Is childhood trauma associated with current cognitive disengagement syndrome symptoms in college students?

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Background

• Cognitive disengagement syndrome is characterized by excessive daydreaming, mental confusion and fogginess, being lost in one’s thought, and slowed behavior and thinking (Becker, 2021).
• CDS has comorbid symptoms that overlap with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; Musicaro et al., 2020), which calls into question whether trauma exposure may exacerbate CDS symptoms in later life.
• As anxiety, depression, and emotion dysregulation are also associated with childhood trauma, we will include those as covariates in our model.

Procedure

• We include 217 participants enrolled at a private mid-size university in the Midwest.
• Participants reported on variables of interest using self-report measures.

Results

• Bivariate correlations indicate that childhood trauma is associated with high levels of CDS symptoms.
• ACEs are associated with CDS even when accounting for anxiety, depression, and emotion dysregulation (β = 0.074, p = 0.025) and 82% of the variance in adulthood CDS symptoms is predicted (R^2 = 0.82).
• Depression showed the strongest effect size (β = 0.67, p < 0.001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DERS Mean</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAD-7 Mean</td>
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<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.022</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDI Mean</td>
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<td>14.06</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACES Mean</td>
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<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Bivariate Correlations

Discussion

• Future work should be done to determine whether childhood trauma may cause CDS presentation; however, it is more likely that trauma may increase CDS symptomology since people without childhood trauma can also exhibit high levels of CDS.
• Intervention is needed to decrease symptoms of CDS, and it will be crucial for clinicians assessing childhood trauma to also assess for CDS.

References