

The Link between Childhood Maltreatment and Psychological Distress: The Mediation and Moderation Roles of Cognitive Distortion, Alexithymia, and Eudemonic Well-Being

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Abstract : This study examined the inter-relationship between childhood maltreatment, cognitive distortion, alexithymia, eudemonic well-being, and psychological distress. One hundred and eighty-two university students participated in the study and completed an online survey comprising the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Cognitive Distortion Scale, Toronto Alexithymia Scale, Psychological Well-Being Scale, and General Health Questionnaire-28. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that child maltreatment, perceptions of hopelessness and helplessness, preoccupation with danger, personal growth, and purpose in life predicted psychological distress. However, alexithymia was not a significant predictor. Further analysis using the regression models with bootstrapping procedure showed that feeling hopeless, helpless and preoccupation with danger mediated the path between child maltreatment and psychological distress. Meanwhile, coping with beliefs in personal growth and life purpose moderated the mediation effects of distorted cognition on psychological distress. To conclude, childhood maltreatment is associated with psychological distress. This relationship is influenced by people's perceptions of life being hopeless, helpless or dangerous. At the same time, the effect of hopelessness, helplessness, and feelings of danger also depends on the degree of using coping strategies of positive psychological functioning.

Keywords : alexithymia, childhood maltreatment, cognitive distortion, eudemonic well-being, psychological distress

Conference Title : ICPPMH 2017 : International Conference on Positive Psychology and Mental Health

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : May 26-27, 2017