

Adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder score high in creativity

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Young adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder showed more creativity compared with those who did not have ADHD, a new study shows.

Researchers at the University of Michigan and Eckerd College also found that ADHD individuals preferred different thinking styles. They like generating ideas, but are not good about completing the tasks.

Lead author Holly White, an assistant professor of psychology at Eckerd, and Priti Shah, an associate professor at U-M, replicated their study from 2006, and those results found that ADHD individuals show better performance on standardized [creativity](#) tests.

Previous research regarding individuals with ADHD focused on laboratory measures of creativity.

"We knew that ADHD individuals did better at laboratory measures of divergent thinking, but we didn't know if that would translate to real-life achievement. The current study suggests that it does," Shah said.

Divergent thinking involves generating several possible solutions to a problem.

ADHD is neuropsychological disorder that involves inattentiveness, impulsiveness and [hyperactivity](#). Most individuals get the disorder in childhood and it persists into adulthood. It has impaired the person's

ability to adjust academically and socially.

Sixty college students (half with ADHD) completed a questionnaire about their level of achievement regarding creativity in 10 areas, such as humor, music, visual arts, culinary arts, invention and writing. Those with ADHD scored higher than individuals who didn't have the disorder.

Another questionnaire assessed the respondents' preferred creative style: clarifiers, who define and structure the problem; ideators, who like to generate ideas; developers, who elaborate or refine ideas and solutions; and implementers, who incorporate a refined idea into a final product or solution.

Non-ADHD participants preferred problem clarification and idea development. ADHD individuals liked the ideator style. Knowing the creative style can help identify careers suited to the strengths and weaknesses of individuals with ADHD, the researchers said.

Researchers also note that their results could be partially attributed to testing college students, who may be a uniquely motivated and successful population with ADHD. They did, however, ensure that the ADHD and non-ADHD participants in the sample were similar in academic achievement. Individuals who are not succeeding as well academically may benefit from understanding that there may be tradeoffs associated with [ADHD](#). With extra motivation to overcome difficulties in planning, attention, and impulsivity, they may be able to take greater advantage of their creative strengths, Shah said.

The findings appear in the current issue of *Personality and Individual Differences*.

More information: www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01918869

Provided by University of Michigan

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