knowledge about movement skills, and expressed many negative feelings about physical activity. Task-specific interventions and a wider range of mixed methods research are recommended for future research studies in ADHD.

Excessive activity and persons with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have a long-standing historical connection. The German author, Heinrich Hoffman, wrote one of the earliest known references to ADHD in 1865 with his poem "Fidgety Phil" about a boy with behavior and attention problems who could not stay still (Miyahara, Möbs, & Doll-Tepper, 1995). Barkley (1998) stated that excessive activity was a common symptom of the disorder for most of the 1900s and important to understand hyperactivity, the term used for ADHD during the time period of 1960–1970, because a state of constant motion was a key element of the accepted definition of hyperactivity at that time (Chess, 1960). The definition states, "emphasized activity as the defining feature of the disorder, as other scientists of the time would also do" (Barkley, 1998, p. 9). Greater emphasis, however, has been placed on deficits in attention (Douglas, 1999) and a lack of self-control to define ADHD over the past few decades (Barkley, 1997, 1998).

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