

Intervening between Family Functioning and Depressive Symptoms: Effect of Deprivation of Liberty, Self-Efficacy and Differentiation of Self

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Abstract : Poor family relations predict depression, but also to other mental health issues. Mediating effect of self-efficacy and differentiation of self and moderating effect of decreased accessibility and/or success of other adaptive and defensive mechanisms for overcoming social disadvantages could explain depression as a specific outcome of dysfunctional family relations. The present study analyzes the mediation effect of self-efficacy and differentiation of self from poor family functioning to depressive symptoms and the moderation effect of deprivation of liberty on the listed mediation effect. Deprivation of liberty has, as a general consequence, a decreased accessibility and/or success of many adaptive and defensive mechanisms. It is hypothesized that: 1) self-efficacy and differentiation of self will mediate between family functioning and depressiveness in the total sample, and 2) deprivation of liberty will moderate the stated relations. Cross-sectional study was conducted among 323 male juveniles in Serbia divided in three groups: 98 adolescents deprived of their liberty due to antisocial behavior (incarcerated antisocial group - IAG), 121 adolescents with antisocial behavior in their natural setting (antisocial control group - CAG) and 105 adolescents in general population (general control group - CGG). The CAG was included along with GCG to control the possible influence that comorbidity of antisocial behavior and depressiveness could have on results. Instruments for family relations assessment were: for a whole family of origin the emotional exchange scale and individuation scale from GRADIR by Knezevic, and for a relationship with mother PCS-YSR and CRPBI by Barber, and intimacy, rejection, sacrifice, punishment, demands, control and internal control by Opacic and Kos. Differentiation of self (DOS) is measured by emotional self scale (Opacic), self-efficacy (SE) by general incompetence scale by Bezinovic, and depression by BDI (Beck), CES-D (Radloff) and D6R (Momirovic). Two-path structural equation modeling based on most commonly reported fit indices, showed that the mediation model had unfavorable fit to our data for total sample [$\chi^2(1, N = 324) = 13.73$; RMSEA = .20 (90% CI = [.12, .30]); CFI = .98; NFI = .97; AIC = 31.73]. Path model provided an adequate fit to the data only for IAG - and not to the data from CAG and GCG. SE and DOS mediated the relationship between PFF and depressiveness. Test of the indirect effects revealed that 23.85% of PFF influences on depressiveness is mediated by these two mediators (the quotient of mediated effect = .24). Test of specific indirect effects showed that SE mediates 22.17%, while DOS mediates 1.67% of PFF influence on depressiveness. Lack of expected mediation effect could be explained by missing other potential mediators (i.e., relationship with that father, social skills, self-esteem) and lower variability of both predictor and criterion variable due to their low levels on the whole sample and on control subsamples. Results suggested that inaccessibility and/or successfulness of other adaptive and defensive mechanisms for overcoming social disadvantages has a strong impact on the mediation effect of self/efficacy and differentiation of self from poor family functioning to depressive symptoms. Further researches could include other potential mediators and a sample of clinically depressed people.

Keywords : antisocial behavior, mediating effect, moderating effect, natural setting, incarceration

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