Slow sluggish cognitive tempo symptoms are associated with poorer academic performance in children with ADHD.

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Abstract

Sluggish cognitive tempo (SCT) symptoms may confer risk for academic impairment in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). We investigated SCT in relation to academic performance and impairment in 252 children (ages 6-12, 67% boys) with ADHD. Parents and teachers completed SCT and academic impairment ratings, and achievement in reading, math, and spelling was assessed. Simultaneous regressions controlling for IQ, ADHD, and comorbidities were conducted. Total SCT predicted parent-rated impairments in writing, mathematics, and overall school but not reading. Parent-rated SCT Slow predicted poorer reading and spelling, but not math achievement. Teacher-rated SCT Slow predicted poorer spelling and math, but not reading achievement. Parent-rated SCT Slow predicted greater academic impairment ratings across all domains, whereas teacher-rated SCT Slow predicted greater impairment in writing only. Age and gender did not moderate these relationships with the exception of math impairment; SCT slow predicted math impairment for younger but not older children. Parent and teacher SCT Sleepy and Daydreamy ratings were not significant predictors. SCT Slow appears to be uniquely related to academic problems in ADHD, and may be important to assess and potentially target in intervention. More work is needed to better understand the nature of SCT Slow symptoms in relation to inattention and amotivation.