Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

The Breadth and Potency of Transdiagnostic Cognitive Risks for Psychopathology in Youth

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OBJECTIVE: Multiple cognitive risks from different theoretical paradigms (dysfunctional attitudes, negative inferential style, self-criticism, dependency, brooding) predict depression, but may be transdiagnostic vulnerabilities for multiple psychopathologies. Risk factors can be identified as broadly transdiagnostic and relatively specific to psychopathological outcomes by organizing the common and specific aspects of each respective construct using latent bifactor models, and by examining links between dimensions of risk and psychopathology. This study evaluated (a) whether a bifactor model of cognitive vulnerabilities, including a general cognitive risk dimension (c factor) and several specific dimensions replicated in early adolescents (Mage = 13.50 years) and extended to younger and older youth, and (b) how the general and specific cognitive risk dimensions related to the general psychopathology (p factor) and internalizing- and externalizing-specific dimensions. METHOD: Community youth (N = 571; 55% female) reported on cognitive risks; youth and a caregiver reported on psychopathologies (depression, anxiety, aggression, conduct, attention problems). RESULTS: The cognitive risk bifactor model showed good fit and slight advantages over a correlated factors model. The bifactor model exhibited invariance across development and captured key associations that were identified when each individual cognitive risk was related to the bifactor model of psychopathology. The c factor strongly related to internalizing-specific, and moderately to the p factor and externalizing-specific dimensions. Specific cognitive risk dimensions (brooding, negative inferential style, dependency) related to all psychopathology dimensions. CONCLUSION: A general cognitive vulnerability (c factor) transdiagnostically associates with a breadth of psychopathologies and most potently to internalizing-specific among youth. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2020 APA, all rights reserved).

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