

Abstract

Background: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is becoming an increasingly important research topic among adult ADHD clients. It is likely to be one of the risk factors for developing addiction. Most of the available research examines ADHD in individuals who are already being addressed as part of treatment in an addiction treatment service. Yet, these researches show that hyperactivity disorder does occur in persons with addiction issues. At the same time, hyperactive disorder is likely to be behind many of the complications in the progression of addiction interventions, increases the risk of early treatment drop-out, and places a greater burden on both clients and staff.

Aim: The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of substance use among adults diagnosed with ADHD, i.e. whether this specific group uses substances and to what extent. A complementary aim was to provide insight into what effects substance users reflect and what may be motivating their continued substance use. Finally, the thesis aims to compare these results with the general population.

Methods: An online questionnaire inspired by the European Model Questionnaire was used to collect data, which contains a set of questions measuring the prevalence of substance use at lifetime, 12-month and 30-day time points. Data analysis was performed using descriptive-statistical methods.

Results: Adults diagnosed with ADHD have been found to have a higher prevalence of substance use than the general population for most substance use disorders. Marijuana, cocaine, and kratom were the most commonly used illicit substances in this cohort. Significant percentages of users were also found of alcohol, sleeping pills, and tobacco. Heroin and LSD use, on the other hand, showed very low levels. The most common effects reported after use were relaxation, mental well-being, calming, better concentration and better sleep.

Conclusion and recommendation: Due to the small number of respondents, the method of selection of respondents and other limitations, it is not possible to generalize the results obtained. The study provides an insight into the understudied population of people with hyperactivity disorder and shows that the issue of substance use as a possible form of self-medication is indeed relevant here. This work can serve as a basis for larger-scale research that would qualify for generalization to a core population.. The findings may be useful in prevention efforts targeting people with ADHD, as well as in follow-up work with these clients.

Key words: Prevalence, use, ADHD, addictive substances