

Effects of Concurrent ADHD and Anxiety on Self and Informant Report Discrepancies in Autistic Adults



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Introduction

- Nearly 1 in 45 U.S. adults are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).¹
- ASD is a neurodevelopmental condition associated with difficulties with social interactions, repetitive behaviors, and communication.²
- Many autistic individuals experience concurrent ADHD and/or anxiety which can exacerbate autistic traits and significantly impact quality of life.^{3,4}
- Informant discrepancies, when multiple raters' scores differ from one another, have gained significant attention in understanding the experiences of autistic individuals.
- These discrepancies may have significant implications for clinical assessment and skill development programs.⁵
- Preliminary research has shown that the presence of concurrent conditions can increase the magnitude of informant discrepancies on ratings of autism-related behaviors.⁶
- Minimal research has been done on how concurrent conditions affect informant discrepancy for autistic adults
- The current study examined how concurrent ADHD and anxiety can influence informant discrepancies (self report vs informant report) in adults with ASD.

Methods

Participants:

- 144 adults (65 female)
- Mean \pm SD age = 35.94 \pm 14.52 years
- 19 ASD; 18 ASD + ADHD; 59 ASD + anxiety; 48 ASD + ADHD + anxiety
- Diagnosed or suspected diagnoses of ASD, ADHD, and/or anxiety
 - Exclusion criteria: intellectual disabilities
- Recruited broadly from different means such as social media, clinic referral, Center for Autism Research, and family friends

Main Measures:

- Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition, for Adults (SRS-2)**
 - Identifies the severity of social difficulties within ASD
 - 65-item questionnaire; five treatment subscales
 - Complete by the individual (self report) and a relative/spouse/other (informant report)
- Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functions**
 - Identifies impairments of executive function
 - 86-item questionnaire; eight subscales
 - Complete by the individual (self report) and a relative/spouse/other (informant report)

Data Analytic Plan:

- SPSS 25 was used to calculate statistical analyses
- Paired sample t-tests examined differences between (1) self and informant report on SRS (2) self and informant report on BRIEF, within each participant group

Four Participant Categories

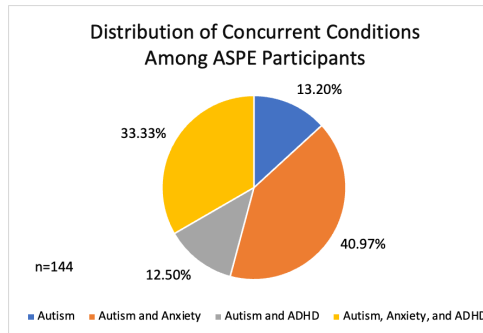
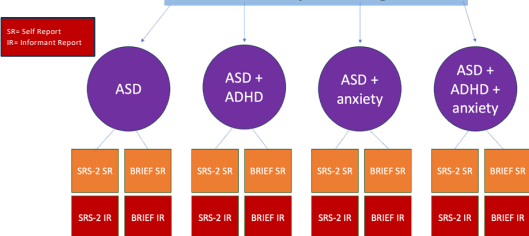


Figure 1: Percent of participants having the following concurrent condition(s)

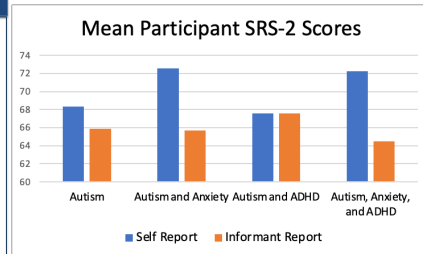


Figure 2: Mean participant SRS-2 scores grouped by concurrent condition(s)

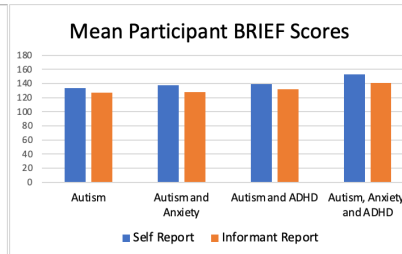


Figure 3: Mean participant BRIEF scores grouped by concurrent condition(s)

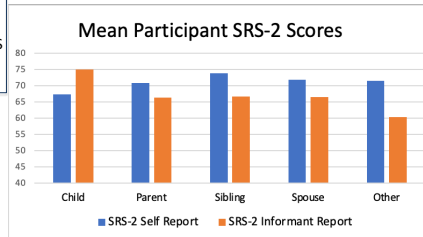


Figure 4: Mean participant SRS-2 scores grouped by informant type

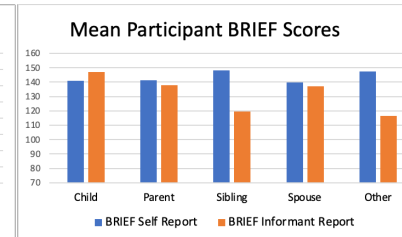


Figure 5: Mean participant BRIEF scores grouped by informant type

Results

- Self and informant report BRIEF scores were significantly correlated ($p = .017$)
- Self and informant report SRS-2 scores were not significantly correlated ($p = .086$)
- Self report BRIEF and SRS-2 were correlated ($r = .44$, $p < .05$), as were informant report BRIEF and SRS-2 scores ($r = .56$, $p < .05$)
- Across both BRIEF and SRS scores, self and informant report scores did not significantly differ from one another ($p > .05$) in ASD participants with no concurrent conditions (SRS: $p = .45$; BRIEF: $p = .94$) or ASD + ADHD participants (SRS: $p = .98$; BRIEF: $p = .39$)
- Self and informant report scores were significantly different in ASD + anxiety (SRS: $t = 4.29$, $p < .001$; BRIEF: $t = 2.04$, $p = .046$) and ASD + ADHD + anxiety (SRS: $t = 3.79$, $p < .001$; BRIEF: $t = 2.66$, $p = .01$) participants on both the BRIEF and SRS-2
- In terms of informants on the SRS, there was discrepancy between self report and child/parent/spouse/other reports
- On the BRIEF, there was only informant discrepancy between self report and child/other report.

Discussion

- Discrepancy was shown to be greatest among self and informant report SRS-2 scores
- When considering concurrent conditions, the presence of concurrent anxiety has been shown to skew mean self report scores, creating a discrepancy with its respective informant reports
- Overall, when anxiety is present, self-reports tend to skew higher than informant reports
- These results shed light on the performance of these measures in the presence of concurrent anxiety

Future Directions

- Analyzing the effects of other concurrent conditions such as depression on autistic individuals with respect to informant discrepancies
- Assessing how a larger sample size with a more even distribution of participants in each participant category (ASD, ASD + ADHD, ASD + anxiety, ASD + ADHD + anxiety) can impact results
- Recruiting a more diverse sample of participants (i.e. race, educational background, gender) in the study

Acknowledgements

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