Childhood Maltreatment, Emotional Lability, and Alcohol Problems in Young Adults At-Risk for ADHD: Testing Moderation and Moderated Moderation.

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Abstract

Childhood maltreatment and alcohol problems are common among young adults with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). However, little is known about the degree to which maltreatment and alcohol problems are associated; potential pertinent mediating or moderating mechanisms, such as emotional lability; and whether this association varies by sex. We examined, in a sample of adults at risk for ADHD (N = 122, 37% male), the association between childhood maltreatment and alcohol problems, whether emotional lability mediated or moderated this association, and whether either role of emotional lability differed between men and women. Emotional lability moderated the association between emotional neglect and alcohol problems; maltreatment increased the risk for alcohol problems for those scoring high to very high on emotional lability, but not for those with very low-moderate levels. The association between emotional abuse and alcohol problems depended both on emotional lability and sex; emotional abuse decreased the risk for alcohol problems among men very low/low on emotional lability, but not for men who were moderate to very high on emotional lability, or for women. These findings have implications for the way in which targeting maltreatment and emotional lability may be incorporated into prevention and intervention programs to prevent alcohol problems among men and women at risk for ADHD.