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 ($\beta = 0.074$, $p = 0.025$) and 82% of the variance in adulthood CDS symptoms is predicted ($R^2 = 0.82$).
- Depression showed the strongest effect size ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$).

Variables	Standardized Beta	*t*	*p*-value
DERS Mean	0.15	3.13	0.002
GAD-7 Mean	0.11	2.30	0.022
BDI Mean	0.67	14.06	<0.001
ACES Mean	0.07	2.26	0.025

Table 3: Regression Coefficients; *Dependent Variable: Cognitive Disengagement Syndrome*

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

Becker S. P. (2021). Systematic Review: Assessment of Sluggish Cognitive Tempo Over the Past Decade. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 60(6), 690–709. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2020.10.016

Musicaro RM, Ford J, Suvak MK, Sposato A, Andersen S. Sluggish cognitive tempo and exposure to interpersonal trauma in children. Anxiety Stress Coping, 2020 Jan;33(1):100- 114. https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2019.1695124

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Higher levels of ACEs in childhood are associated with cognitive disengagement syndrome (CDS) symptoms in adulthood

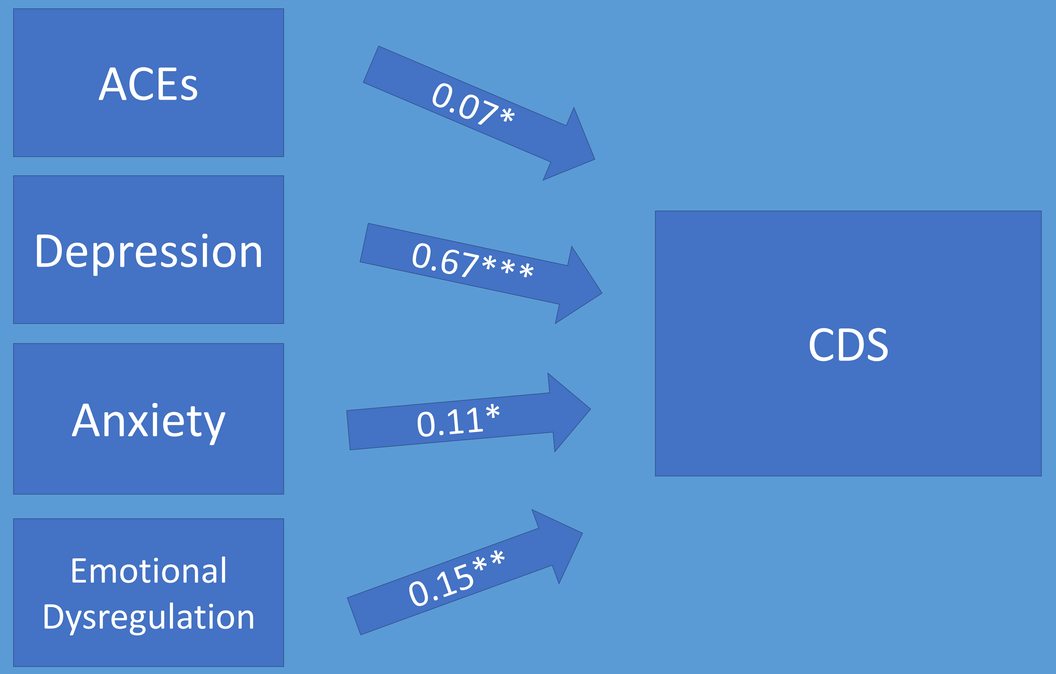

Figure 1: Hierarchical Multiple Regression; **** = highly significant, $p < 0.001$, ** = very significant, $p < 0.01$, * = significant, $p < 0.05$, = not significant, $p > 0.05$*

Pearson Correlation	CDS	DERS	GAD-7	BDI	ACES
CDS	--				
Emo Reg	0.76	--			
Anxiety	0.74	0.76	--		
Depression	0.89	0.74	0.43	--	
ACEs	0.47	0.34	0.43	0.45	--

Table 1: Bivariate Correlations

Model	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	Significant F Change
Step 1	0.82[a]	0.82	327.37	3	213	< 0.001
Step 2	0.83[b]	0.00	5.12	1	212	0.025

Table 2: Model Summary; *a. Predictors: (Constant), BDI Mean, GAD-7 Mean, DERS Mean, b. Predictors: (Constant), BDI Mean, GAD-7 Mean, DERS Mean, ACES Mean*

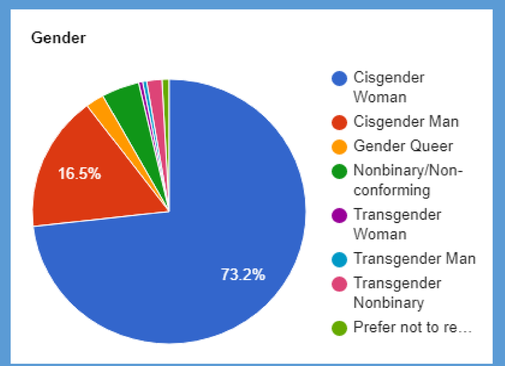

Figure 2: Gender; *77.0% Cisgender Woman, 17.40% Cisgender Man, 2.30% Gender queer, 4.70% Nonbinary/non-conforming, 0.50% Transgender woman, 0.50% Transgender man, 1.90% Transgender nonbinary, 0.90% Prefer not to respond*

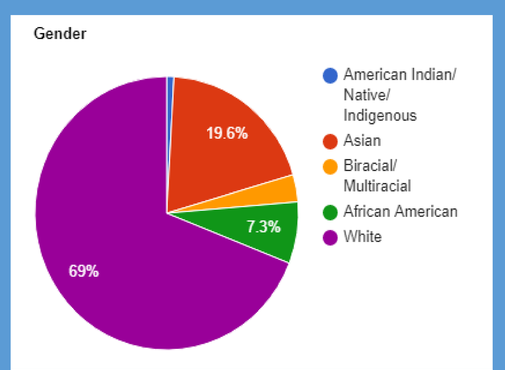

Figure 3: Race/Ethnicity; *0.9% American Indian/Native/Indigenous, 19.6% Asian, 3.2% Biracial/Multiracial, 7.3% African American, 69% White*