Do Individual Differences in Early Affective and Cognitive Self-Regulation Predict Developmental Change in ADHD Symptoms from Preschool to Adolescence?

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Abstract

Objective:
The role of heterogeneous self-regulation deficits in ADHD has long been emphasised. Yet, longitudinal studies examining distinct self-regulation processes as prospective predictors of developmental change in ADHD symptoms spanning wide developmental periods are scarce. The aim of the current study was to examine affective and cognitive self-regulation as predictors of developmental change in ADHD symptoms from preschool to adolescence in a sample with one-third of the children being at risk for developing an ADHD and/or ODD diagnosis.

Method:
At 5 years laboratory measures of hot and cool executive function (EF) and parental and teacher ratings were used for regulation of positive and negative emotionality. Symptoms of ADHD and ODD were measured at 5 and 13 years using parental and teacher ratings based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed.; DSM-IV).

Results:
Converging developmental paths in hyperactivity/impulsivity across time were found for those high versus low in early cognitive self-regulation, whereas the development of inattention symptoms diverged across time for those high versus low in early affective self-regulation.

Conclusion:
These results support the idea that different aspects of self-regulation are important for developmental change in the two separate ADHD symptom domains from preschool to adolescence.