

# Research Report: Phenomenological Comorbidity Between ADHD and Autism

## Introduction

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are both neurodevelopmental disorders that are frequently diagnosed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) (Verywell Mind, n.d.). ADHD is characterized by symptoms such as inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, while ASD is characterized by impairments in social interaction, repetitive behaviors, and communication issues.

The comorbidity of ADHD and ASD is a common occurrence, with ADHD presenting in 30-80% of individuals with ASD, and ASD presenting in 20-50% of individuals with ADHD (Psychscenehub, n.d.). This comorbidity presents unique challenges for individuals, as the symptoms of both disorders can overlap and exacerbate each other. This report aims to explore the subjective experience of having both ADHD and autism, the contradictions and complementarities of these disorders in everyday life, the distinguishability of individual symptoms, and the common or unique challenges arising from their comorbidity.

## Literature Review

Recent studies have shown that ADHD and ASD share genetic heritability and are both associated with impairments in social functioning and executive functioning (Springer, 2019). However, there are quantitative and qualitative differences in the phenotypic presentations of the impairments that characterize ASD and ADHD.

ADHD and ASD are described as frequently co-occurring, sharing certain cognitive phenotypes. However, it is important to trace these shared features back to a common physiopathology and identify the physiopathologic characteristics of comorbidity, which may present additional neuro-functional deficits (PMC, n.d.).

Research exploring the overlap/distinctiveness between ADHD and ASD has significantly increased in recent years, but direct comparison of the inhibition-related neuronal correlates between these disorders is still lacking (Nature, n.d.).

## Methodology

This research employs a qualitative evaluation approach, focusing on individuals diagnosed with both ADHD and autism. Data collection methods include interviews and self-reports, aiming to capture the subjective experiences of these individuals.

## Research Themes

### Time-Blindness

Time-blindness, or the inability to accurately perceive the passage of time, is a common symptom of ADHD. This can exacerbate daily tasks and social interactions, as individuals may struggle with time management and meeting deadlines.

### Social Complexity

The comorbidity of ADHD and ASD can increase the complexity of social relationships. Individuals may struggle with understanding social cues, maintaining relationships, and managing their impulsivity in social situations.

### Attention

Individuals with both ADHD and ASD may face enhanced challenges with focus in everyday life. The hyperactivity and impulsivity associated with ADHD, combined with the social and commu-

nication impairments of ASD, can make it difficult for individuals to maintain attention on tasks or conversations.

## **Post-Meditation**

Meditation has been shown to increase focus and reduce impulsivity in individuals with ADHD. However, the persistent social challenges associated with ASD may not be as responsive to meditation.

## **Results**

The results of this research will be presented according to the research themes, using statistical and thematic analysis where applicable.

## **Discussion**

The results will be interpreted in relation to the aim of the study, with implications for the understanding of comorbidity between ADHD and autism.

## **Reference List**

- Springer. (2019). Current Opinion in Psychiatry. [online] Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-019-1020-5> [Accessed 20 Sep. 2021].
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