

# ADHD and Problem Behaviour: A Neuropsychological Approach

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**Staša Lalatović<sup>1</sup>** (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9701-2117>)

*University of Belgrade, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation*

**Branislava Popović Ćitić** (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1076-5838>)

*University of Belgrade, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation*

**Nadežda Krstić** (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6525-2669>)

*University of Belgrade, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation*

**Viktor Pavlović** (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0312-1548>)

*Institute of Mental Health, Belgrade*

*University of Singidunum, Faculty of Media and Communication*

Evidence suggests that Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) occurs more frequently among children and adolescents with problem behaviour than in the general population. This has often led to the conclusion that ADHD represents a specific risk factor for the development of various forms of delinquent behaviour. Rather than accepting this assumption uncritically, a more precise understanding of the complex relationship between ADHD and problem behaviour requires an examination of the underlying neurocognitive mechanisms involved in the emergence and functioning of both ADHD and different forms of problem behaviour. This paper places particular emphasis on executive and verbal functions, which have proven especially important in clarifying this association, as well as on the domain of social cognition, whose relevance in this context has received increasing attention. In addition, neurobiological mechanisms that may contribute to the co-occurrence of ADHD and conduct disorder (CD) are discussed. Beyond the conclusion that ADHD in itself constitutes a (limited) risk factor primarily for impulsive, less violent forms of problem behaviour, this paper underscores the importance of neuropsychological monitoring of children and adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Particular attention should be directed toward individuals with CD, given the implications of such monitoring for the further development of therapeutic approaches.

**Keywords:** ADHD, problem behaviour, conduct disorder, neuropsychology

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1 stasalalatovic@fasper.bg.ac.rs

## Introduction

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder which is characterized by a persistent pattern (lasting at least six months) of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity, which has a direct negative effect on the academic, work or social functioning and which surpasses the limits of normal variability expected for the given age and level of intellectual functioning (World Health Organization, 2022). According to the previous revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), which is still applied in the domestic clinical context, this disorder corresponds to the diagnosis of hyperkinetic disorder (World Health Organization, 2016). ADHD increases the risk of different forms of problem behavior (Sibley et al., 2011; Pratt et al., 2002; Wojciechowski, 2021), and the prevalence of ADHD symptoms is significantly increased in delinquent populations (Baggio et al., 2018; Young et al., 2015). Starting from childhood, a high degree of comorbidity between ADHD and disruptive behavior disorders is observed (Elia et al., 2008; Taurines et al., 2010). Children categorized as ADHD + Conduct Disorder – CD/Conduct-dissocial Disorder are, as such, at the highest risk of developing later delinquent forms of behavior, compared to children without a diagnosis, with a diagnosis of ADHD, and even ADHD + Oppositional Defiant Disorder – ODD (Sibley et al., 2011). Later in life, individuals with ADHD are more prone to committing various kinds of violations compared to those without ADHD (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2009). Accordingly, individuals with ADHD are at higher risk of being arrested, convicted, and detained during adolescence and adulthood (Mohr-Jensen & Steinhausen, 2016). The estimated prevalence of ADHD in prison populations is 25,5%, with percentage values for younger and older prisoners being on a similar level (30,1% and 26,2%) (Young et al., 2015). Additionally, an ADHD diagnosis is considered a risk factor for the occurrence of recidivism (Philipp-Wiegmann et al., 2018). At the same time, ADHD is considered to be a heterogeneous disorder that encompasses different clinical types, including predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive-impulsive, and combined types (World Health Organization, 2022). In this context, individuals who belong to a predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type exhibit the highest rate of criminal activity, and the likelihood of being caught is higher in comparison to other types. The thoughtlessness that is characteristic of this type of ADHD is additionally confirmed by the finding that these individuals are most commonly perpetrators of quick criminal acts such as robberies and thefts (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2009).

However, one should be careful in drawing conclusions and cautious in generalizing obtained results. The correlation – in this case between ADHD profiles and different types of problem behavior – does not imply causation (Lynam & Henry, 2004). Also, high comorbidity with all forms of psychopathology, including neurodevelopmental, internalizing, and

externalizing disorders, is almost certainly a feature of ADHD regardless of its basic form (see, for example, Gnanavel et al., 2019). Accordingly, a child with isolated difficulties with impulsivity, attention, or motor activity is most likely an exception rather than the rule. Additionally, the obtained values for such relationships vary from study to study. We encounter the same challenges that we observe when analyzing comorbid disorders of ADHD when it comes, for example, to juvenile delinquent behavior (Beaudry et al., 2021).

How much can understanding the basic cognitive structure of the disorder and its neurobiological basis help us in disentangling the complexity of the inherent connection of ADHD and problem behavior, especially in the context of understanding the origin, nature, and course of delinquent behavior? The potential importance of the neuropsychology of ADHD in clarifying the different categories of problem behavior in both young and old (from behavior contrary to moral norms to violent behavior) was recognized many decades ago. The neurocognitive (“neuropsychological”) deficits that form the backbone of ADHD (impulsivity-hyperactivity to a greater degree than inattentiveness) represent a risk factor for the development of several forms of problem behavior (Pratt et al., 2002; Retz et al., 2021). At the same time, disorders related to neurocognitive maturing, many out of the range characteristic for ADHD, have shown to be significant predictors of problem behavior, especially the kind seen in adult populations (Young & Cocallis, 2021), though some of them are closely related to what we consider “basic cognitive deficit”, that is, the core of ADHD (Barkley, 1997). Last but not least, considering many authors have described ADHD as one of the possible developmental starting points toward later delinquency (Babinski et al., 1999; Patterson et al., 2000), understanding the nature of this relationship is important from an early intervention standpoint (Pratt et al., 2002).

The idea of behavior that is at odds with social and legal societal norms, even outside the scope of what is described as delinquent, can include numerous and completely heterogeneous behavioral dimensions which are additionally dependent on an individual’s age, and as such can equally incorporate cases that are vaguely indicated as “bad behavior” in early childhood along with serious criminal acts in youth or adult age. Attempts to unravel and more precisely demarcate such behavior by adding distinct psychopathological categories to large classification systems have resulted only in partial gains. As Michael Rater previously very precisely stated about the criteria for the then valid DSM-III, a child that exhibits symptoms of “socially disruptive” behavior could be (even excluding all children that could be subsumed under any of the, in that time, ADD – “attention deficit disorder” diagnoses) classified into at least 10 other diagnostic categories (Hirshbein, 2021). Problems such as these persist even today, though at a smaller scale, while every glance into the past contains even more challenges. The criteria of “large” classification systems (World Health Organization, along with DSM), though now almost equal, defined participants of studies on which empirical

evidence is based differently at different times. Additionally, parts of many studies lean on criteria borrowed from the field of criminology. Hence, as blurring the line between a “problematic child” and an “incipient delinquent” can, in this context, have a unifying function (Wright, 2017), we’ve decided on a wider conceptualization of such behavior when analyzing literature. This is why we made the choice to use the term “problem behavior” as a wider conceptual frame that allows the integration of differently defined issues in behavior that are connected to ADHD, including situations where the source material did not precisely define a diagnosis or category of behavior. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that a majority of recent studies (compared to longitudinal studies that began earlier) explicitly rely on the narrow definition of CD and that this, in spite of the obvious benefits, does not always imply the (expected) consistency among samples. Split between terminology that is either overly broad or overly specific, we’ve decided to use the criteria as they were formulated originally, while striving to clarify the chosen broad term of “problem behavior” wherever possible or necessary. In Table 1, we’ve given an overview of all forms of “problem behavior” used in this article, in accordance with the terms used in the original literature.

**Table 1**  
*Overview of terms used in this article*

Term	Definition	Reference
problem behavior	a series of deviations from societal norms defined as problematic, which can lead to different forms of sanctions and are associated with negative consequences or difficulties for the individual	Jessor, 2016
disruptive disorders	a group of conditions characterized by aggression issues, impulse control issues, and difficulties with self-control, whereupon the behavior often puts others at risk and breaks societal norms	Milone & Sesso, 2022
conduct disorder	a repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior that violates the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate cultural or societal norms, rules, or laws	World Health Organization, 2022
oppositional defiant disorder	a persistent pattern of markedly defiant, disobedient, provocative, or vindictive behavior that occurs more frequently than is typical for individuals of comparable age and developmental level	World Health Organization, 2022
delinquent behavior	a wide range of behaviors, ranging from socially unacceptable behavior that occurs in early childhood to violent and destructive illegal behavior	Dryfoos, 1990
criminal behavior	behavior that represents the breaking of a criminal law	Sutherland et al., 1992

## Cognitive deficits in ADHD and problem behavior

Numerous warnings had already accumulated until the early 1980s about the existence of “neuropsychological” deficits in adolescent and older delinquent populations. There is a proportionally higher rate of occurrence of neurological soft signs (for example, difficulties in fine or gross motor function, muscle imbalance, presence of associated movements), but also speech impediments (Wolff et al., 1982), cognitive profiles indicating frontal lobe disorder (Yeudall et al., 1982), learning disabilities (McKay & Brumback, 1980). At the same time, in the context of neuropsychological profile, associations are made between delinquency and hyperactivity, whether in the sense of connecting criminal activity with severe symptoms of hyperactivity (Virkkunen & Nuutila, 1976), or by stating that delinquents that are simultaneously hyperactive, apart from their infractions beginning at an earlier age and being more severe than for non-hyperactives, tend to exhibit significantly more precursors of neurodevelopmental disorder (Offord et al., 1979). The data is further confirmed by a neuropsychological study of a sample of nearly seven hundred thirteen-year-olds, whose results show that in the domain of verbal, visuospatial and visuomotor skills adolescent delinquents score significantly lower than non-delinquent counterparts, while those who are simultaneously diagnosed with ADD (a category later replaced by ADHD) have even larger deficits in addition to verbal memory issues (Moffitt & Silva, 1988). Further study of this group showed that the lack of these verbal skills was, in fact, most strongly correlated to delinquent behavior (Moffitt et al., 1994). Additional testing of executive functions on the same sample has shown significant developmental deviations in groups of delinquents with hyperactivity, but not in groups that exhibited only delinquency or only ADD (Moffitt & Henry, 1989). Apart from pointing to the role of neuropsychological deficits as a risk factor for the occurrence of delinquent behavior, Moffitt’s study highlights the two cognitive domains potentially most important for understanding different forms of problem behavior, and their association with ADHD – language and executive functions.

**Verbal functions.** Lower scores on verbal assessment tasks are commonly found among youth with problem behavior (Chow et al., 2022; Moffitt & Silva, 1988; Wolff et al., 1982) and stand out as robust predictors of delinquent outcomes (Moffitt et al., 1994; Walters, 2022). Additionally, it has been shown that delinquents with a history of ADD exhibit more severe verbal skill deficits compared to groups of “pure” delinquents (Moffitt & Silva, 1988). Taking into account these findings and data showing lower verbal reasoning in children with ADHD (Andreou et al., 2005), it is no surprise that many authors have posed the question of whether the connection between a deficit in verbal skills and CD could be explained by a comorbidity of CD and ADHD (Smith et al., 2011). The results of the study by Smith and colleagues (2011) suggest

that low verbal skills are not a significant risk factor for CD after controlling for ADHD. Further, it has been shown that there is a significant covariance between verbal abilities and CD, but the majority of this covariance is related to influences shared with ADHD.

Nevertheless, numerous studies about language impairments suggest a possible role in generating problem behavior, some even postulating a left-hemisphere dysfunction in this population (Lynam & Henry, 2004). Luria (Luria, 1961) also points out the significance of orderly language development for establishing adequate behavioral regulation. According to his findings, the abstract and generalizing function of speech is an essential instance in achieving behavioral self-regulation, ranging from the inhibition of simple behavioral patterns to more complex schemes. Luria's work with children with intellectual impairments has confirmed the importance of speech for behavioral regulation, especially its' role in analyzing new situations and connecting previous and current information to adapt behavior to existing rules (Luria, 1963 as cited by Loney et al., 1998). In accordance with this idea, a deficit in verbal ability has a possible (negative) effect on private/inner speech actualization, which is an important factor of behavioral regulation (Loney et al., 1998). Later studies confirm the role of language skills in establishing self-regulation, with self-regulation emerging as a mediator between verbal abilities and later behavioral outcomes characterized by insufficient attention and hyperactivity (Petersen et al., 2015). Additionally, a deficit in verbal ability can compromise the optimal anticipation of the consequences of future actions, thus encouraging problem behavior (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). On a neurobiological level, a dysfunction of the left-hemisphere verbal capacities by the frontal lobe, which is otherwise presumed to have an effect on the adequate guidance of behavior, is possible (Miller, 1988).

**Executive functions.** Deficits like impulsivity, which characterize ADHD, are also a part of the neuropsychological profile of underage delinquents. The application of more refined measures of executive functions, along with higher levels of impulsivity, reveals various difficulties in this domain – for instance, difficulties in shifting and maintaining attention, working memory functioning, and/or planning problem solving (Patiz & Bayraktar, 2023). Offending behavior in adults is also clearly associated with executive dysfunction (Griffith et al., 2024).

The concept of self-control (somewhat closely related to the previously described notion of self-regulation), presumed to be highly dependent on the status of the executive system, could represent one of the key points in the explanation of this association. As early as Gottfredson and Hirschi (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), in their general theory of crime, a low level of self-control is identified as a key variable for explaining criminal behavior. Individuals with a low degree of self-control are described as “tendency to

respond to tangible stimuli in the immediate environment, to have a concrete *here and now* orientation” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 89). According to the authors, such a cognitive mechanism is the result of early familial patterns of behavior control, excluding potential effects of biological factors on self-control, which are redefined by later studies (Jackson & Beaver, 2013). The ability of self-control is examined through the lens of executive mechanisms, with the prefrontal regions of the brain as its neurobiological substrate (Beaver et al., 2007). Early neuropsychological findings about behavioral changes in individuals with prefrontal cortex damage indicate that these parts of the cerebral cortex have a role in self-control (Konow & Pribram, 1970; O’Driscoll & Leach, 1998), which is the basis of what is described in literature as *pseudopsychopathy* (Koenigs & Tranel, 2006). More recent studies confirm the link between the dorsomedial prefrontal cortex and self-control ability (Jin et al., 2024).

If we view self-control as the process of prioritizing abstract rather than concrete motivations, impulse inhibition is one of the more significant mechanisms of realizing this process (Fujita, 2011). In fact, the intentional inhibition of one’s own actions represents the core of various abilities that all fall within the scope of self-control (Schel et al., 2014). *Inhibition*, as one of the core components of executive functions (Miyake et al., 2000), stands out as an important cognitive mechanism not only for understanding ADHD (Barkley, 1997; Barkley, 2010), but also for understanding various forms of problem behavior (Oosterlaan et al., 1998; Prateeksha & Roopesh, 2014). Apart from earlier neurophysiological data (Quay, 1993, 1997), more recent studies of brain function imaging (Normal et al., 2016) and characteristic errors on neuropsychological tests in subjects with ADHD (e.g. Epstein et al., 2001; Senkowski et al., 2024; Wodka et al., 2007) as well as those involved in different kinds of delinquent behavior (e.g. Borrani et al., 2019; Patiz & Bayraktar, 2023) indicate that the inactivity of inhibitory functions is a “shared” deficient cognitive mechanism among the aforementioned conditions. Indirectly, the same is indicated by their results in tasks of delayed gratification and working memory (Bayard et al., 2020).

Several theories regarding the genesis of disinhibition as the fundamental cognitive deficit in the aforementioned conditions have been suggested, the largest number of which rely on Gray’s model, which postulates three basic systems with their own behavioral and neurobiological substrates (Gray, 1970; Gray, 1991; Gray and McNaughton, 2003). Building upon the existing model, Newmall and Wallace (Newman & Wallace, 1993) consider the basis of disinhibited behavior through the lens of the *behavioral activation system* [BAS] and the *behavioral inhibition system* [BIS] from Gray’s model, taking into account the interaction between goal-oriented behavior (via BAS) and the integration of unexpected, but potentially relevant information from the environment (via BIS). In other words, the authors postulate a deficit in

response modulation, a process necessary for self-regulation, characterized by difficulties in the automatic shifting of attention during goal-oriented behavior for the purpose of assimilating relevant environmental information, as one of the possible explanations of “disinhibitory psychopathology”. Studies published at different time periods support the hypothesized role of BAS overactivation and response modulation deficits in understanding the cognitive deficits characteristic of ADHD and various forms of conduct disorders (Gomez & Corr, 2010; Mitchell & Nelson-Gray, 2006; Quay, 1993; Walker et al., 1991).

Though there is a certain degree of overlap, both on the behavioral and neural level, between ADHD and other categories of problem behavior (i.e., ODD/CD), there are differences that make them independent entities with their own inherent pathophysiological and neurocognitive mechanisms (Bayard et al., 2020; Rubia, 2011). In the context of considering frontal control functions, a more pronounced abnormality of those neural structures involved in supporting “hot” executive functions (for instance, affective decision-making or the ability to delay gratification), primarily the amygdala, has proven to be specifically associated with ODD/CD symptomatology compared to ADHD (Bayard et al., 2020; Noordemer et al., 2016; Rubia, 2011), which is also recorded on testing material (Hobson et al., 2011). These differences have important implications for planning further interventions, especially keeping in mind the neurodevelopmental nature of ADHD and the early onset of symptoms, which is why ADHD can be viewed as a primary candidate for early intervention (for examples of some intervention possibilities, see Krstić, 2002). Due to this, programmes such as “Reasoning and Rehabilitation 2 for ADHD” [R&R2ADHD], whose primary goal is reducing future behavioral problems, precisely recognize the importance of targeting the individual’s neurocognitive profile (Young & Ross, 2007) and report initial successes (Young et al., 2017, Young et al., 2018).

### **Social cognition, ADHD, and problem behavior**

In a sample of 138 children and youth (ages 9-18), categorized for the purposes of this study into CD, ADHD, ADHD+CD, and typically developing groups, an fMRI study investigated decision-making ability depending on whether it is reinforced with a reward or punishment (Baumann et al., 2022). The results of the study have shown that, in conditions where decision-making is based on reward or punishment, youth with ADHD+CD exhibit a lower degree of brain activity in the caudate and dorsal striatum, middle temporal gyrus, inferior frontal gyrus, and lateral occipital cortex relative to typically developing youth. Compared to youth with ADHD, lower activity is registered in the orbitofrontal cortex, dorsal striatum and putamen, as

well as in the inferior frontal gyrus. In addition to these results supporting the hypothesis that ADHD+CD is neurobiologically a proportionately more aberrant disorder than in cases where such comorbidity is absent, they also speak to the existence of deficits in the functioning of cerebral networks responsible for affective decision-making, primarily associated with the behavioral characteristics of CD. The finding is generally consistent with previous evidence suggesting that ADHD is primarily characterized by dysfunction in cerebral networks that support so-called “cool” executive functions, such as inhibition, attention or timing (impairments typical for ADHD), while in CD the abnormalities affect the neurobiological substrate of the “hot” executive system that regulates affect and motivation (inferior fronto-striato-cerebellar rather than orbitofrontal-paralimbic) (Rubia, 2011). In other words, the deficit typical for CD (but not for ADHD) points toward probable problems in the field of social cognition. Accordingly, studies have shown that adolescents with ADHD+CD exhibit difficulties in emotion recognition compared to age-matched peers with only ADHD or those with typical development, suggesting that these deficits are related specifically to CD (Airdrie et al., 2018). The literature review confirms the hypothesis of a deficit in emotional content processing in individuals with CD, with findings pointing to impaired amygdala function in response to negative valence stimuli (Li et al., 2024).

Factors associated with impaired social cognition in children with disruptive behavior are diverse and, among others, relate to deficits in executive functioning, as well as the presence of callous-unemotional [CU] traits, characterised by a lack of empathy, remorse, and guilt, along with limited emotional expressiveness. The presence of CU traits negatively affects the optimal development of a child and may increase the risk of future disruptive behavior (Lakshmi et al., 2023).

As a relatively new field of study that has been developing intensely since the 1970s (Hamilton & Stroessner, 2021), social cognition creates new perspectives for understanding and treating problem behavior in youth and adults, but also requires further elaboration (Li et al., 2024).

### **The neurobiological basis of problem behavior associated with ADHD**

Based on the findings that young delinquents with previously diagnosed ADD exhibit more extensive and significantly more pronounced cognitive deficits than those without comorbid ADD, obtained in a cross-sectional study (Moffitt & Silva, 1988), Moffitt presupposes that there are other differences between these two groups, in this case related to the chronological order of symptom onset. She distinguishes between two types of delinquents

– those who begin exhibiting problematic behavior in early childhood, with a tendency for this pattern of behavior to persist later in life (life-course-persistent delinquents), and those whose delinquent behavior is limited to adolescence after which it disappears (adolescence-limited delinquent behavior). Compared to the second type, the first type of delinquent is characterised by pronounced early neuropsychological deficits, as well as the comorbid presence of ADHD (Moffitt, 1993). Moffitt explains the observed status and assumed development of this type of disorder with the hypothesis that life-course-persistent delinquent behavior arises through a process of reciprocal interaction between neuropsychological status and an inadequate social environment, testing this assumption through further longitudinal follow-up of youth from the original sample (Moffitt et al., 1994, 1996, 2002). For example, the subgroup of boys from the study who achieved the lowest results on a set of neuropsychological tests at the age of thirteen, exhibited the highest scores across various measures of delinquency five years later (Moffitt et al., 1994). Longitudinal follow-ups validated the assumption that there are two different trajectories in the evolution of delinquent behavior – insufficient neuropsychological status in early childhood predicted delinquent behavior with onset before age thirteen and subsequent worsening, unrelated to antisocial behavior that begins in adolescence. Moffitt, accordingly, concludes that what we describe as juvenile delinquency in fact encompasses two different subgroups, each possessing a unique etiology and developmental trajectory (Moffitt et al., 1994).

Both of Moffitt's ideas – the specific implications of the association between delinquency and ADHD, and the concept of different developmental trajectories dependent on early neurocognitive factors – largely influenced the direction in which subsequent research evolved (Popović-Čitić & Đurić, 2010). One of the outcomes is certainly the widely accepted view that ADHD is a significant risk factor for the occurrence of delinquent behavior (Babinski et al., 1999; Patterson et al., 2000). Nevertheless, this claim has not remained unquestioned, nor is it consistently confirmed. For example, while we would expect that treatment of ADHD has a significant effect on problem behavior, only about half of the studies in this field report the expected results (Shaw et al., 2012). Different findings are accumulating, especially those suggesting that the trajectories of (particularly violent) forms of problem behavior are strongly correlated to early onset (typically prior to age ten or earlier) conduct problems (Lichenstain et al., 2020; Moffitt et al., 1993; Tärnhäll et al., 2022). Combined with previous findings, some studies suggest that an ADHD diagnosis is a significant predictor of future delinquent behavior only in cases where behavioral disorders are also present in the child (Breuer et al., 2022), or decidedly conclude that it is not possible to establish a direct link between ADHD and criminality (Mordre et al., 2011).

We must not forget the effects of additional risk factors on the occurrence of violent and delinquent behavior, such as, for instance, adverse family environment, low general cognitive ability, peer delinquency, and similar factors (Fazel et al., 2018; Murray & Farrington, 2010; Popović-Ćitić, 2007).

The interactive triad consisting of problem behavior, ADHD, and early onset CD is certainly worthy of deeper analysis. Numerous studies suggest that ADHD must have at least a modulating effect on later occurrence of delinquency (Sibley et al., 2011; Pratt et al., 2002; Wojciechowski, 2021), and that the presence of ADHD is linked to a specific type of socially disruptive manifestations, primarily within the category of impulsive-aggressive behavior (Retz et al., 2021). The question of what mechanisms form the basis of the co-occurrence of ADHD and CD points toward research on the neurobiology of both disorders, but so far, answers are inconsistent. Some studies suggest that ADHD+CD is a distinct, more severe variant of the disorder, while others conversely indicate that it is possible to differentiate between the two. For instance, some twin genetic studies suggest a shared genetic origin of both phenotypes, and results have shown that in twins, it is impossible to predict one disorder based on the presence of the other, and vice versa (Thapar et al., 2001). Structural and functional brain imaging has shown similar results. The findings of several studies of gray matter volume and surface area in the prefrontal cortex have successfully inversely linked ADHD symptoms with the dorsolateral and dorsomedial prefrontal cortex, as well as the caudal part of the anterior cingulate, whereas CD symptoms were linked with the rostral regions of the anterior cingulate (Bayard et al., 2020). A differently structured study of gray matter volume (68 cortical and 19 subcortical regions), which separately considered internalizing problems, ADHD, and behavioral issues, suggested that the significance of the general psychopathological factor that reflects the shared characteristics across groups is greater than that of the specific factors. At the same time, findings indicated the possibility of potential specific associations with structures such as the hippocampus, amygdala, or cerebral cortex (Durham et al., 2021). Considering what we know about the development of (interactive) cerebral networks that our psychological capabilities are based on, especially when there are deviations in development, such findings may not necessarily be conflicting.

## **Conclusion**

ADHD occurs significantly more frequently in children and youth who exhibit problem behavior than in the general population. However, the claim that ADHD constitutes a distinct risk factor should be interpreted with caution. On a cognitive level, the behavioral characteristics of ADHD can lead a child toward various forms of risky behavior (substance abuse, school expulsions, injuries, and so on), which can be prevented with

adequate treatment, but the effects of these treatments only barely relate to CD. Nevertheless, particular attention should be paid to cases where ADHD occurs simultaneously as early manifestations of socially disruptive behavior, as such a combination indicates poorer outcomes.

When addressing the mechanisms underlying the co-occurrence of ADHD and CD, it is meaningful to seek answers at the neurobiological level. It is hypothesized that the proximity of neural networks involved in either condition, as well as the degree of neurobiological atypicality, may play an important role, with genetic factors also likely constituting a significant risk factor. The prognosis of future delinquency is particularly linked to early forms of disruptive behavior, especially when there are CU traits that involve a lack of empathy, remorse, and guilt. Generally, deficits in prosocial behavior are increasingly recognized as a key risk factor for later delinquent behavior.

Though various neuropsychological factors have been recognized as significant, the presented components of executive and verbal functioning – along with their characteristic neurobiological mechanisms – have emerged as particularly important for understanding the relationship between ADHD and different categories of problem behavior. Additionally, social cognition warrants special attention, considering its' significance for understanding problem behavior. Overall, findings suggest that neuropsychological follow-up of children with problem behavior could potentially improve therapeutic interventions.

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RECEIVED: 2025/07/17

ACCEPTED: 2025/12/23