The Longitudinal Association between Peer Victimization and Depressive Symptoms during Adolescence: The Moderating Role of Co-Rumination

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BACKGROUND

- Peer victimization is a pernicious and pervasive problem which peaks in prevalence during adolescence (Modecki et al., 2014).
- The psychosocial consequences of peer victimization are well documented (Schoeler et al., 2018). Specifically, exposure to peer victimization predicts increased risk for the onset and exacerbation of internalizing problems among adolescents.
- Further, there is cross-sectional evidence (Guarneri-White et al., 2015) that maladaptive interpersonal coping processes, such as co-rumination, exacerbate depressive symptoms following exposure to peer victimization.
- Therefore, it is of critical importance to examine the longitudinal psychosocial implications of co-rumination among victimized adolescents.

OBJECTIVE

- Primary Objective: To explore the potential moderating role of co-rumination on the longitudinal association between peer victimization and internalizing problems during adolescence.

METHODS

Measures:

- The following validated self-report measures were administered at T1 and T2:
  - Peer Victimization: Revised Peer Experiences Questionnaire (R-PEQ)
  - Co-Rumination: Co-Rumination Questionnaire; Short Version (CRQ-S)
  - Depressive Symptoms: Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC)

Analytic Plan:

- Hierarchical Linear Regression Model
  - Independent Variable: Peer Victimization (T1)
  - Moderator: Co-Rumination (T1)
  - Dependent Variable: Depressive Symptoms (T3)
  - Covariates: Gender (T1), Age (T1), SES (T1), Race/Ethnicity (T1) and Depressive Symptoms (T1)

RESULTS

Table 1. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Depressive Symptoms (T3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline Depression</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-.06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived SES</td>
<td>-.57</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Victimization (R-PEQ)</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Rumination (CRQ-S)</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-PEQ x CRQ-S</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.17***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Z-scored were computed for Peer Victimization and CRQ-S
*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

CONCLUSIONS

- The present findings are in line with prior research which indicates that engagement in co-ruminative behavior may exacerbate subsequent depressive symptoms following exposure to peer victimization during adolescence (Guarneri-White et al., 2015).
- It is possible that co-rumination with close friends about severe interpersonal stressors, such as peer victimization, may generate negative affect and feelings of helplessness among victimized adolescents.

Implications:

- Future interventions addressing peer victimization in adolescent populations may benefit from providing youth with adaptive interpersonal coping skills in order to avoid engagement in co-ruminative behavior.