

# Workplace Experiences Of Youth Diagnosed With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Adhd)

Emma Thomas<sup>1</sup>, Boitumelo Molebogeng Diale<sup>2</sup>, Vera Victor-Aigbodion<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Department Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

<sup>3</sup>Department Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg, South Africa  
(verav@uj.ac.za)

## Abstract

The emergence of attention deficits in adults can be seen significantly in the workplace environment. Working-age adults with moderate to serious mental illness are employed less than adults with no reported mental illness. The study aim was to look at ADHD's effect on youth and their experiences in all areas of their working life. The population consisted of 6 youth between 18 and 35 years old who had been diagnosed with ADHD. This qualitative research process consisted of data collection; transcription; data thematic analysis; writing up the results and having a discussion. Three main themes emerged. First is the knowledge of ADHD, secondly the theme of mindfulness and thirdly the experience in the working environment. It was found that people with ADHD reported an awareness of stigma attached to ADHD, causing concern about what others would think of them after disclosing their diagnosis.

**Keywords:** Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Employment, Career, Social Constructivism

## Introduction

Currently, employment or the lack thereof is possibly one of the biggest concerns for many, especially with the current climate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the working-age population, one of the most damaging individual experiences is unemployment (Ahn, Garcia, & Jimeno, 2004, p. 1). However, with the recent COVID-19 outbreak, unemployment has become even more of a concern around the world. In South Africa, the youth between the ages of 15 to 35 is seen to be the highest unemployment percentage in South Africa (Stats SA, 2016). However, unemployment was found to be even more of a concern for individuals with moderate to serious mental illness. Work for people with mental health barriers has been a continual challenge for many years that need to be dealt with. Ebuenyi, Syurina, Bunders and Regeer (2018) found that individuals with mental health barriers have significantly lower rates of

employment than the general population around the world. As a result, it can be seen that for many years, individuals with mental health barriers have been fighting for equal opportunities in employment. In South Africa, Uganda, Ghana and Zambia, mental health has been seen to be a low priority, at national and provincial levels (Bird et al., 2011). However, Bird et al. (2011) found many factors are contributing to the low priority of mental health; these are the barriers not being considered to be a genuine problem; insufficient knowledge of interventions and socio-cultural beliefs of causes and treatment; lack of funding and stigma. A challenge with individuals who have mental health barriers is the continuing stigmatisation of people's view towards individuals with mental barriers regarding them as unable to work due to their mental health problems. With the continuation of stigma towards mental health barriers, a continual medical model perception towards individuals

with mental barriers is identified as still persisting, especially in the world of work. Therefore, the low priority and stigma lead to the understanding that youth with mental health barriers still have lower opportunities to attain jobs today. As a result, this paper aims to explore the career experiences of youth with ADHD as a Neurodevelopmental challenge.

### **Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder**

In the past, ADHD has been said to be a childhood mental condition, which has become one of the widest spread conditions for children (Langlois, 2020). However, in most recent years, awareness of ADHD in adults has started to increase. Asherson, Akehurst, Kooij, Huss, Beusterien, Sasane, Gholizadeh and Hodgkins (2012) express that more than half the children with ADHD experience their symptoms of ADHD in adulthood. It has been seen that ADHD in adults continues to be a diagnosis that goes unnoticed. The reason for adults going undiagnosed in adulthood is due to co-morbid disorders, like that of depression and anxiety, that get diagnosed instead (Asherson, et al., 2012). According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013, p. 59) in the Diagnostic Statistics Manual (DSM-5), for an individual to be diagnosed with ADHD, "a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity that interferes with functioning and development" needs to be evident. Typically, there are three types of ADHD; Inattentive type (ADHD-I); Hyperactive-Impulsive type (ADHD-H); and Combined type (ADHD-C) (Amaravathi, Murugan, Subramanian, & Geetha, 2019). However, these types will differ according to the unique symptoms that an individual may present and which type they are diagnosed with.

### **Workplace ADHD**

Mental disorders are associated with diminished labour market activity; people with mental illness are less likely to work, and those who do work earn less than workers without mental illness (Luciano & Meara, 2014, p. 1201). Harris (2020) states that adults with ADHD symptoms can demonstrate non-tolerated behaviours resulting in the individual losing their jobs or becoming isolated from co-workers. Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) it has

been reported that individuals with ADHD in the workplace, have higher levels of terminations; job changes, and a lower likelihood of full-time employment (Arnold, Easteal, Easteal, & Rice, 2010). However, section 6 (1) of the Employment Equity Amendment Act, No. 47 Of 2013 states that an employee cannot be unfairly discriminated against directly or indirectly on one or more grounds like race, age, or any other arbitrary ground (Government Gazette, 2013). What's more is section 5 of the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 states that an employee must take steps to promote equal opportunity in the workplace (Government Gazette, 1998). However, even though individuals with ADHD face these challenges, individuals with ADHD have their strengths in the workplace too. Robbins (2017) has expressed if individuals with ADHD are incorporated in the right way, with strategies and interventions, individuals with ADHD can be seen as "the diamond in the rough". Their success, depending on the context, comes from working with their symptoms by choosing a career that suits them and their symptoms (Schoeman, Albertyn, & de Klerk, 2017).

### **Effect the individual with ADHD has on the workplace**

Direct costs of ADHD are high but the indirect costs to society are much higher (Schoeman, Albertyn, & de Klerk, 2017). There are many influences that an individual with ADHD can have on the workplace. Adults with ADHD can have both a positive and a negative influence on the workplace. If managers moderate the adults with ADHD weaknesses and use their strengths people with ADHD can have a positive influence on the workplace (Robbins, 2017). According to Schoeman, Albertyn and de Klerk (2017), the associated challenges faced with ADHD, behaviourally, cognitively, emotionally and socially, can influence work performance which in turn influences the productivity of the company. Robbins (2017) explains that if the employers and managers do not get acquainted and adapt to the changing workforce, the company has a chance to lose money, effort, time, and profitability and put themselves at risk of being sued. However, this is not realistic as the fear of stigmatisation affects them making their

diagnosis known to their employers and managers. However, the individual with ADHD not only impacts the workplace but the workplace and the employees can also impact an individual with ADHD. This may sound positive but the impact the workplace can have on the individual can be both positive and negative. The biggest influence workplace has on an individual with ADHD is the impact it has on their quality of life. Quality of life is affected by the individual's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationship, and relationship with important features of their environment (World Health Organisation, 2020). Therefore, the experience that one has in the work environment can impact their psychological state.

Consequently, if the person, their employer, managers and co-workers do not understand and adapt to the changing work environment, this can lead to stigma and misconception towards the individual (Robbins, 2017). As a result, the individual with ADHD will then have lower self-esteem, leading to a lower self-concept resulting in impacting the work that they do, and impacting the company's productivity (Schoeman, Albertyn, & de Klerk, 2017). On the other hand, the workplace can lead to a positive quality of life for the individual themselves, their employer and their manager if they all understand and make adaptations to the working environment (Robbins, 2017). Furthermore, individuals suffering from ADHD are at high risk of being confronted with stigma, prejudices, and discrimination (Mueller, Fuermaier, Koerts, & Tucha, 2012) and the workplace is no exception.

Stigma has been explained as one of the largest barriers for individuals with a mental health barrier that negatively impacts their work-life (Szeto & Dobson, 2010). The stigma of ADHD from society fuels misconceptions about ADHD. For instance, where it is misconceived in the workplace, by their co-workers, that individuals with ADHD are lazy or undisciplined is fuelled by the stigma in society around ADHD due to the lack of knowledge. In correlation, ADHD in the workplace is commonly misunderstood to be a result of a person's laziness, being undisciplined or not believing that adult ADHD exists (Robbins, 2017). What's more is, having the necessary knowledge of ADHD, how best to

work with them; supervise them, and the best ways to construct successful management techniques will reduce stigma and enable the individual to perform to full capacity (Robbins, 2017). On the other hand, the stigma that is often directed towards individuals with ADHD, results in self-stigmatisation where they start to view themselves as a perpetual failure (Schoeman, Albertyn, & de Klerk, 2017).

### **The effect of the workplace on individuals with ADHD**

The awareness is growing concerning the importance that the workplace plays in promoting or hindering mental health or illness (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000), depending on if it is a positive environment or a negative environment. More negative than positive thoughts are seen in the "normal" workplaces that are seen as neutral and reasonable for all but discriminate against people who try to conform to this norm, which is sometimes difficult or impossible because of the differences in cognitive and neuronal functioning.

### **Medical Model versus Social Model and the individual with ADHD's employment**

The medical model versus social model is an important aspect that needs to be considered when understanding the influence individuals with ADHD has on the workplace and the impact the work environment has on the individual with ADHD. The medical model of mental "illness", treats mental "disorders" as though it is caused by physical factors (McLeod, 2014). Furthermore, these individuals with "disabilities" are thought to get back to "normal functioning" if they get treatment or care that will "fix" them (Goering, 2015). The stigma challenges that individuals with ADHD face, of their ADHD barriers, assist in their inability to work (Szeto & Dobson, 2010). Consequently, with people's inability to understand that individuals with mental barriers can work with the right management care and medication that the medical model view is still more utilized.

The social model looks at mental health barriers as the result of an unaccommodating and repressive society instead of the individual with a medical problem. What's more, the social model views helping the individual with ADHD through

psychosocial interventions, psycho-education; therapy; support or assistance, as an integral part of the management of the barrier (Schoeman, Albertyn, & de Klerk, 2017). Therefore, there has been research to prove that accommodating environments can also aid in more productivity for the individual and the company. Schoeman, Albertyn and de Klerk (2017) and Robbin's (2017) advocate using both the medical model and the social model collectively to improve the quality of life of an individual with ADHD in the workplace.

### **Employment options for individuals with ADHD**

Individuals with ADHD experience barriers in all areas of their employment, from job searches; interviews and their employment (Adamou, et al., 2013). When it comes to applying for a job, the symptoms that challenge them will affect the employment opportunities that they have. However, with the right career, individuals with ADHD can be successful and happy (CHADD, 2003). Although, in South African, the high unemployment rate leads to many not having a choice or option of a career that would suit their ADHD needs. As a result, many people may be in jobs that may not suit them and work with their strengths but focus more on their weaknesses, making them unhappy and hopeless and unworthy.

### **Strategies that have been suggested to help individuals with ADHD in the workplace**

Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC), the Learning Assessment and Neurocare Centre in London England, the National Resource Centre on ADHD: A CHADD program in America and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa (ADHASA) are centres that are trying to bring awareness of strategies that can facilitate success for individuals with ADHD to be incorporated into the workplace well. It is suggested individuals with ADHD should address tasks during a time most alert; use a timer to define periods of concentration; tasks that are boring need to be rotated with stimulating tasks; take notes for long instructions; audio record during meetings; distribution of tasks considering job

requirements and strengths; make phone calls go directly to voicemail and respond at a set time; make notes of intrusive ideas down in a notebook to avoid interrupting the task (Bernhardt, 2020). Bernhardt (2020) suggests noise-cancelling headphones; work hours where people are not in the office (Flexi-hours); work from home sometimes or a private office.

### **Methodology**

As seen in the previous section, the researcher was interested in learning more about the career experiences of youth with the neurodevelopmental disorder (NDD) – ADHD, as there is still a large amount of stigmatisation of persons with NDDs in the workplace. As a result, the design of this research was purely descriptive. When a researcher wants to describe, explore or understand the participants' behaviour, themes in behaviours, attitudes, trends, or relationship between people's actions, the researcher needs to use qualitative research (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout 2018). As a result of the researchers' interest is on the lived experiences of youth with ADHD in the workplace, a qualitative research design is needed. Furthermore, since this research aims to find out the experiences of individuals with ADHD in the working world, a qualitative phenomenological approach to the study was taken with a social constructivist framework. As a result, with this framework, the study aimed to understand through their interactions in the workplace, the meaning that youth with ADHD have created about ADHD in the working world.

With the objective of this research having been to make sense of the meaning the participants had in relation to the phenomenon of ADHD in the workplace, inductive reasoning was used. Inductive reasoning involves the researcher making a specific observation from what the participants express, to form an overall conclusion about the participants' experiences (Sauce & Matzel, 2017). Therefore, from the transcripts, the researcher made observations about what was occurring and formed an overall conclusion about youth with ADHD in the workplace. This approach is used in an attempt to describe the subjective experiences of youth with ADHD in their employment, to gain better insight

and understanding of what it is like today for individuals with ADHD in employment.

### **Participants**

The population parameters were determined to be individuals aged 15 and older that are legally allowed to be employed and work. Furthermore, considering the time constraints and the additional ethical considerations (of parental consent forms) that would need to be considered, it was not feasible to include the youth between the ages 15 and 17 years old. As a result, my intended target population was between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. In addition to this research's intended target population were youth who are of working age, the participants also needed to have been diagnosed with ADHD by a registered professional.

With the target population identified but seen to be too large and unrealistic to include in the research process, the individuals that are accessible needed to be identified. Therefore, once the target population parameters have been identified and the accessible population has been identified, the sampling process can begin. The researcher decided that non-probability sampling was to be used because the entire population of youth that are diagnosed with ADHD would be too challenging to access. Within this non-probability sampling approach, the convenience sampling method was used. The researcher used the convenience sampling due to the ease of access to the participants from the Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa (ADHASA), the ADHD centre in the Gauteng region in South Africa.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In this qualitative research, the process consists of having conducted data collection; transcription; data analysis; writing up the results; having a discussion and coming to a conclusion about the phenomenon.

### **Method of Data Collection**

In a qualitative phenomenological approach to research, the in-depth interview method or technique is used for data collection (Hanurawan, 2012). A self-designed semi-structured in-depth interview with open-ended questions was used to

gain a deep understanding of the participants' views, opinions, and beliefs about the phenomenon. However, in addition to the in-depth interview, a self-designed qualitative questionnaire was used. The biographical questionnaire was used as a triangulation tool, for the purpose of providing background and historical information on the experiences of participants with ADHD in the workplace. Consequently, with the aim of the research being to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of youth diagnosed with ADHD in the workplace, the best tools to use were an in-depth interview schedule and a biographical questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involves the processes and procedures where the qualitative data is interpreted, understood and explains the meaning of the participants' situation in the research findings (Schutt, 2019). With this study having been qualitative, a thematic content analysis was used for the data analysis process. The thematic analysis consisted of six steps to allow for an in-depth analysis. These six steps comprise; becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Once the thematic analysis was completed, the themes were used to aid in the understanding of youth with ADHD's experiences in the working world.

### **Ethical considerations**

With ethical clearance having been given by the University of Johannesburg, ADHASA in the Blairgowrie, Randburg area was contacted and approached for aid in finding participants for this study. However, due to time limitations on the research and the limited response from ADHASA, the researcher further decided to contact multiple ADHD groups on Facebook to find participants.

Once participants volunteered they were provided with an information sheet, including that their participation was purely voluntary and could leave at any time during the research. Once all aspects of the research were understood they were asked to sign a consent form. In addition, all documents that were sent to the participants, that

had their personal information was password protected. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the interviews were conducted via Zoom sessions, which were locked and private where no one else could access them. The interview sessions were recorded and saved in a confidential file, with a corresponding identification number between the participant's questionnaire and interview. What's more, to protect confidentiality further, only the researcher and supervisor had access to the participant's information.

### Findings and Discussion

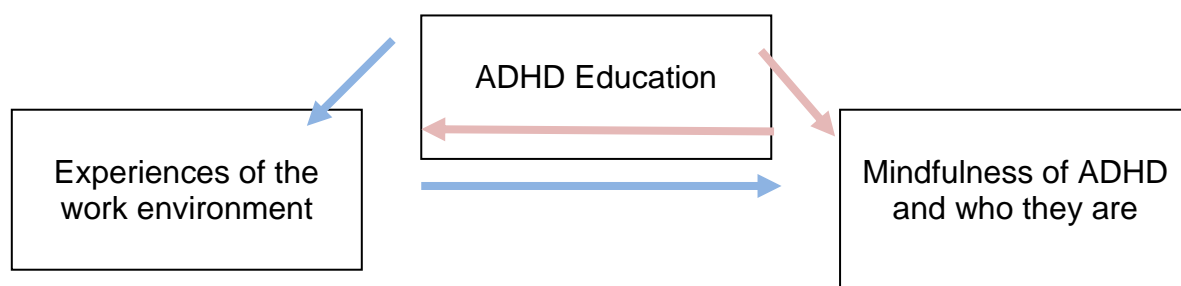
As mentioned in the previous chapters, of the increase in adult ADHD studies, the awareness of ADHD'S prevalence in adulthood and ADHD's effect on the individual's life has increased. As a result, there was a particular interest in understanding the experiences of individuals with ADHD in the workplace. However, no research was found on the experiences of individuals with ADHD in the workplace in the South African context. Therefore, with the limited time for the research, the researcher focused on youth and their experiences in employment. As a result, the purpose of this study was to then gain an understanding of the South African youth with ADHD and their experiences within their career aspects of their lives. The research focused on the possible impact that ADHD has on an individual's application for jobs, job interviews, employment, experiences of working with co-workers, and

experiences with leaders in teamwork. Furthermore, this research will aid in the understanding of what strategies may work for youth with ADHD in other companies, if they recognize the symptoms of ADHD in their employee or colleagues.

To gain this understanding, the researcher attempted to answer three questions. Firstly, what are the experiences of youth with ADHD in employment? Secondly, does discrimination and misunderstanding of ADHD affect opportunities in the workplace for individuals with ADHD? Lastly, is the stigmatization of individuals with ADHD the reason for the discrimination and misunderstanding felt in the workplace? Generally, it was found that all of the participants stated that they enjoyed their career and the work that they did. However, two participants mentioned when working for a big corporation they did not enjoy how the company has so many different procedures to follow. In addition to this, one participant expressed how the work environment that she was in, not the work, was the challenge that increased her stress and anxiety. Furthermore, the experience of the youth with ADHD in employment was more positive and less of a challenge when they saw their environment as warm and supportive.

The findings of the research will be organised according to the themes that were found and how they relate to the research questions. These themes are depicted in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Thematic Map**



Note: The participants' knowledge and understanding of ADHD affect their experiences in the workplace and their self-awareness and self-acceptance in a more positive way. In addition, their

awareness of ADHD and who they are, have also been found to impact their experience in the working environment. Therefore, the more positive they felt about themselves, the more they enjoyed

the working environment due to their increased knowledge and understanding of ADHD.

### **Category 1: ADHD Education**

People's attitudes and beliefs of mental health barriers are shaped by personal knowledge, and knowing and interacting with someone with mental health barrier and cultural stereotypes (Choudhry, Mani, Ming, & Khan, 2016). However, according to Murtani, Wibowo, Liu, Goey, Harsono, Mardani and Wiguna (2020), there is a poor to very poor level of knowledge/understanding of ADHD. Therefore, it can be understood that, what people have learnt and understood about ADHD can affect how people see individuals with ADHD and how individuals with ADHD see themselves.

It was found that the understanding and knowledge of the individuals with ADHD varied depending on their life experiences and having ADHD. For instance, where Participant 2 explained her understanding of what ADHD is as:

“...it was actually only in varsity where I understood ...I definitely learnt about it... in psychology ... that kind of peaked my interest to just look up a little bit further...”

(Participant 2)

Or where Participant 5 explained her understanding of what ADHD is, as:

“...like my inability to concentrate...also like um forgetfulness...like you kind of lose track of things...”

(Participant 5)

Consequently, this shows us that there is still a lack of understanding of why they think the way that they do. Therefore, it was found that more education on how ADHD works and its effect on them specifically, will allow for the individuals to find to work with their symptoms as strengths and not impact their work negatively. However, this lack of knowledge of ADHD in adulthood was also expressed by the participants to have been seen in others around them. Majority of the participants found that when it came to other

people's views, some people believe that it exists and others do not think that it is real. When it came to their understanding of others knowledge of ADHD, it was found to turn to the negative understanding. Canu, Newman, Marrow and Pope(2008) also found that individuals with ADHD in the past were judged more negatively compared to peers without ADHD. Furthermore, it was common for there to be misconceptions, confusion and lack of disorder-related knowledge when it came to ADHD in adults (Mueller, Fuermaier, Koerts, & Tucha, 2012). However, public prejudices rise partly due to this challenge from the inconsistency and diversity of diagnostic criteria that have been used over the last few decades (Mueller, Fuermaier, Koerts, & Tucha, 2012). Therefore, the added challenge of the inconsistency and diversity of diagnosing ADHD in adults has aided towards the misconceptions and lack of understanding in the community.

It was also found that the strategies that individuals with ADHD used to perform better in their workplace, was learnt through their own trial and error. For instance, things like diarising every little task and tick it off as you go; keeping as organised as possible; setting small realistic goals; having the freedom to choose how the day goes; some strict deadlines but not all of them so strict; work hard; some pressure is good as it will help start the work; time management techniques like a watch; exercise; noise-cancelling headphones; a separate office; diet; there needs to be structure but allowance for creativity and flexibility. However, some of these methods were unique to individuals, shows that no one size fits all strategy would work to help individuals with ADHD. Consequently, showing the importance of ADHD education on helping individuals with ADHD to find out what best works for them and be as productive as possible at work.

### **Category 2: Mindfulness of ADHD and who they are**

Although there has been an expressed need to have knowledge about ADHD to help the participants to find out what works and what does not work for them. This knowledge of ADHD has been identified as having an effect on the individual's perception of themselves and compassion towards themselves (Zylowska &

Mitchell, 2020). As a result, it can be understood that if there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of ADHD, it is likely that an individual will gain a more negative perspective of themselves and have less compassion towards themselves. For instance, the participants that have found what works for them and what ADHD is, has allowed for them to have more awareness of ADHD as a positive than as a negative. It has been found that knowing oneself in the present and being non-judgmental helps to develop self-awareness and self-acceptance (Klussman, Curtin, Langer, & Nichols, 2020). Bearing this in mind, with the participants having gone to increase their knowledge and understanding of ADHD, it helps them to understand themselves better. As a result, influencing the way they see themselves, in a more positive light.

It has been established here in this theme that the participants were quite aware of their struggles, conscious of who they are and not letting it affect their work-life and what methods they are alert of that has worked for them. Mindfulness has been shown to reduce symptom load in Adult ADHD Hoxhaj, Sadohara, Borel, D'Amelio, Sobanski, Muller, Feige, Matthies and Philipsen (2018). Therefore, the more the participants reflect and gain an awareness of themselves they will have less of a symptom load. However, Manor, Vurembrandt, Rozen, Gevah, Weizman and Zalsman (2012) found that adults with ADHD tend to underestimate their own ADHD-related challenges. Nevertheless, even though this didn't appear to be the case, memory and potential embarrassment may have caused this to happen. If then it is the case, the challenges they have acknowledged and been aware of, shows that there is still mindfulness occurring about the challenges they face and how to not let them affect their work.

In addition to the benefit of the change in perspective on themselves, the participants' experiences also showed the benefit of self-compassion. Majority of the participants showed self-acceptance. They showed it by saying that it wasn't as bad as many people think it is, most of the time I forget I have it or it does not cross my mind. Furthermore, self-acceptance was shown where many said that having ADHD was not their fault. However, one participant (Participant 4) demonstrated the least level of self-acceptance

but was seeking therapy for her imposter syndrome. As a result, with the lack of awareness from when she was young, learning, support from her mother and her current work environment could affect her self-acceptance. On the other hand Participant 3, who also was only diagnosed later in her life, when she was in varsity, was seen to have more self-acceptance than Participant 4. Therefore, it can be seen that the work environment where Participant 4 has expressed is a patriarchal environment; her boss isn't very supportive; micro-management and things being used against her could be affecting her acceptance of her ADHD in the workplace.

### **Category 3: Experiences of the work environment**

Understanding people's view of ADHD is dependent on their knowledge of ADHD and their awareness of their own thoughts and feeling of their ADHD, from the two previous categories, can affect their experience in the work environment. However, it can also be the other way around where the experiences in the workplace can affect how the individual sees themselves. By looking at the participants' experiences, it is understood that the more knowledge and understanding of ADHD symptoms, both the individuals themselves and their work colleagues, has been seen to provide a more positive experience in the workplace for the participants.

It was established that majority of the participants expressed a positive experience in the environment. As mentioned previously, the experiences in the work environment is linked to how the individual and their community understand and perceive ADHD. For instance, some of the participants being in the healthcare career field and having studied psychology expressed better experience at work because there was more of an understanding of ADHD. However, there were two other participants that also had positive experiences in their workplace but were not working in the health care field. Nevertheless, this could be linked to the participants expressed positive involvement from their boss' in their working life. Consequently, this shows that it is not the field in which you work that creates a positive experience in employment, but is a result of the management



style too that aids towards the positive experience. This correlates with Robins (2017), who states that the implementation of successful management techniques will allow employees to work at their full capacity.

Therefore, through looking at these different themes and then looking back at the questions that wanted to be answered, it was found that overall, the experience of youth with ADHD in employment, was positive. However, majority of the participants expressed that because they have found the strategies that help them work more effectively, they find that ADHD is not something that affects their life. Majority of the participants have also worked to accept as well and not be so hard on themselves when their challenges do appear. Therefore, ADHD does have an impact on their life they have managed to find out what works for them to reduce the symptoms and increase their performance at work. However, the positive experience in the work environment was further mentioned to result from their boss's support and guidance. The one participant who expressed a dislike for her work environment, not her work, found her boss to be a micromanager, with no people skills, with a closed door policy and is not approachable when she is feeling like she is struggling. Furthermore, in trying to understand if discrimination and misunderstanding of ADHD affect individuals with ADHD opportunities in the workplace, it was found not to be the case with these participants.

### **Limitations and Recommendation**

It was also found by Arnold et al (2010 p. 366-367) that "Individuals with ADHD in the workplace have higher levels of terminations; behaviour problems; disciplinary actions; job changes; absenteeism; lower income; poorer performance; more work-related accidents and injuries; greater levels of lost role performance; lower likelihood of full-time employment; poorer self-evaluation of functioning; greater reliance on teammates". However, there appeared to be a lack of information related to their experiences in job-seeking; disclosure of their diagnosis; and the impact their ADHD has in the workplace and their success in the workplace. As a result of these gaps, the researcher intends to look at youth who have been diagnosed with ADHD and their

experiences in the working world. For this reason, there was a particular interest in understanding the experiences of individuals with ADHD in the workplace, to aid in a holistic understanding of ADHD's effect on the workplace.

Although this research has found several aspects in relation to the participants and their employment, there have been limitations that could have provided further detail had these limitations not been there. One of the major limitations that had an effect on the research process was that of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID pandemic had an effect on the way that the researcher obtained participants for the research. As a result of these challenges in finding participants, this limited my time further on the research of finding participants; getting them to answer the questionnaire; doing the interview; transcribing; interpreting and concluding to a matter of four months. However, in this respect time also played a factor in limiting the gender that participated in the research as by the time the researcher had completed the interviews to be able to meet the deadline of the research submission, the male participants started to request if they could volunteer. Therefore, had there not been a limit of time, the researcher would have been able to include a male youth with ADHD experiences in employment. However, it would have benefited the research further, if the researcher could have had a larger sample size rather than just six participants. Consequently, to the small sample size, the researcher was unable to generalise these findings to other youth with ADHD and their experiences in employment.

Additionally, the participants that were involved were all but one from small companies. This then limits the understanding of the experiences of big companies and the experience of youth with ADHD in larger businesses. What's more, the researcher did not communicate with the businesses to understand the participants work performance and therefore cannot say that their ADHD has or has not impacted their work. Therefore, with these challenges and the inability to generalise results to other youth with ADHD in employment, further research needs to be done.

As a result, it would be recommended to look at youth with ADHD and their experiences in more of a large corporate environment. This is

suggested because, out of no choice to the researcher, most of the participants were found to work within a small business environment. Another recommendation, for further research, would be to decrease the time limit and then increase the number of participants to see if the conclusions can be generalised to youth with ADHD in employment within the South African context. In addition to this, with the larger sample size, this could also allow for male and female participants with more participants of different ethnicity.

What's more is future research could do a combined study of the experiences of the youth with ADHD in employment and their boss and colleagues experiences with ADHD symptoms, to identify if the experiences of the youth with ADHD matches that of the colleagues or bosses or if the youth with ADHD underestimating the impact their ADHD has on their work performance. Additionally, a research study could be done on the impacts of increasing education to employers and employees of companies and the effect that it will have in terms of open acceptance of individuals with ADHD in the workplace. Last but not least, because only one participant disclosed their diagnosis, further research can be done in terms of the effect of expressing their diagnosis and their experiences in their employment.

### Conclusion

To conclude, this research added value to the understanding that there were individuals that are having positive experiences in their employment, contrary to what was found in the past research. It was further identified that employers can use the information in this research to help them create an environment that is conducive to getting ADHD to improve their performance. On the other hand, it was also seen to be able to help individuals with challenges in the workplace what they can do to improve their experience at work as well as becoming more accepting of their ADHD is ok too. It was further acknowledged that the research has its limits. Therefore, the recommendations for further research will help to minimise the gap that was identified in this research, to further understand the impact of ADHD in employment within the South African context.

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