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ATTACHMENT IN ADULT PATIENTS WITH ATTENTION-DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

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Introduction: Adult patients with ADHD suffer from marriage problems and increased divorce rates significantly more often. There are, however, only a few studies which analyse romantic attachment to a partner or romantic relationships among patients with ADHD in view of attachment theory.

Aims: The aim of the present study is to research if ADHD patients show a diminished quality of romantic relationships in comparison to a matched sample of healthy controls. Furthermore, correlations between ADHD specific characteristics and particular variables of partnership perception and psychosomatic discomfort were analysed within the ADHD subgroup.

Methods: We recruited 39 patients with ADHD and compared them with a matched sample of healthy controls. Self-estimation measures were used to examine the quality of attachment, dimensions of attachment, love styles, psychosomatic discomfort and ADHD specific symptoms.

Results: In comparison to the control sample, adult ADHD patients show a significantly reduced quality of relationships. ADHD patients rank themselves as more scared of attachment and showing more avoidance of interpersonal relationships in general as well as romantic relationships. They also feel less romantic love. ADHD specific characteristics correlate moderately with the attachment dimensions "Fear" and "Avoidance", the love style "Mania" and psychosomatic discomfort.

Conclusions: This study lends further support to the assumption that adult patients with ADHD show an impaired quality of attachment, increased fear and avoidance of relationships as well as less romantic love. The results strongly underline the necessity to account for individual attachment styles in psychotherapy of ADHD.