Family Cohesion and Youth Dysregulation: Moderation by Bullying and Gender

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Background

- Emotional dysregulation and adolescent psychosocial adjustment
  - Linked with anxiety, depression, substance use, etc.
- Family Cohesion as a protective factor
- The bioecological model
  - Relational Victimization
    - Being bullied as a peer-based stressor
- Gender
  - Girls and dysregulation, sensitivity to family variables

Boyes, Carmody, Clarke, & Hasking, 2017; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Deng, Li, & Tang, 2014; Herres, Ewing, & Kobak, 2016; Rabinowitz, Osigwe, Drabick, & Reynolds, 2016; Riggs & Brown, 2017
Present Study

• Aim 1: to examine whether relational victimization moderates relationship between family cohesion and dysregulation

H1: negative association stronger with high relational victimization (Stress-buffering)

• Aim 2: to examine gender differences

H2: negative association stronger for girls
Methods

• Participants
  • N = 1,098 7th and 8th grade students from public schools in CT & MA
  • Mean age 12.75, SD = .71, 51% girls
  • 51% Non-Hispanic White, 9% African American, 20% Hispanic/Latinx, 3% Asian, 14% Multi-Ethnic, 3% other

• Procedures
  • In-school data collection in fall of 2016 (PANDA project)

• Measures
  • Demographic variables: age, gender, race/ethnicity, parent education
  • Cohesion subscale of the Family Satisfaction Scale (α=.84)
  • Emotional Reactivity Scale (α=.94)
  • Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Scale (Reverse scored; α=.83)
  • Relational Victimization Subscale of the Revised Peer Experiences Questionnaire SF (α=.80)

Olson & Wilson, 1982; Greco, Baer, & Smith, 2011; Nock et al., 2008; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001
## Moderated Regression Results

**Linear OLS regression coefficients for emotional reactivity and poorer mindfulness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Emotional Reactivity ($n = 946$)</th>
<th>Poorer Mindfulness ($n = 813$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>$SE$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black/African American</strong></td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latinx</strong></td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian</strong></td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Education</strong></td>
<td>-0.034</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Cohesion (FC)</strong></td>
<td>-0.047</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relational Victimization (RV)</strong></td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>0.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender (G)</strong></td>
<td>-0.880</td>
<td>0.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em><em>FC</em> RV</em>*</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FC*G</strong></td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*<em>RV <em>G</em></em></td>
<td>-0.226</td>
<td>0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>28.22***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.15***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Girls and White adolescents served as the reference group.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*
Post Hoc Results for Emotional Reactivity

A. Low Relational Victimization
   - $b = -0.04, p < .001$
   - $b = -0.02, p > .05$

B. Girls
   - $b = -0.05, p < .001$

B. Boys
   - $b = -0.03, p > .05$
Post Hoc Results for Poorer Mindfulness

![Graph showing the relationship between family cohesion and poorer mindfulness]
Implications and Conclusions

• Cross-sectional evidence for stress-buffering effects of family cohesion in the presence of relational victimization for early adolescent dysregulation
  • Next step: longitudinal

• Evidence that family cohesion was more closely tied to emotional dysregulation for adolescent girls
  • Extends literature on gendered effects of family functioning

• Highlights the need for prevention/interventionists to consider multiple systems at work in the lives of adolescents, including the family, as well as the need to consider gender
Questions for Later Discussion

• Which characteristics of the family or parent-child relationships are most protective against emotional dysregulation or other developmental concerns?

• What individual differences may impact these protective features of the family?

Thank you