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Anxiety among adults with a history of childhood adversity: Psychological resilience moderates
the indirect effect of emotion dysregulation

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Abstract

Background: Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have been widely identified as risk factors for increased symptoms of anxiety across the lifespan. Little is known, however, about the processes by which ACEs set the stage for increased symptoms of anxiety in adulthood. The current study evaluated whether emotion dysregulation and psychological resilience influence the association between ACEs and symptoms of anxiety.

Methods: A sample of adult primary care patients ($N = 4,006$) completed self-report measures related to ACEs, symptoms of anxiety, emotion dysregulation, and psychological resilience.

Results: A moderated mediation analysis showed that emotion dysregulation mediated the association between ACEs and anxiety symptoms, and that the strength of this effect varied as a function of psychological resilience. Specifically, the influence of ACEs on emotional dysregulation was stronger among individuals with low levels of psychological resilience than among those with high levels of psychological resilience. These findings remained significant when controlling for a range of sociodemographic variables in the model.

Limitations: Cross-sectional designs preclude inferences about causality and self-report data may be susceptible to reporting biases. Other psychological variables that may be relevant to the current results, such as protective factors in childhood were not assessed.

Conclusions: These results have implications for the conceptualization of ACEs, emotion dysregulation, and psychological resilience in etiological models of anxiety. They also highlight

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