Title: Parental Aggravation as a Mediator Between Childhood ADHD Severity and Media Use: A Population Based Study

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Background: Children can spend up to ten hours per day using various types of electronic media. Research has shown that children with ADHD use media for longer durations of time compared to children without ADHD, and this vulnerable population may be more susceptible to poor academic performance and impairments in behavioral functioning. More severe ADHD symptoms are associated with higher levels of parental stress and ineffective parenting practices. There is limited research that has explored whether aggravated parents provide their children greater access to electronic media, and whether these relationships are dependent on age.

Objective: To determine whether the association between ADHD severity and electronic media use is mediated by parental aggravation.

Methods: This is a secondary data analysis using cross-sectional data from the combined 2016-2017 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) Questionnaires. This study included data on children ages of 3-17 years who had a diagnosis of ADHD (n=5930). A path analysis was used to model the relationship between ADHD and electronic media use (computer use) through parental aggravation, controlling for child- and parent-related covariates.

Results: More severe ADHD was significantly associated with increased parental aggravation (β=.22, *p*<.001), and increased parental aggravation was associated with a greater likelihood of computer use (OR=1.07, *p*<.001). There was no significant relationship between ADHD and computer use; parental aggravation fully mediated the relationship between ADHD and computer use (indirect effect: β=.02, *p*<.001). A strong relationship between child age (covariate) and computer use was found (β=.47, *p*<.001), so stratification analyses by age (3-5; 6-12; and 13-17 year olds) were modeled. Similar findings for each subgroup were found.

Conclusion: Parental aggravation fully mediated the relationship between higher ADHD severity levels and electronic media use.