

# Employment Outcomes and preferences in Adults with Childhood-diagnosed ADHD

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## **Objective:**

The purpose of this study was to examine the employment outcomes and preferences of males with and without a history of ADHD who were followed into midlife (35-45 years old) as part of a longitudinal study.

## **Methods:**

This study was a secondary analysis of data collected as part of a longitudinal study of boys referred to the University of Iowa Hospital outpatient psychiatric clinic between 1967-1978 for evaluation and treatment of ADHD and a control group of boys without ADHD. The current study included data from 205 subjects ( $N = 205$ ) who were followed into midlife. This sample included subjects who were diagnosed with ADHD in childhood (ADHD adults;  $n = 118$ ) and those who were never diagnosed (controls;  $n = 87$ ). Employment outcomes included current employment status, annual household income, and ratings of job satisfaction, work performance, job attendance, workplace relationships, and preferences. Chi-square analyses were used to identify statistically significant relationships between ADHD status and these employment outcomes.

## **Results:**

Results of chi-square analyses identified several statistically significant relationships between ADHD status and employment outcomes. Controls as compared to ADHD adults were more likely to be employed full time [ $\chi^2 (1, N = 186) = 4.35, p = 0.037$ ], report doing "a much better job than others" [ $\chi^2 (4, N = 167) = 8.35, p = 0.08$ ], and report getting along with coworkers "very well" [ $\chi^2 (4, N = 168) = 10.49, p = 0.005$ ]. A significant relationship was found between ADHD status and several job preferences. ADHD adults as compared to controls were more likely to endorse salary as a "very important" consideration [ $\chi^2 (2, N = 205) = 5.49, p = 0.064$ ] and to report getting along with their boss as "very" or "fairly important" [ $\chi^2 (2, N = 205) = 8.78, p = 0.012$ ] when choosing a job. ADHD adults were also more likely to report a preference for jobs that involve driving a car or truck [ $\chi^2 (2, N = 205) = 11.39, p = 0.003$ ] and to report disliking jobs that involve working at a desk [ $\chi^2 (2, N = 204) = 4.69, p = 0.096$ ].

## **Conclusions:**

The current study examined the relationship between ADHD status and employment outcomes, including current employment status, annual household income, job satisfaction, work performance, attendance, workplace relationships, and employment preferences. Chi-square analyses revealed several statistically significant relationships between ADHD status and these employment outcomes. These results suggest that ADHD adults as compared to controls may be less likely have full-time employment. Relationships between ADHD status and job preferences were found, with ADHD adults more likely to report salary as "very important" and getting along with their boss as "very" or "fairly important." Results also suggest that ADHD adults are more likely to report a strong preference for jobs that involve driving a car or truck and a dislike of jobs that

involve working at a desk. No significant relationships were found between ADHD status and annual household income, job satisfaction, or attendance.

Regarding job performance and coworker relationships, ADHD adults as compared to controls were less likely to rate their performance as “much better” than others doing the same job, and they were less likely to report that they got along with their coworkers “very well.” While these results might reflect worse work performance and relationships in ADHD adults, it’s also plausible that these ratings reflect respondents’ lower self-esteem and/or self-efficacy. Previous research has consistently found self-assessment bias in work performance ratings (for a review see Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). However, this literature suggests that individuals are more likely to overrate, not underrate, their actual performance. Future research might examine potential differences in self-assessment bias in those with and without ADHD, while being sure to include appropriate validation measures of respondents’ actual job performance (e.g., supervisor evaluation).