

Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach to ADHD Assessment: A Systematic Review

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INTRODUCTION

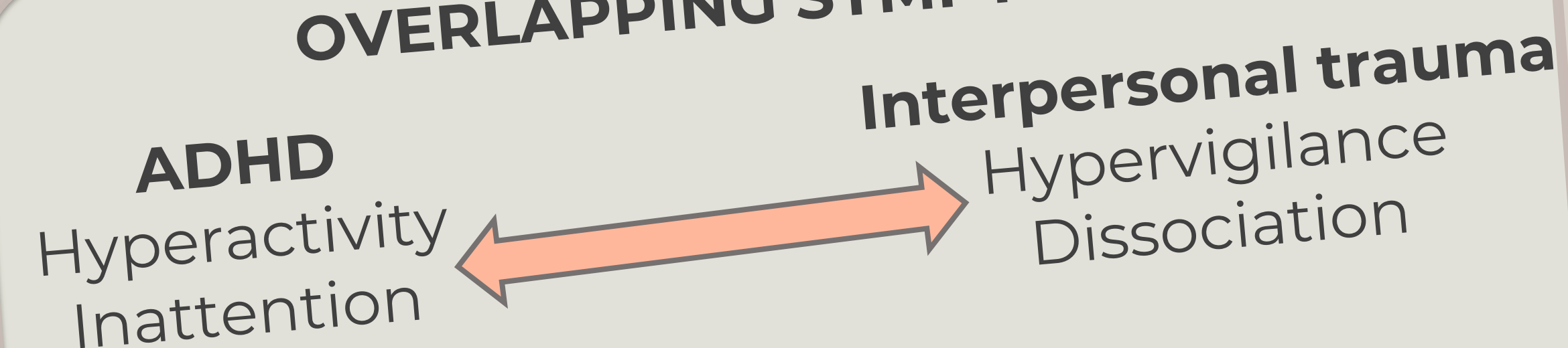
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD):

- ADHD diagnosis rates have been increasing drastically over the past two decades (Jerome & Jerome, 2020).
- There likely are many reasons for this increase. One may be attributed to the inconsistencies in differentiating ADHD from highly associated conditions, including interpersonal trauma symptoms (Luo et al., 2019).

Interpersonal trauma

- The recognition of different trauma types and traumatic stress manifestations has increased recently in the literature (D'Andrea et al., 2012).
- Many different trauma-related terms have been proposed to facilitate trauma understanding and identification, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- In this review, we use the term interpersonal trauma because of its inclusive nature – encompassing young people who have been harmed through relationships (often by caregivers). The overlap between ADHD and interpersonal trauma symptom manifestations has brought significant challenges in clinical and research work in terms of differentiation. This raises concerns about diagnosis accuracy (Jerome & Jerome, 2020).

OVERLAPPING SYMPTOMS



(D'Andrea et al., 2012; Selwyn et al., 2019)

AIM OF STUDY

Among published studies that have identified, screened, or assessed children and youth with ADHD, how many also considered interpersonal trauma-related symptoms?

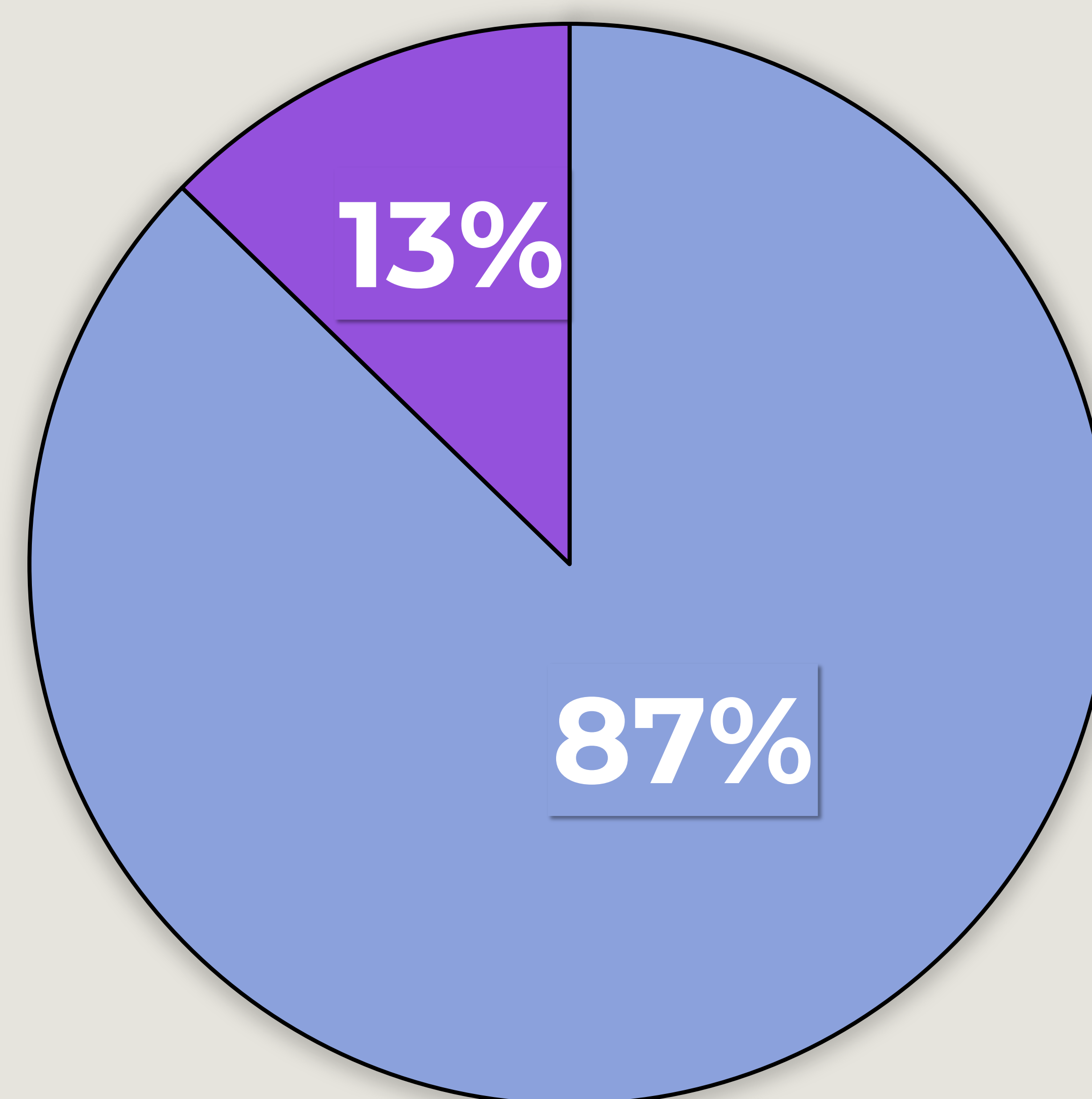
METHOD

Inclusion criteria for the systematic search strategy:

- Empirical studies related to ADHD identification, screening, or assessment in children and adolescents.
- English and French publications.
- Published between 2008 and 2023.
- ADHD identification for clinical or empirical purposes (e.g., symptom monitoring, diagnosis, and group controls for research).
- Any comorbid conditions considered.
- Databases: APA PsychINFO, APA PsychINFO (OVID), Google Scholar, ERIC (education), and PubMed (Medline-health)
- A cross-reference list verification of all relevant reviews and manuscripts was completed.
- Trauma types and manifestations were defined as either: trauma, PTSD, adverse events/adversity, maltreatment, or abuse.

Initial search results (n=1,013)

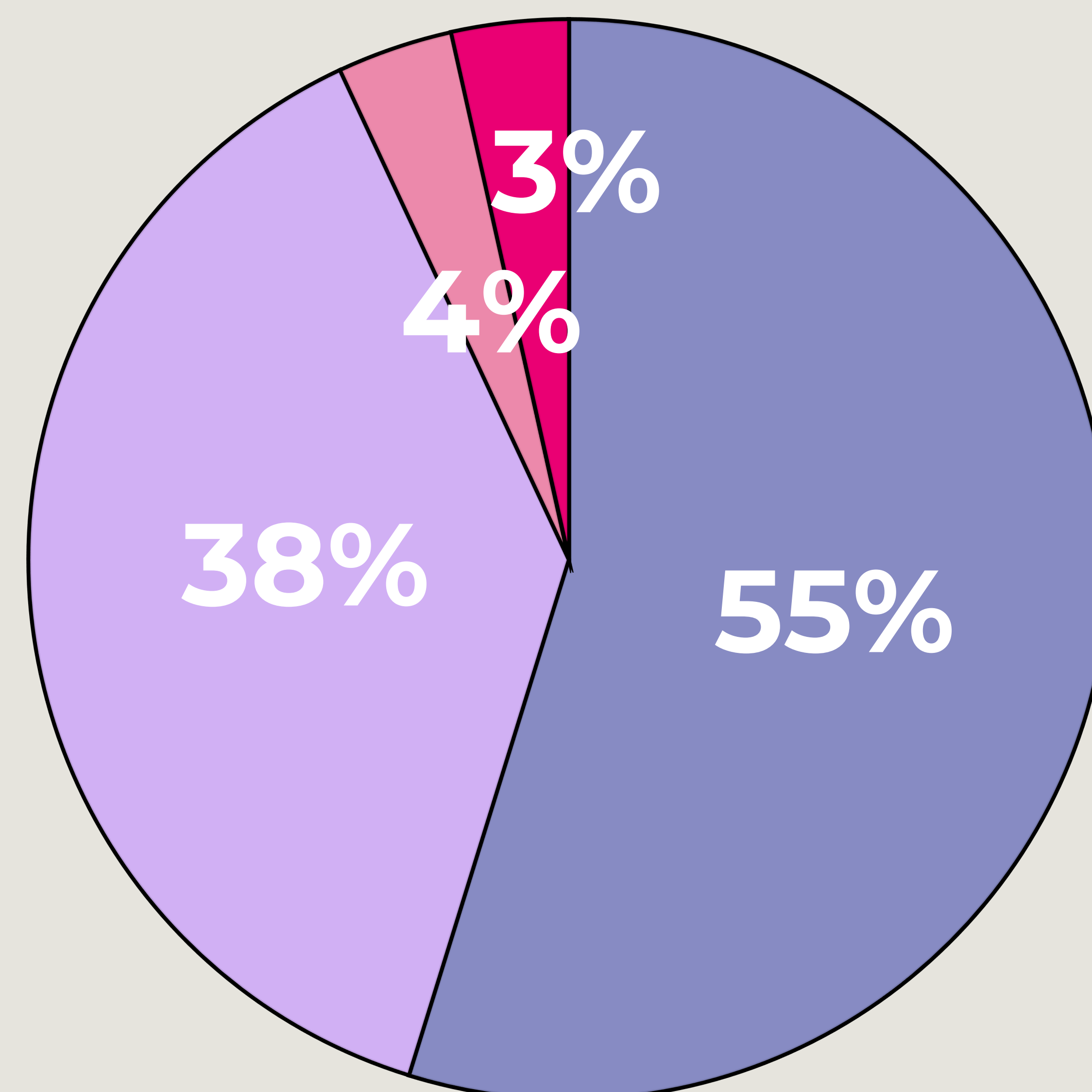
No mention of any trauma types in majority of ADHD identification-related studies



■ No mention of interpersonal trauma identification, screening, or assessment in the ADHD study (n=884)

■ Mention of interpersonal trauma identification, screening or assessment (n=129)

Data extraction results (n=112)



■ Only PTSD identified, screened for, or assessed (n=63)

■ Only interpersonal trauma identified, screened for, or assessed (n=44)

■ PTSD & one type of interpersonal trauma identified, screened for, or assessed (e.g., ACEs, child maltreatment) (n=4)

■ PTSD & multiple interpersonal trauma types identified, screened for, or assessed (n=4)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- In empirical studies that focused on ADHD in children and youth, there was a very low rate of screening and integration of interpersonal trauma in terms of its presence and/or potential effects on the young person.
- As expected, PTSD was the most likely to be considered in those few studies where a mention of trauma was made. This may be explained by its clear diagnostic criteria in the DSM-5 and its direct trauma-related outcomes (Bell et al., 2015).

IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Further results from this review will be presented about ADHD/trauma assessment procedures. Precisely, the types of methods and measures (e.g., interviews, rating scales), the types of assessors (psychiatrist, psychologist, psychometrician, teacher/caregiver ratings), the comorbidities assessed, and the variables measured.
- Considering the many potential adverse outcomes from being misdiagnosed with another condition such as ADHD while not addressing the current interpersonal trauma symptoms, (e.g., delayed physical and brain development, interpersonal difficulties, emotion regulation difficulties), the screening approach discrepancies found in our study demonstrate the pressing need to develop a trauma-informed approach and integrate it during the ADHD evaluation process.

IMPORTANT POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Profound beneficial clinical and societal impacts by increasing health practitioners' awareness of interpersonal trauma screening methods. This would, in turn, increase treatment efficacy by increasing accurate diagnosis rates. Thus, children's and adolescents' well-being and best interests would be accentuated (Jerome & Jerome, 2020).

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***Please note: more references available upon request.