

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Clinical Psychology
University of East Anglia**

**PERCEIVED CONTROLLABILITY,
AVOIDANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND
DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMATOLOGY IN
BOYS WITH HYPERACTIVE BEHAVIOURS**

Nicola Fowler

2005



**© This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that
anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright
rests with the author and that no quotation from the thesis, nor any
information derived therefrom, may be published without the author's
prior written consent**

ABSTRACT

Background

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is consistently associated with academic, social and emotional difficulties and poor long-term outcomes. Several studies have identified differences in the causal attributions children with ADHD make following failure experiences compared to their non-clinical peers and have suggested that they have a tendency to avoid responsibility. It has been questioned whether causal attributional style impacts on the motivation and ability of children with ADHD to recognise and change their negative behaviours. The aims of this study are to identify differences in causal attributional style and avoidance of responsibility in boys with and without ADHD and to explore the relationships between causal attributions, avoidance of responsibility and depressive symptomatology using Weiner's (1985; 1995) theory of causal attributions and process of responsibility model.

Method

This study used a between subjects design comparing a clinical group (n=22) consisting of participants with ADHD and a non-clinical comparison group (n=28). Participants were boys aged 11 – 13 years. Participants attended a single interview session where they completed a screening questionnaire for behavioural and emotional problems, and questionnaires about depression and avoidance of responsibility. Specifically designed questions were used to facilitate recall of failure experiences in academic and social domains. Participants were asked to spontaneously generate causal attributions in

relation to these failure experiences and then rate these along four causal dimensions using likert scales.

Results

Compared to their non-clinical peers, boys with ADHD had an externalising causal attributional style, characterised by situational locus of causality, low personal control, high external control and stability, which was found across academic and social situations. Boys with ADHD were found to use significantly more avoidance of responsibility strategies than non-clinical participants and high associations were found between high avoidance of responsibility and an externalising attributional style. No significant relationships were found between depression and the causal dimensions included in Weiner's (1985; 1995) theory of causal attributions.

Conclusions

The results of this study support the validity of Weiner's (1985; 1995) theory of causal attributions and process of responsibility model in children with ADHD and support and extend previous findings that children with ADHD have an externalising causal attributional style. Theoretical and clinical implications are discussed and suggestions for further research are presented.

UEA Print Thesis

The full text of this thesis is not currently available
in the repository

Please contact

lle.helpdesk@uea.ac.uk

to request access to the print copy