

Clarifying the Possible Symptomatic Pathway of Comorbid Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among Adolescents Exposed to Childhood Trauma: Insight from the Network Approach

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Abstract : Childhood trauma can have a long-lasting influence on individuals and contribute to mental disorders, including depression and anxiety. The current study aimed to explore the symptomatic and developmental patterns of depression, anxiety, and stress among adolescents who have suffered from childhood trauma. A total of 3,598 college students (female = 1,617 (44.94%), Mean Age = 19.68, SD Age = 1.35) in China completed the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) and the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS-21), and 2,337 participants met the selection standard based on the cut-off scores of the CTQ. The symptomatic network and directed acyclic graph (DAG) network approaches were used. The results revealed that males reported experiencing significantly more physical abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse compared to females. However, females scored significantly higher than males on all items of DASS-21, except for "Worthless". No significant difference between the two genders was observed in the network structure and global strength. Meanwhile, among all participants, "Down-hearted" and "Agitated" appeared to be the most interconnected symptoms, the bridge symptoms in the symptom network, as well as the most vital symptoms in the DAG network. Apart from that, "No-relax" also served as the most prominent symptom in the DAG network. The results suggested that intervention targeted at assisting adolescents in developing more adaptive coping strategies with stress and regulating emotion could benefit the alleviation of comorbid depression, anxiety, and stress.

Keywords : symptom network, childhood trauma, depression, anxiety, stress

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