
What Specific Facets of Executive Function are Associated with Academic Functioning in Youth with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder?

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The purpose of the study was to evaluate the relation between ratings of Executive Function (EF) and academic functioning in a sample of 94 middle-school-aged youth with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD; Mage = 11.9; 78 % male; 21 % minority). This study builds on prior work by evaluating associations between multiple specific aspects of EF (e.g., working memory, inhibition, and planning and organization) as rated by both parents and teachers on the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF), with multiple academic outcomes, including school grades and homework problems. Further, this study examined the relationship between EF and academic outcomes above and beyond ADHD symptoms and controlled for a number of potentially important covariates, including intelligence and achievement scores. The EF Planning and Organization subscale as rated by both parents and teachers predicted school grades above and beyond symptoms of ADHD and relevant covariates. Parent ratings of youth's ability to transition effectively between tasks/situations (Shift subscale) also predicted school grades. Parent-rated symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity/impulsivity, and planning and organization abilities were significant in the final model predicting homework problems. In contrast, only symptoms of inattention and the Organization of Materials subscale from the BRIEF were significant in the teacher model predicting homework problems. Organization and planning abilities are highly important aspects academic functioning for middle-school-aged youth with ADHD. Implications of these findings for the measurement of EF, and organization and planning abilities in particular, are discussed along with potential implications for intervention.