

COMPENSATORY STRATEGY USE DIFFERS BY LEVEL OF SELF-REPORTED COGNITIVE ISSUES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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Background

- Self-management programs can help persons with multiple sclerosis (MS) improve their quality of life and functioning.
- Up to 70% of persons with MS have cognitive difficulties, but few self-management programs have focused on compensatory skill development.

Objectives

- To explore 1) which compensatory cognitive strategies are used the most (often or all the time) by persons with MS and 2) whether their usage differs by level of self-reported cognitive issues.

Methods

- Participants:**
- Persons with MS ($n = 1,075$) recruited nationally through the National MS Society, Mandell MS Center, and University of Washington.
 - 80.6% women
 - 82.5% White/European descent
 - 69.1% relapsing remitting MS
 - Level of self-reported cognitive issues determined using the SymptoMScreen.
 - Mild:* Frequent adjustments made ($n = 549$)
 - Moderate:* Reduce daily activities ($n = 320$)
 - Severe:* Gave up some activities ($n = 206$)
- Outcome Measure:**
- 20-item Compensatory Cognitive Strategies Scale
 - Responses aggregated into three categories: Never/Rarely, Sometimes, and Often/All the Time.

Methods (Cont.)

- Statistical Analyses:**
- First chi-squares were used to compare frequencies of usage between the three groups, with Bonferroni corrections for pairwise comparisons.
 - If significant differences, then conducted individual logistic regressions with mild group as reference category, adjusting for gender, race, education, disability level (Patient Determined Disease Steps; PDDS) and MS type.

Results

- Thirteen of the strategies (65.0%) were used $\geq 50\%$ by at least one subgroup.
 - Establish a routine for placing items** and **use electronic reminders** were the two most frequently used strategies for all three groups.
- No significant difference in usage on three strategies between the mild, moderate, and severe groups:
 - Use electronic reminders** (79.3%/83.7%/66.2%)
 - Take notes during presentations** (65.2%/68.1%/66.2%)
 - Minimize distractions in the workplace** (44.2%/52.2%/53.9%)
- Compared to the mild group, the severe group had higher usage on 17 strategies while the moderate group had higher usage on 15 strategies (**Figure 1**).
 - Differences remained significant after adjusting for demographics and disease-related factors.
- Severe group also had higher usage than the moderate group on three strategies:
 - Slow pace of communication:** 41.0% vs. 30.2%, $p = .034$
 - Request accommodations:** 38.4% vs. 26.0%, $p = .008$
 - Slow down/avoid fast reaction times:** 63.4% vs. 46.2%, $p < .001$

Conclusions

- Persons with MS-related cognitive issues report the use of compensatory strategies, independent of demographic and disease-related factors.
- Strategies related to information processing (e.g., slowing the pace of communication and avoiding situations with fast reaction times) had the largest increase in usage as self-reported cognitive issues worsened..
- A cognitive-focused self-management program may be beneficial early in the disease process, as well as a therapeutic intervention across the MS continuum.
 - Programs may consider emphasizing strategies that become more frequently used when persons with MS report having more cognitive issues that impact their daily functioning.

References

Available upon request.

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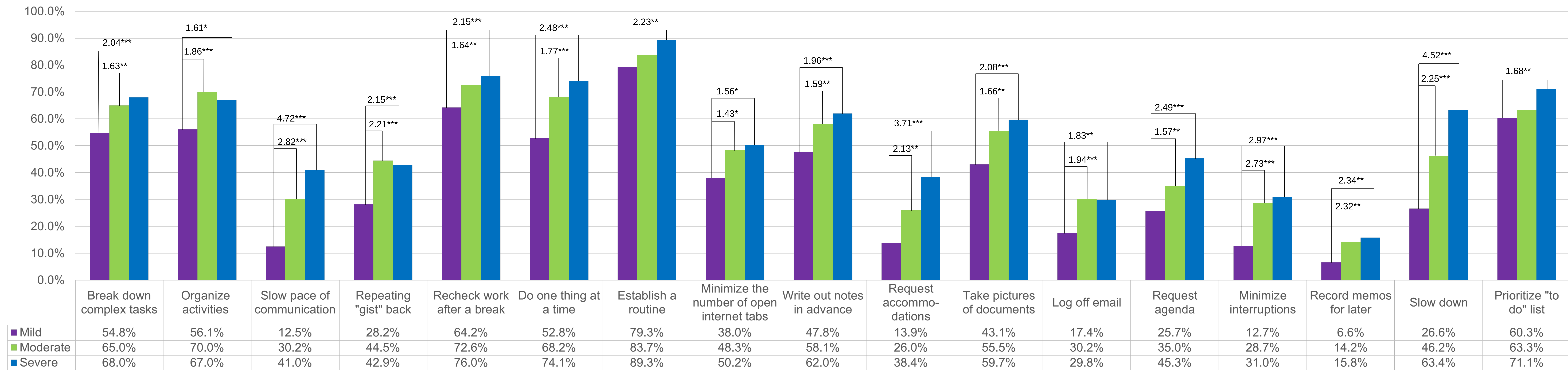


Figure 1: Strategies where the percentage of individuals who used them often or all the time differed between mild group and moderate or severe groups. Adjusted odds ratios (aOR) reported. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$