



Intervention Strategies for Students with ADHD in Higher Education

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Summary

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) poses a significant challenge in higher education, as it directly impacts students' academic performance and interpersonal relationships. This article presents a multiple-case study aimed at analyzing the distinct profiles of university students diagnosed with ADHD and proposing pedagogical intervention strategies that contribute to their retention and academic success. Three cases were studied: a student with an inattentive profile, a student with a hyperactive-impulsive profile, and another with a combined profile. Analyzing the challenges faced by each profile allowed the proposal of differentiated strategies that emphasize the personalization of the teaching and learning process, as well as the fundamental role of faculty in creating inclusive environments. The conclusion is that the adoption of adapted practices, combined with institutional support, can transform the university experience of students with ADHD.

Keywords: ADHD; higher education; pedagogical strategies; inclusion; case study.

Abstract

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) poses significant challenges in higher education, as it directly impacts students' academic performance and interpersonal relationships. This article presents a multiple-case study aimed at analyzing different profiles of university students diagnosed with ADHD and proposing pedagogical intervention strategies that contribute to their academic success and retention. Three cases were studied: a student with an inattentive profile, another with a hyperactive-impulsive profile, and a third with a combined profile. The analysis of the challenges faced by each profile enabled the proposal of differentiated strategies that emphasize the personalization of teaching and learning processes, as well as the crucial role of teachers in creating inclusive environments. It is concluded that adopting adapted practices, together with institutional support, can transform the university experience of students with ADHD.

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1. Introduction

Entry and retention in higher education present challenges significant for students diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and Hyperactivity (ADHD). Recognized by the DSM-5 as a developmental disorder neurodevelopment characterized by persistent symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, ADHD manifests itself in different ways, directly affecting performance academic and adaptation to university requirements.

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In this context, there is a need to develop pedagogical practices that meet to the specificities of these students, promoting equitable learning conditions. The This article aims to analyze intervention strategies of a pedagogical center from the Federal University of Bahia in academic monitoring of students with ADHD in higher education, based on the report of multiple cases carried out at the Federal University of Bahia in the context of the Affirmative Action Coordination to which the author is linked, highlighting as different profiles require different approaches from teachers and the institution.

2. Methodology

This is a report of multiple cases selected from more than 43 cases attended in the year 2023 that can make it possible to understand situations in depth singular and propose contextualized strategies. Thus, three students were analyzed university students, each representing a distinct ADHD profile (inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive and combined).

The survey included:

- Description of the academic context of each student;
- Identification of the main challenges faced;
- Definition of pedagogical intervention strategies appropriate to each profile.

This methodology allowed us to understand the complexity of the phenomenon and propose practices applicable in different university contexts.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 ADHD as a Neurodevelopmental Disorder

ADHD is classified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as a neurodevelopmental disorder involving persistent symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity (APA, 2014).

According to Barkley (2016, p. 42), ADHD should be understood as a condition that affects behavioral self-regulation, directly impacting planning and task execution. Rohde and Halpern (2004) add that the disorder results from a interaction between genetic and environmental factors, with its manifestation being heterogeneous and complex.

In Brazil, Mattos (2019) emphasizes that, despite the growing diagnostic visibility, there is still a lack of understanding about the impacts of ADHD in higher education, which may aggravate academic exclusion processes.



3.2 ADHD and its Challenges in Higher Education

Entry into higher education intensifies cognitive and social demands, exposing further the difficulties faced by students with ADHD. International studies point out that such students have a greater risk of academic failure and dropout, when compared to their colleagues (Weyandt; DuPaul, 2006).

Miranda and Baixauli (2013) highlight that, at university level, the symptoms of inattention are particularly harmful, affecting time management and organization of tasks. Ciasca (2010) and Moysés (2001) warn that, in Brazil, the absence of strategies adequate institutional frameworks accentuate the risks of evasion, making investment in accessibility policies and specialized pedagogical support.

3.3 Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies

According to Barkley (2016), promoting academic success for students with ADHD requires well-structured learning environments, with constant feedback and use of organizational support tools.

Capellini, Rodrigues and Germano (2014) highlight the importance of teacher mediation to promote autonomy and self-regulation, through curricular adaptation, division of tasks in smaller steps and the use of active methodologies.

In this sense, Mantoan (2003) and Mittler (2003) argue that educational inclusion must transcend individual adjustments and consolidate itself as an institutional practice, through the creation of inclusive environments, supported by public policies and support centers student.

Literature analysis indicates that the challenges of ADHD in higher education require a multidimensional approach, articulating:

1. The clinical dimension, which includes the diagnosis and impacts of the disorder;
2. The pedagogical dimension, which organizes teaching and learning strategies;
3. The institutional dimension, which guarantees conditions for inclusion and permanence academic.

Thus, the centrality of the teaching role, of pedagogical centers and interdisciplinary approaches to student support at the University and institutional policies to ensure not only access, but also retention and success of university students with ADHD.



4. Case Studies and Intervention Strategies

The analysis of the three cases (the names were changed to fictional names to maintain the integrity of the subjects) highlights the diversity of ADHD manifestations and how each profile requires specific strategies for students to advance in their academic trajectory.

The first case refers to João, a 20-year-old Civil Engineering student, who presents a predominantly inattentive profile. Their main difficulties are related to the disorganization of materials, forgetting deadlines and difficulty in maintain concentration during classes. Despite personal effort, your academic results are inconsistent. After evaluating João's case, the service center pedagogical recommended dividing tasks into smaller stages, with intermediate deadlines well-defined, in addition to the use of digital organization tools, such as Google Calendar. Providing constant, positive feedback, combined with visuals and diagrams simplified, favors understanding and improves planning capacity.

The second case involves Maria, a 22-year-old Pedagogy student, who presents a predominantly hyperactive-impulsive profile. Enthusiastic and participative, Maria faces difficulty remaining seated for long periods and often interrupts discussions in classroom. Their impulsiveness also compromises the quality of assessments, since responds in a hurry and without reviewing their answers. In this profile, the following strategies were adopted: effective measures that included establishing clear rules for coexistence in the classroom, planning short, regular breaks for movement and the insertion of activities structured practices and discussions, which allow you to channel your energy productively. In addition, In addition, self-regulation techniques, such as controlled breathing and sports practices, such as jiu-jitsu, contribute to improving your behavioral control.

Finally, the third case refers to Pedro, a 19-year-old Architecture and Urban Planning student. years, whose profile combines characteristics of inattention and hyperactivity. Pedro presents difficulties both in maintaining focus in theoretical classes and in completing practical tasks, often abandoned halfway. This situation generates frustration and anxiety, in addition to lack of motivation to complete academic activities. In this scenario, it became It is essential to develop a personalized schedule of tasks, with specific goals and realistic, which helps you manage your time. The adoption of active teaching methods, such as debates and group work, can stimulate greater engagement. Furthermore, meetings periodic to monitor progress and positively reinforce achievements, even if small, are essential to promote your self-confidence and reduce the feeling of failure.

The joint analysis of these three cases allows us to observe that ADHD manifests itself in different forms and that, therefore, pedagogical strategies must be equally differentiated. While students with an inattentive profile need greater support in organization and planning, those with a hyperactive-impulsive profile benefit from practical activities and of energy regulation, and those with a combined profile require a balance between support structural and motivational incentive. The common point between the three profiles is the need for attentive teachers, capable of offering personalized interventions, and institutions that adopt inclusive practices that enable the permanence and academic success of these students.

Final Considerations

The study demonstrated that intervention strategies for students with ADHD in the higher education must be personalized and contextualized, taking into account the specificities of each profile. The role of teachers is fundamental in promoting a inclusive environment, capable of balancing academic demands with adapted practices.

Furthermore, it is recommended that higher education institutions implement Centers of Student Support, with multidisciplinary teams, to offer continuous support. curricular individualization, although limited, shows itself to be a possibility to expand the access and retention of these students.

The inclusion of students with ADHD in higher education should not be seen only as compliance with educational policies, but as an opportunity to enrich spaces academics with diverse backgrounds and ways of learning.

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