

Cross-sectional examination of sluggish cognitive tempo, ADHD-inattentive symptoms, and mental health diagnoses in college students



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Background

- Sluggish cognitive tempo is characterized by excessive daydreaming, mental foginess, and behavioral and cognitive lethargy (Dvorsky et al., 2021)
- SCT and ADHD inattentive symptoms (ADHD-I) are strongly correlated, but distinct constructs (Becker et al., 2016)
- Research has shown a predictive relationship between childhood SCT and ADHD-IA and depressive symptoms and psychopathology in adulthood (Smith et al., 2020)
- Limited research has examined SCT and internalizing symptoms in college students

Objectives: (1) Examine if SCT, ADHD-I, and internalizing symptoms are correlated and (2) if significantly associated, whether SCT and/or ADHD-I is associated with internalizing psychopathology

Methods

- Participants were 36 college students who completed a self-report online survey
- Data included self-reported SCT, ADHD, depression, anxiety and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Higher scores indicate greater symptom frequency
- First, descriptive statistics will be examined for all variables
- Bivariate correlations ($r < .50$ indicates strong effect) were examined
- Any significantly correlated variables were subsequently included in regression analyses

Variables	Mean(SD)
Sluggish cognitive tempo	1.78 (.64)
Adverse childhood experiences	1.76 (.21)
ADHD-inattentive	2.21 (.71)
Depression	1.90 (.57)
Anxiety	1.65 (.86)

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for examined constructs

ADHD-I is associated & positively correlated with depression and anxiety in college students

Results

- Bivariate correlations found significant correlations between ADHD-I and depression and anxiety ($r = .63, p < .001$; $r = .55, p = .003$)
- Regression analyses found ADHD-I was significantly associated with depression and anxiety in college students ($beta = .51, p < .001$; $beta = .67, p = .003$).
- SCT was not significantly correlated with any mental health construct
- Neither SCT or ADHD-I were correlated with adverse childhood experiences
- As recruitment is ongoing, this was an underpowered study. It is possible that SCT may be significantly associated with these constructs, which we will explore as recruitment continues

Correlations

	SCT	ACEs	ADHD-I	Depres	Anxiety
SCT	1				
ACEs	-0.21	1			
ADHD-I	0.31	-0.21	1		
Depres	0.26	-0.02	.63**	1	
Anxiety	0.14	-0.25	.55**	.63**	1

Table 2. Bivariate correlations

Discussion

- We determined a positive, strong correlation between symptoms of ADHD-I and depression and anxiety
- Symptoms of depression and anxiety are associated with ADHD-I symptoms in college students
- SCT was not correlated with mental health diagnosis
- Findings suggest a strong relationship between ADHD-I and internalizing psychopathology, continuing a trend that ADHD may not be solely categorized as an externalizing disorder
- Using a larger sample, future research should further examine SCT and mental health diagnoses in college students

References

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