Increasing Peers’ Inclusiveness as a Target of Intervention for Peer Problems of Children with ADHD

Amori Yee Mikami PhD
Mary Jia, Jennifer J. Na
University of British Columbia
Matthew D. Lerner PhD
Stony Brook University
Victoria Savalei PhD
University of British Columbia

ABSTRACT
Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have severe peer impairment.1 My lab is inspired by the idea that existing interventions for peer problems have limited efficacy because they target the problematic behaviors of children with ADHD, under the assumption that if children with ADHD improve their behavior then peers automatically notice these changes and respond with increased liking.2 However, our research documents the cliquishness and stigma that peers hold against children with ADHD, which also contribute to peer problems.3,4 Therefore, we designed a novel intervention training teachers to develop positive relationships with children with ADHD, which we hypothesized would serve as an inclusive model for peers to follow (Making Socially Accepting Inclusive Classrooms [MOSAIC]). The MOSAIC intervention will be described in greater detail during the presentation.

We tested the efficacy of MOSAIC in a research summer day camp. Children (ages 7-9; 48.2% male) with ADHD (n=24) and typically developing (TD) children (n=114) interacted together in 16 classrooms, randomly assigned to have a teacher administering MOSAIC or a comparison condition of behavioral management/social skills training. Results, now published, demonstrated that both the children with ADHD5 as well as TD children6 showed improvement in MOSAIC on the peer sociometric outcomes of increased acceptance/reduced rejection, with the largest effect size for reciprocated friendships. We are unaware of any existing intervention, pharmacological or psychosocial, that consistently demonstrates improvements on sociometrics for children with ADHD. In the current submission we will present the treatment results on sociometric variables along with effects on a previously-unpublished dependent variable: During recess/lunch breaks at camp when teachers were not present, blinded coders used time sampled observations to record the naturalistic peer groupings that children were in. The average child was observed for 169 20-second intervals; inter-rater reliability was 85%. Children with ADHD were more likely to be alone than TD children, F(1,133)=5.88; p=.017. However, after statistical control of diagnostic status, children in MOSAIC and in the comparison condition did not differ from one another in proportion of time observed to be alone (p>.10), but children in MOSAIC were more likely to be in groups of two, F(1,133)=10.11; p=.002, and the positive effect of MOSAIC on the likelihood that the child would be in a group of three was stronger for children with ADHD (B=.17) relative to TD children (B=.08). We conducted further analyses to examine the similarity between children within groups. For each child, the mean of the social skills7 (rated by parents and regular classroom teachers before camp) of the peers in the most common grouping was calculated. Regression analyses revealed that the correlation between each child’s own skills and the mean of the peers’ skills was significant (B=.39; p=.025). Crucially, there was an interaction effect such that this correlation was attenuated in MOSAIC (B=.39) relative to the comparison condition (B=.10).

In summary, children in MOSAIC were more frequently observed to be in small groups with peers- consistent with the previously obtained results for MOSAIC increasing reciprocated friendship. These results further suggest that in MOSAIC, children may not only have more friends, but also have friend groupings that are more heterogeneous/diverse.