



## SCHOOL-RELATED PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN WITH ADHD: A STUDY OF PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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### ABSTRACT

Relative to the voluminous research literature in psychology and education, ADHD has been the most studied of all psychological disorders in children and is one of the most common reasons for referring children to psychiatric and mental health agencies. ADHD is currently recognized as a disorder with behavioral, emotional, educational and cognitive aspects that are manifested in some degree in a child with ADHD. It is quite astonishing to realize that despite decades of research in this field, children with ADHD continue to encounter significant difficulties to succeed in schools. In order to address the various issues related to ADHD the investigator evinced a keen interest in identifying major school-related problems of students with ADHD. The investigator conducted a descriptive survey among 50 secondary school teachers selected through stratified random sampling technique giving due representation to locality and type of management of school. Data was collected using semi-structured interview for teachers and ADHD symptom checklist. Percentage analysis was used for data interpretation. Practitioners in the fields of psychology and education must increase their understanding of the limitations of students with this disorder to provide a pleasant school experience to affected students. The investigator hopes that this paper will help to strengthen the hands of teachers, parents and other important stake holders.

**KEYWORDS :** ADHD, school-related problems, perception, secondary school teachers

### INTRODUCTION

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a psychiatric disorder or neurobehavioral disorder characterized by significant difficulties either of inattention and/or hyperactivity and impulsiveness. Attention deficit (the inability to attend to a task) and hyperactivity (high rates of purposeless movement) are frequently cited as characteristics of children with learning disabilities. Children are diagnosed as having ADHD according to criteria found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) by American Psychological Association, 1994). "The essential feature of ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development." (APA, 1994). There are three subtypes of the disorder: predominantly inattentive (ADHD-PI), predominantly hyperactive-impulsive (ADHD-HI) or the two combined (ADHD-C), which shows all three difficulties.

Prevalence of ADHD ranges from 3% to 5% of all school-age children (APA 1994). A typical classroom will have from 1-3 children either diagnosed as ADHD or presenting problems typically associated with ADHD. A random national sample found that approximately 5% of all elementary students screened showed ADHD. 25%-50% of children with ADHD are also identified as having a learning disability and 15% to 20% of children with learning disabilities have ADHD.

### NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

On reviewing the research literature in educational research, investigator realized that there are many unanswered questions about ADHD, and there is more we need to learn about how ADHD affects people throughout their life. As students with ADHD move from elementary school to middle school, they face a plethora of developmental hurdles. Secondary school settings are characteristically more demanding with respect to discipline, academic skills and self-organization. Secondary school students are assumed to have developed self-organizational skills; even then this assumption may not be valid for ADHD students. Although there has been substantial progress in ADHD research over the past decades, significant work remains to be done in a number of key areas. Since students with ADHD occupy an important place in school there is a need to probe the major school-related problems of students with ADHD.

### OBJECTIVES

- To find out the major school-related problems that challenge children with ADHD
- To elicit suggestions from teachers to reduce inappropriate

classroom behaviour of students with ADHD

### METHODOLOGY

In the present study, descriptive survey method was employed in order to know the perception of secondary school teachers regarding the major school-related problems of secondary school students with ADHD.

### Sample

The population for the present study consisted of secondary school teachers. The investigator conducted a normative survey among 50 secondary school teachers from 12 schools in Ernakulam district, Kerala state. The investigator used stratified random sampling because the population consists of a number of strata such as locality of the school ( rural/urban) and type of management of the school (government/ aided/ unaided).

### Tools used for the study

Data was collected using self-constructed interview schedule for teachers and ADHD symptom checklist. In the semi-structured Interview schedule based on DSM-V, teachers were asked about the problems faced by ADHD students in school-settings. Items in the Interview schedule covered areas such as problems encountered by ADHD students in school with respect to discipline, academic performance, peer interactions, oppositional behaviours etc. The ADHD symptom checklist based on DSM-V consists of 18 items (9 for inattention and 9 for hyperactivity/ impulsivity). The tools were subjected to expert validation based on selected criteria by a term of experts including supervising teacher, research scholars, school teachers and ADHD experts.

### Procedure used for data collection

The investigator contacted the Heads of the selected schools and fixed a schedule for administering the tools. Before administering the tools, the objectives and importance of the study were explained to the participants to ensure their full co-operation. First teachers were interviewed, and the checklist was given after the interview.

### Statistical Technique

The quantification of data obtained by the interview was achieved through tabulation and counting. The totals were counted into percentage. Percentage analysis was used for data interpretation.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

The primary symptoms associated with ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. The relative degree and pattern of

these primary symptoms differ in every child. Not all children with ADHD will present these symptoms in the same way or to the same degree. The investigator identified major problem areas in ADHD students.

**Table 1: Percentage analysis of school- related problems of students with ADHD**

Sl.No:	Problem areas of ADHD students	Percentage of teacher response
1	Inattention	82%
2	Hyperactivity	73%
3	Impulsivity	92%
4	Oppositional defiant disorder	65%
5	Emotionally volatile behaviour	72%
6	Risk taking behaviour	51%
7	Poor academic performance	74%
8	Anxiety and depression	34%
9	Forgetfulness	41%
10	Aggression	64%

They are inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, oppositional behavior, risk taking behavior, emotionally volatile behavior and poor academic performance.

- **Inattention:** 82% teachers said that ADHD students have difficulty attending to teachers because they often pay attention to everything. They fail to pay attention when directions are given by the teacher. They attend only to the first part or last part of directions given by the teacher. They are easily distracted by sounds of closing door, or a child walking down the aisle
- **Hyperactivity:** Fidgeting and out-of-seat behavior are common in children with ADHD. 73% teachers responded that classroom behaviour of children with ADHD showed that levels of inappropriate behaviour were consistently higher on days when students did not have recess, compared with days when they did have recess.
- **Impulsivity:** ADHD individuals have difficulty inhibiting impulsivity. They say or do what pops into their minds without first thinking about the consequences of their action. They blurt out answers before thinking. 92% teachers said that affected students have difficulty staying focused on a school task for an extended period of time compared with other children in the classroom. They easily get bored in classroom and fail to finish their assignments. A child with ADHD often find nearly impossible in taking turn, often resulting in playing out of turn, pushing in line or being impulsive while waiting for his or her turn. They can be disruptive, provocative and become aggressive waiting for their turn. 64% Teachers pointed out that boys are more likely to be aggressive than girls. Learning to take turns is a social skill influenced by a number of factors.
- **Oppositional Defiant Disorder:** ADHD students exhibit noncompliant and oppositional behaviours. They show noncompliance with authority figure. Many students receive punishments, suspensions or are sent to the principal's office for disruptive behavior. Some tend to exhibit physically or verbally aggressive behavior towards those who irritate them. Because of their impulsive nature they are sometimes involved in breaking or damaging things. 65% teachers noted that ADHD children get involved in arguments with others and show poor temper control. They are argumentative towards peers and authority figures.
- **Emotionally volatile behaviour:** ADHD students experience unpredictable moods that often go up and down. Therefore they are at greater risk for interpersonal conflict in school with peers. They show little ability to control their emotions and often express in extreme and raw ways. Due to the conduct problems it is very difficult for them to maintain friendship and face peer rejection. Affected children can share and play cooperatively with a classmate; however they can easily become upset and no longer wish to share. Driven by the

moment, they will grab a toy or book away from a classmate. 72% teachers pointed out that ADHD students show low tolerance for frustration, irritability, quickness to upset and react violently to those who irritate them.

- **Risk taking behavior:** As ADHD students are driven by the moment, they show reckless behaviours such as climbing to the top of a tree or repeatedly run downstairs even after repeated warnings not to do so. 51% teachers responded that ADHD students are accident prone compared to other children. They often get hurt or injured. They repeat risky behavior even after an accident. They have an urge to experience risk.
- **Poor academic performance:** Teachers reported that children with ADHD underachieve academically compared to their classmates. 74% teachers responded that ADHD is associated with academic failure. It is due to their poor study habits, incomplete notes, assignments and tests. This inconsistency in academic performance is due to inherent difficulties in impulse control, attention capacity, and hyperactivity. 41% teachers said that ADHD students are often forgetful and fail to remember daily school activities. They forget to take home books and other belongings and often lose important items.

**Table II: Percentage analysis of DSM-ADHD symptoms checklist among secondary school students**

Sl.NO:	ADHD symptoms	Percentage of teacher response
1	Difficulty in sustaining attention	82%
2	Easily distracted	82%
3	Loses belongings	40%
4	Blurt out answers	92%
5	Difficulty in organization	51%
6	Careless mistakes	82%
7	Avoids activities which require sustained attention	82%
8	Doesn't listen when spoken directly	82%
9	Fidgets/ squirms	92%
10	restlessness	73%
11	Cannot wait for turn	73%
12	forgetful	82%
13	Incomplete classworks, notes etc.	82%
14	Excess talking	73%
15	Difficulty to engage in activities quietly	73%
16	Leaves seat in situations where being seated is expected	92%
17	Interrupts or intrudes others	92%
18	Always "driven by a motor"	73%

**Table III: Suggestions given by teachers to reduce inappropriate classroom behaviour of ADHD students**

Sl. NO:	Suggestions	Percentage of response
1	Repetition of instruction	34%
2	Reducing noise and distractions in class	64%
3	Provide recess period	73%
4	Games to inculcate social skills	27%
5	Gestures of teacher	78%
6	Positive attitude of teacher towards ADHD students	76%
7	Communication with parents	84%
8	Co-operation of parents	31%
9	Increased recess period and physical exercise	42%
10	Constant reminders and clear instructions	81%
11	Talking to child	21%
12	Small class size	60%

- 34% teachers suggested that repetition of instructions alone is not likely to increase the attention of children with ADHD. Classrooms are often noisy and distracting environments.
- 64% teachers suggested that methods for reducing noise and other distractions should be studied.
- 78% suggested that teacher related factors can have profound impact on students. For instance, gesture used by teachers can influence performance of students with ADHD.
- 76% responded that teachers who demonstrate patience, knowledge of intervention techniques and a positive attitude towards children with special needs can have a positive impact on these students.
- 84% teachers suggested that teachers need to communicate on a regular basis with parents of ADHD students. Children require close communication and monitoring between parent and teacher. Teachers responded that parents are instrumental in providing teacher with information regarding changes in routine or other stressors at home.
- 31% teachers responded that parents often react with disbelief and present itself as anger blame or denial when teacher expresses her suspicions that child has ADHD. It is very important to ensure the co-operation of parents to bring out desired changes in students.
- 42% teachers suggested that increased use of recess and physical exercise might reduce over activity.
- 81% teachers responded that ADHD students need more reminders, explicit instruction, and monitoring than unaffected children to stop a negative behavior.
- 21% teachers suggested that to minimize the negative interactions the teacher need to talk to the child over the importance of cooperation and sharing.
- 68% teachers suggested that small classes of approximately 8 to 15 students have been beneficial for younger children and children with special needs.

## CONCLUSION

Meeting the needs of students with ADHD presents significant challenges to teachers. The hallmark characteristics such as inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity often affect the school decorum, relationship with peers and academic performance. The major findings of the study points out the need for addressing the school-related problems that challenge children with ADHD in schools and suggestions elicited by teachers to reinforce appropriate social behaviours in them. Despite decades of research on diagnosis, prevalence, and short-term treatment effects, we are still unaware of means and ways to improve academic and educational outcomes of children with ADHD. Educational interventions for children with ADHD must be studied. The investigator recommends large-scale, prospective studies to evaluate the impact of educational interventions.

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