

ADHD traits linked to tantrums in preschool children

A survey of 154 parents of French preschool children found that the children who were rated as being more emotionally labile were also prone to ADHD symptoms.

Jenna Maire and colleagues at the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research used both online and paper surveys to explore the association between emotional lability and anxiety, aggression and hyperactivity-impulsivity.

The authors took into account a number of confounding factors, including the child's age and sex and the parent's occupation and marital status. After adjusting for these, only anxiety and hyperactivity-impulsivity were significantly associated with emotional lability.

However, they acknowledge that a tendency to have temper tantrums is not in itself diagnostic for any single disorder. They also note that only 18% of parents responded to the survey and those that did tended to be educated, professional, two-parent families.

The authors suggest that preschoolers' emotional lability could be used as part of a baseline for longitudinal studies and the trait could one day prompt targeting for early intervention.

Maire, J., Galéra, C., Meyer, E., Salla, J. and Michel, G. (2017), Is emotional lability a marker for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety and aggression symptoms in preschoolers?. Child Adolesc Ment Health, 22: 77–83. doi:10.1111/camh.12168