Temporal and Reciprocal Relations Between ADHD symptoms and Emotional Problems in School-Age Children

Han GT, Chen YL, Tsai FJ, Gau SS.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:
The study aimed to investigate the reciprocal and temporal relations between ADHD symptoms and emotional problems in school-age children.

METHOD:
This 1-year longitudinal study with a four-wave design included 1,253 children and adolescents (254 third graders, 281 fifth graders, and 718 eighth graders; 50.9% boys). ADHD symptoms and emotional problems were measured using parent report of the Swanson, Nolan, and Pelham, Version IV Scale and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

RESULTS:
Cross-lagged panel analyses indicated that both inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms were associated with emotional problems over the 1-year period. However, only inattention symptoms demonstrated a transactional relationship with emotional problems, such that inattention predicted future emotional problems, which in turn led to increases in inattention symptoms.

CONCLUSION:
Our findings highlight the transactional and dynamic interplay between inattention symptoms and emotional problems and support the mechanistic role of inattention symptoms in the development and persistence of emotional problems in school-age children.