

## **The Impact of Intervention on Quality of Life, for Families of Children with ADHD: The Mother's Perspective**

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The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of a holistic approach to intervention, on quality of life, for families of children with diagnosed ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). The impact was examined from the perspective of the mother. Additionally, it was of interest to learn if there is a difference in impact if intervention is done with a family with a young child (under 8 years of age) or a family with a pre-adolescent or adolescent (age 10 and over).

The study is qualitative. Data was compiled through in-depth interviews with five mothers of children previously diagnosed with ADHD: two began intervention when their child with ADHD was under age eight, two began intervention when their child with ADHD was age ten or older, and one participant has an adolescent who has had intervention from a young age and continues to have intervention.

For the purposes of this research, "quality of life" was gauged by: self-esteem of all the family members, life satisfaction of all the family members (optimistic attitudes, pleasure and enjoyment), family cohesiveness (family support, harmonious relationships, consistent parenting), family stability, and a supportive environment that maximizes each family member's physical, intellectual and emotional development (Wan, K.P., 1997).

The intervention that was the unit of analysis is the intervention that the researcher is doing or has done in the past, with such families, through her private practice. Those who participated have been involved, or are presently involved, in this intervention. The goals of the intervention are tailored to meet the unique needs of each family. Parenting skills/strategies, family therapy, individual therapy, group therapy, school consultations, anger management, behavior management, and/or social skills training may be a part of the intervention.

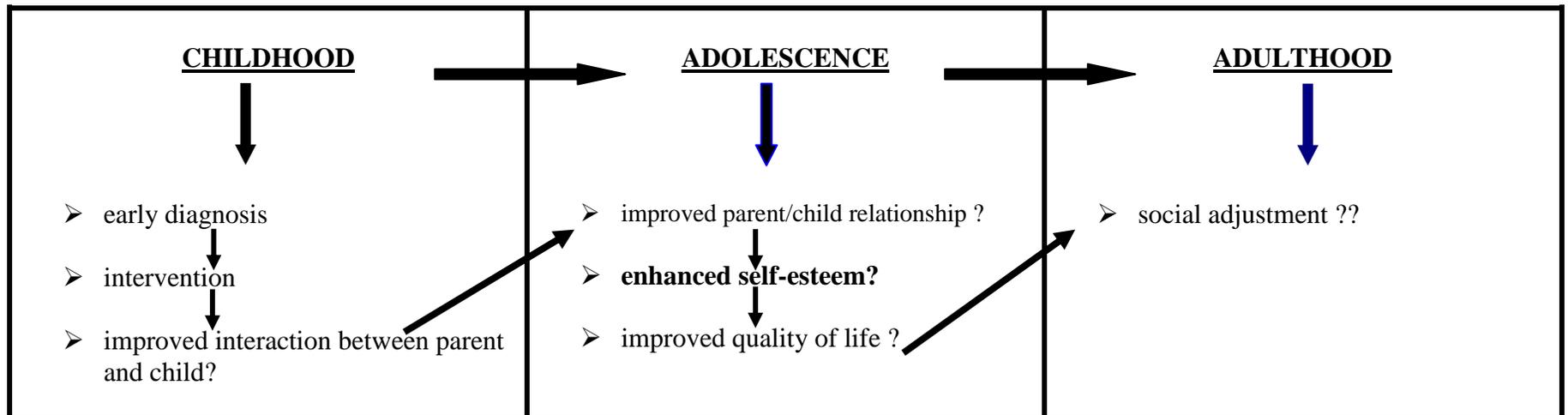
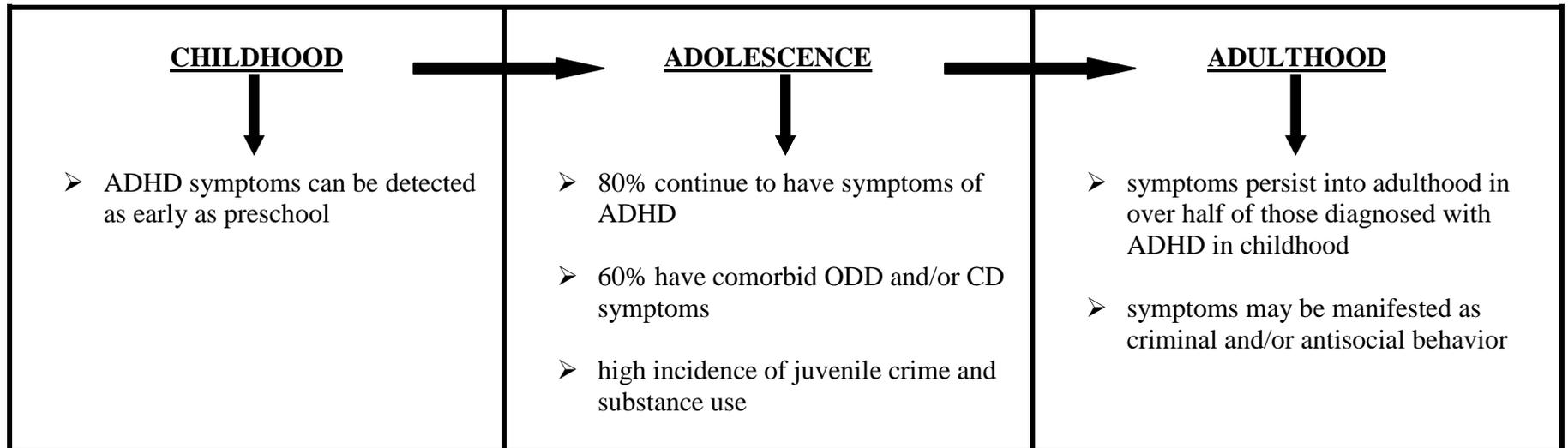
There is a body of research that discusses that ADHD can be diagnosed from a young age, that the disorder is pervasive and lifelong, and that children with ADHD develop into adolescents who either continue to demonstrate behaviors characteristic of ADHD or who develop even more severe behavior disorders. The research indicates that these more severe disorders carry over into adulthood in a large majority of the cases (Table 1). Findings indicate that poor parenting skills and parental anti-social behavior are common amongst parents of children with ADHD and that parental behavior changes as a result of intervention and that the children's behavior also changes as a result. However, the results of studies are conflicting and inconclusive.

The intent of the present study was to determine whether there are changes in the family's quality of life, as a result of the interventions in which they have been involved. Is the child functioning better at home, at school, and/or socially (Table 2)? How does this family feel about their situation? What are their frustrations? Does understanding the child better help to eliminate some of those frustrations? What are the difficulties that the family and the child were experiencing prior to intervention? How were they feeling then? Has any of this changed since the intervention began? Does the timing make a difference? Will intervention have the same impact regardless of the child's age? Are the changes maintained post intervention?

Data analysis within this study suggested the following:

- ✓ Initially, all the mothers in the study questioned their efficacy as parents. Education about the disorder eventually helped to alleviate some of the doubt, in most cases. Additionally it increased the mothers' confidence in parenting.
- ✓ All the mothers expressed frustration with the professionals with whom they dealt throughout the journey of discovering the cause of their child's difficulties. Some expressed that the diagnosis should have been made much earlier and that their "cries for help" went unanswered.
- ✓ In most cases the interventions have had a positive impact on some aspects of family functioning (i.e., household is generally calmer, improved self-esteem of the child and the parents, improved sibling relationships, better anger management on the part of the parents).
- ✓ In most cases mothers reported that the positive changes were related to improved parenting strategies rather than to improved impulse control on the part of the child with ADHD.
- ✓ The data provided a very strong argument for the need for intervention to be on going and for the importance of parental involvement in the intervention process.
- ✓ The indications are that improved family interactions and a more positive family atmosphere benefit the child's feelings of worthiness, thereby enhancing self-esteem. It would stand to reason that if these factors can be maintained, their impact should be long term. However, it was not possible to draw these conclusions within the framework of this type of study.
- ✓ Throughout this study, mothers made statements that indicated strong support for early intervention. The anger, frustration, and poor self-esteem experienced by both the parents and their children may possibly be avoided if diagnosis and intervention transpire early rather than later. However, there is no evidence that the long-term outcome is superior, if there is early intervention. These conclusions could not be drawn within the parameters of this study.

**Table 1. Causal Chain in Which Early Attentional Problems Lead to Conduct Problems**



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**Table 2. Does Intervention Reduce the Incidence of ODD and CD in Children Diagnosed with ADHD?**

Relevant works in the area include:

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