

DIAGNOSIS OF ADHD DISORDER - PERCEPTION OF PARENTS

Lejla Osmančević Katkić¹, Ivona Salaj², Đana Baftiri¹

**1- Secondary School Center for Upbringing and Education Zagreb
2- The Office of the Ombudsman for Children**

Abstract: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood disorders, affecting about 5% of school-aged children world-wide (Polanczyk and Jensen, 2008). According to recent research data, a worrying small number of preschool children are diagnosed with ADHD disorder in Croatia that leads to the assumption that the behavior of a child with ADHD is still attributed to educational omissions or peculiar temperament, and because of that we miss valuable time to work with the child, we miss time for education and counseling parents, educators and the child's closer social environment (Sekušak and Galešev, et al., 2016). Early diagnosis and giving support to parents directly affects the functioning and development of a child with ADHD disorder and its relations with his closer and wider environment.

The aim of this study was to get a better insight into the views of parents of children with ADHD disorder in the process of diagnosing their child. The study was conducted through focus groups, in February 2016. The focus group was attended by eight parents of children with ADHD disorder, members of the association called "Buđenje". Data were collected and analyzed with qualitative methodology following the eight basic steps of qualitative analysis (Mesec, 1998). The analysis was separated into three categories: (1) the first signs of ADHD disorder; (2) how parents deal with ADHD disorder diagnosis; and (3) the diagnosis of ADHD disorder. The results indicate the importance of recognizing the early signs of ADHD disorder and timely setting an accurate diagnosis. Strengthening support for parents, during and after a diagnosis, is also an important prerequisite for enabling the development of a child's capacity.

Keywords: ADHD disorder, diagnosis, parents, qualitative research.

What are the experiences of parents with a child diagnosed with ADHD from their first awareness of their child's behaviors to the time of the initial diagnosis?

METHOD: Focus group discussion

PARTICIPANTS: 8 parents (7F and 1M) of children with ADHD

DATA ANALYSIS: Qualitative analysis, open coding procedure

FIRST SIGNS OF ADHD DISORDER

Becoming aware something is wrong
Doesn't fit
Comparison with another (older) child
Behavioural problems

HOW PARENTS DEAL WITH ADHD DISORDER DIAGNOSIS

Social isolation
Emotional activities
Tiredness of parents
Lack of formal support
Personal resources
Financial burden
Stigma

DIAGNOSIS OF ADHD DISORDER

Information and acceptance
Family stress
Distrust of professionals
Late diagnosis

IMPLICATION FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- ✓ The study report the importance of recognizing the early signs of ADHD disorder and timely setting an accurate diagnosis.
- ✓ This study highlights the importance of formal support systems which include family and professionals who have helped parents to cope with the experiences and challenges of raising a child with ADHD.
- ✓ It's also important to provide training for professionals providing them with the skills to help and encourage parents to identify their resources to enable better coping strategies to tackle difficulties (eg. family therapy approach).