ABSTRACT

The term Sluggish Cognitive Tempo (SCT) refers to attention difficulties that are characterized by a constellation of symptoms ranging from excessive daydreaming to drowsiness, sluggishness, and lethargy. Although several SCT scales have been developed in recent years, researchers have yet to agree upon an ideal set of symptoms. In addition, it remains unclear whether SCT consists of a single dimension or if it is a multidimensional construct. The first aim of this study was to extend research related to SCT symptomatology and measurement by conducting a comprehensive investigation of SCT symptoms. A 25-item scale was developed to include each of the behavioral characteristics associated with SCT in previous research, as well as items from each of the previously identified possible dimensions of SCT. Parents of 301 elementary school aged children, ages 5 to 11 years, completed an online survey. Exploratory factor analyses were used in order to investigate the construct validity and dimensionality of the SCT scale. Results of this study provide additional support for the inclusion of 11 primary items within an ideal symptom set for measuring SCT. Results of the factor analyses suggest that SCT is multidimensional, consisting of three underlying dimensions which include items associated with daydreaming, sleepy/sluggish symptoms, and slow processing and task completion.

The second aim of this study was to extend research related to the external validity of SCT. Twenty-eight children between the ages of 5 and 11 years were administered measures of general intellectual ability, processing speed, sustained attention, and working memory, in addition to the SCT scale. Their parent also completed a measure of executive function (EF) in daily life. Results of this study suggest that SCT is significantly related to the EF domains of working memory and shifting as measured on a parent-completed rating scale; however, SCT
Kristin Roberts was not significantly related to performance on individually administered tests of general intelligence, processing speed, sustained attention, or working memory. Implications and future directions are discussed.