



STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH ADHD: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND ENHANCING SUCCESS

Hristina R. Fidosievaⁱ

Senior Lecturer, PhD,

Faculty of Education,

Department of Primary School Pedagogy,

University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. Cyril and St. Methodius",

Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

Abstract:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders, affecting millions of children and adolescents worldwide. In the United States alone, approximately 7 million children aged 3 to 17 years have been diagnosed with ADHD, representing about 11.4% of the population in this age group (CDC, 2024). ADHD is characterized by a combination of symptoms that include difficulties in sustaining attention, increased distractibility, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. These symptoms often result in significant challenges in educational settings, impacting both academic performance and overall well-being. Students with ADHD frequently struggle to concentrate on tasks, follow instructions, and complete assignments, which can lead to lower academic achievements. Their inability to maintain focus or resist distractions may cause them to miss critical information during lessons or fail to meet deadlines. Additionally, the hyperactivity and impulsivity associated with ADHD can disrupt classroom dynamics, creating challenges for both educators and peers. Beyond academic difficulties, students with ADHD often experience social and emotional struggles, such as difficulty forming and maintaining friendships, conflicts with teachers and classmates, and low self-esteem stemming from repeated failures and criticism. Addressing the educational needs of students with ADHD requires a comprehensive understanding of their unique challenges and strengths. This article explores evidence-based strategies that can enhance learning outcomes for these students. These strategies include creating structured and predictable classroom environments, incorporating active learning methods, using visual aids, and providing regular positive reinforcement. Furthermore, collaboration among teachers, parents, and specialists is crucial to ensure a supportive network for students with ADHD. By focusing on effective educational practices, this article highlights the importance of addressing ADHD in academic settings. Early intervention and tailored support not only improve

ⁱ Correspondence: email h.fidosieva@ts.uni-vt.bg

academic performance but also foster the social and emotional development of students, enabling them to thrive both in and outside the classroom.

Keywords: ADHD, attention, hyperactivity, education, inclusive education

1. Introduction

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders in childhood, affecting a significant proportion of children and adolescents worldwide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 7 million children aged 3 to 17 in the United States have been diagnosed with ADHD, accounting for about 11.4% of this age group (CDC, 2024). Official statistics for Bulgaria are not yet available.

Studying the challenges faced by students with ADHD is essential not only for their individual development but also for improving the quality of education as a whole. Without adequate teaching strategies, students with ADHD may face difficulties in socialization, receive lower grades, and suffer from low self-esteem (Barkley, 2015). The lack of appropriate support in school can lead to long-term consequences, including an increased risk of mental health issues, social isolation, and reduced quality of life (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). These challenges impact not only academic performance but also the social and emotional development of students.

The purpose of this article is to identify the primary challenges encountered by students with ADHD in school settings and to propose strategies for overcoming them. A review of existing literature and practices will focus on successful approaches and strategies that support students with ADHD.

2. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating theoretical research and analysis of existing literature to identify the main challenges in educating students with ADHD. A review of scientific publications, including articles, books, and reports from international organizations, was conducted to explore the scope of challenges faced by students. The analysis also includes a review of successful practices and strategies implemented in various educational systems. This research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities for improving education for students with ADHD, serving as a basis for applying pedagogical approaches and strategies.

3. Results

3.1 Definition of ADHD

A historical analysis of ADHD reveals that the condition is not solely a medical issue but also a social and educational one, requiring systemic approaches to support students and their families. There is a need for better preparation of educational specialists and parents to address these challenges.

ADHD is a neurological disorder characterized by three main categories: hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattention. Hyperactivity manifests as excessive physical activity inappropriate for the context; impulsivity involves difficulty controlling impulses and desires; and inattention is characterized by challenges in maintaining focus on various tasks (CDC, 2024). The medical diagnosis of ADHD is based on specific criteria outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).

3.2 Theories and Behavioral Models

Several theories explain ADHD, including neurobiological, psychological, and social models. The neurobiological theory emphasizes genetic and neurochemical aspects of the disorder (Faraone et al., 2005). Research indicates that ADHD has a significant genetic basis, with numerous studies suggesting that about 70-80% of the variation in symptoms can be attributed to heredity (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Psychological theories address the cognitive and emotional aspects of the condition, focusing on executive functions such as planning, organizing, and time management. Some studies indicate that students with ADHD struggle with regulating attention and controlling impulses, affecting their social interactions and academic success (Barkley, 2015). Social theories highlight the influence of the environment in which the child grows up and their interactions with parents and peers, suggesting that behavior results not only from individual characteristics but also from the context in which it develops.

3.3 Core Characteristics of ADHD

The Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) syndrome is classified into three main types: predominantly hyperactive/impulsive, predominantly inattentive, and combined type (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Identifying these core characteristics provides educators and specialists with essential insights into the primary challenges faced when teaching students with ADHD.

3.3.1 Attention Deficit

Students with ADHD often face significant challenges in focusing on tasks or activities. They may become easily distracted from the primary task, even in environments free of external distractions. This difficulty in maintaining attention manifests in several ways:

- **Easy Distractibility** – Students often react to sounds, movements, or even thoughts, which hinders their ability to follow instructions or complete academic

tasks (Alexopoulou & Batsou, 2023). For example, in the classroom, they may pay attention to peer conversations or objects in the room rather than focusing on the lesson.

- **Task Organization** – They may struggle to plan and organize their tasks effectively, leading to failure in completing assignments on time. They might forget homework or fail to prioritize their activities.
- **Difficulty Completing Tasks** – Due to their tendency to lose focus quickly, students often leave tasks unfinished or move from one activity to another without completing any.
- **Difficulty Following Instructions** – Students frequently struggle to follow complex instructions, resulting in incomplete tasks and assignments.

3.3.2 Hyperactivity

Hyperactivity is one of the most recognizable traits of ADHD and can manifest in the following ways:

- **Persistent Physical Activity** – Students may exhibit relentless movement (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024), such as running or jumping, even when calm behavior is required. This behavior can disrupt the learning process and irritate peers.
- **Inability to Sit Still** – They often find it challenging to remain in one place, especially during extended periods of study or class activities.
- **Frequent Interruptions** – Students may interrupt teachers or peers (Alexopoulou & Batsou, 2023), complicating communication and creating conflict.

3.3.3 Impulsivity

Impulsivity is associated with difficulties in self-regulation, often leading to the following behaviors:

- **Acting Without Thinking** – Students often respond spontaneously without considering the consequences of their actions. For example, they might answer a question without waiting to be called upon.
- **Conflicts with Peers and Adults** – Impulsivity can lead to conflicts as students may struggle to recognize social boundaries in behavior and communication.
- **Constant Attention-Seeking** – Students with ADHD often require continuous attention from teachers, parents, or friends (Alexopoulou & Batsou, 2023). Simultaneously, they may struggle to respect authority, are easily irritated, and are sensitive to criticism.

Understanding the characteristics of the condition is essential for developing and implementing effective teaching strategies that can be applied by educators and pedagogical specialists in the classroom.

4. Discussion

Identifying and understanding the core characteristics of the condition also highlights the challenges that may arise in educational environments. Examining these challenges, along with the pedagogical approaches and strategies for teaching students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), is essential for improving the learning process.

4.1 Cognitive Challenges

Students with ADHD often encounter difficulties with attention and concentration. They may make careless errors in academic work, fail to follow instructions and struggle with organizing tasks (Barkley, 2015). These challenges may also extend to the acquisition and application of new information. Common issues include slow responses to assignments, frequent distractions from external factors, and a need for repeated reminders to complete tasks. Research indicates that these characteristics significantly affect their ability to follow instructions, complete tasks, and stay organized (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). A lack of sustained attention can result in poor academic performance and place students at a disadvantage in the classroom.

4.2 Social Interactions

Social interactions are another significant challenge for students with ADHD in educational settings. They often face difficulties in building and maintaining relationships with peers and teachers due to impulsivity and hyperactivity (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). Students exhibiting pronounced impulsive behavior may be perceived as "disruptive," further complicating their social integration. They frequently struggle to understand social norms, leading to conflicts within the school environment. Some students with ADHD may display behavior that provokes teachers, thereby disrupting the learning process for the entire class.

4.3 Emotional Challenges

Students with ADHD often contend with emotional difficulties. They may experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety, particularly in situations requiring focus and attention. Many suffer from low self-esteem, a consequence of frequent failures in the learning process (Barkley, 2015). Furthermore, these students may react more intensely to stressful situations, making it difficult to manage their emotions in the classroom. This can lead to emotional outbursts or challenges in resolving conflicts with peers.

4.4 Physical Challenges

The hyperactivity characteristic of ADHD presents challenges in adapting to the classroom environment. Students with ADHD often find it difficult to remain seated for extended periods (Williams, Wright & Partridge, 1999) and seek opportunities for physical activity. This behavior can disrupt not only their own learning but also the

educational process for their classmates. Additionally, they often struggle to concentrate on tasks requiring prolonged seated attention, resulting in reduced productivity.

Table 1: Key Challenges in Educating Students with ADHD

Challenges	Key Characteristic
Cognitive Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulties with attention and concentration.• Inability to organize and complete tasks.• Careless errors in academic work.
Social Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenges in building positive relationships with peers.• Misunderstanding of social norms.• Impulsive behavior leading to conflicts.• Feelings of isolation from the social group.
Emotional Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased levels of stress and anxiety.• Low self-esteem due to frequent failures.• Intense reactions to stressful situations.• Difficulty managing conflicts.
Physical Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty maintaining attention while staying still.• A need for physical activity that disrupts the learning process.• Easily distracted by external factors.• A constant need for "movement" in the classroom.

5. Practical Approaches and Strategies for Classroom Work with Students with ADHD

Undoubtedly, the key challenges in educating students with ADHD significantly impact their overall development. To ensure high-quality education for every student in the classroom, it is essential to understand their individual abilities and needs. Based on research from various theoretical sources, the following list of practical approaches and strategies can be used for classroom work with students with ADHD:

5.1 Active Learning Methods

Active learning methods may include interactive and game-based techniques that actively engage students in the educational process. These methods increase student engagement and interest, which in turn leads to better absorption of the material. Examples include multisensory instructions, visual materials for task redirection, active response strategies, and other interactive techniques.

5.2 Structured Classroom Environment

A structured classroom creates a clear and organized environment with established rules and routines. This helps students feel secure and understand what is expected of them. The primary goal is to provide a predictable environment that reduces stress and allows students to focus on learning. Recommendations include creating a flexible physical environment that accommodates activity changes and spatially organizing zones for different tasks and activities.

5.3 Visual Aids

Incorporating charts, tables, color-coded highlights, graphic organizers, and other visual aids into educational tasks facilitates the absorption of information. These visual tools can help students effectively organize information. The main goal is to enhance information organization and support memory retention.

5.4 Positive Attention

Providing positive attention and regular feedback on students' efforts and achievements strengthens their motivation. Support and recognition can significantly increase student engagement. The primary goal is to enhance students' self-esteem and motivation, which is especially important for students with ADHD. Positive attention can be expressed through praise, assigning responsibilities, and providing positive feedback to parents about their children's accomplishments.

5.5 Physical Breaks

Incorporating short movement breaks during the school day provides students with ADHD the opportunity to move around, which helps them feel more at ease. This approach improves concentration by preventing fatigue and overload—common causes of difficulties with focus and attention among students with ADHD.

5.6 Social Skills

Conducting lessons focused on the development of social skills helps students understand the boundaries of social relationships. Providing opportunities for interaction and guidance on conflict resolution is essential for the successful integration of students with ADHD into the learning process. The primary goal is to teach students how to interact positively with their peers and manage conflicts effectively.

5.7 Technological Solutions

The use of educational applications and platforms that offer interactive learning supports engagement and facilitates the educational process. On one hand, incorporating various interactive materials and applications allows for the adaptation of educational content to meet the needs and abilities of students. On the other hand, it captures their attention and simplifies the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

5.8 Adaptation of Educational Materials

Adapting educational materials to align with the individual abilities and needs of students creates opportunities for their growth and achievement. Modifying tasks can help students manage their workload more easily. The primary goal is to reduce frustration and enhance students' academic success.

5.9 Partnerships with Parents and Communities

Actively involving parents and the local community in the educational process is of paramount importance when working with students with ADHD. Teachers can organize meetings, workshops, and training sessions for parents to discuss strategies for supporting students with ADHD and maintain regular communication with families. The primary objective is to foster collaboration between schools and parents by providing information, resources, and positive feedback. This approach helps build a support network that is crucial for the success of students with ADHD.

6. Conclusion

Understanding the core characteristics of ADHD is essential for effective classroom management. It is necessary to develop, understand, and implement pedagogical approaches and strategies that meet the abilities and needs of students with ADHD. Providing adequate support in education can improve not only their academic performance but also their social and emotional development. Collaboration among teachers, parents, and specialists is critical for the successful integration and achievement of these students.

Educating students with ADHD is undoubtedly a complex process that requires the integration of diverse approaches based on understanding and adapting effective strategies for working with them. Despite the numerous challenges these students face, every child deserves the opportunity to achieve their goals and successes, and it is essential to provide the conditions necessary for this.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Hristina R. Fidosieva is an Senior Lecturer PhD at the Faculty of Education, specializing in the field of special pedagogy. Her academic focus includes the education and support of children with special educational needs, with particular emphasis on neurodevelopmental disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Fidosieva's research interests span inclusive education practices, development and implementation of individualized education plans (IEPs), teacher training, and the integration of assistive technologies to enhance learning outcomes for students with diverse abilities. She has published extensively in academic journals and presented at international conferences on topics related to special pedagogy and innovative educational strategies for students with special educational needs. Fidosieva is committed to advancing the understanding and application of evidence-based practices in the education of students with disabilities, ensuring equal access to quality education, and fostering collaboration among educators, families, and communities.

References

- Alexopoulou, A. & Batsou, A. (2023). Digital technologies for students with ADHD. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive* 9(2) Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2023.9.2.0555>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association. Retrieved from <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm>
- Barkley, R. A. (2015). *Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder: A handbook for diagnosis and treatment* (4th ed.). New York: Guilford Press. <https://www.guilford.com/books/Attention-Deficit-Hyperactivity-Disorder/Russell-Barkley/9781462538874>
- Castellanos, F. X., Sonuga-Barke, E. J. S., Milham, M. P., & Tannock, R. (2006). Characterizing cognition in ADHD: Beyond executive dysfunction. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 10(3), 117-123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.01.011>
- CDC (2024). Data and Statistics on ADHD. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/adhd/data/index.html>
- Faraone, S. V., Biederman, J., & Mick, E. (2005). The age-dependent decline of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: A meta-analysis of follow-up studies. *Psychological Medicine*, 35(2), 197-203. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s003329170500471x>
- Tello, M & Argudo-Serrano, J. (2024). Teaching strategies for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in English as foreign language classrooms. Resistances. *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 5(9). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.46652/resistances.v5i9.143>
- Williams C, Wright B, Partridge I. (1999). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder--a review. *Br J Gen Pract.* 1999 Jul; 49(444):563-71. Retrieved from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1313479/>

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Special Education Research shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).