Abstract

THREE POTENTIAL MEDIATORS OF THE EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT ON SMOKING IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

by

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The purpose of the current study was fourfold (1) to determine whether abused and neglected individuals have higher rates of current cigarette smoking in middle adulthood compared with matched controls; (2) to examine whether abused and/or neglected individuals are at increased risk for higher rates of current psychopathology (anxiety or depression), negative coping, and past year traumas and victimization experiences compared with matched controls; (3) to determine whether current psychopathology, negative coping, and past year traumas and victimization experiences mediate the relationship between child maltreatment and current smoking; and (4) to examine whether there are sex differences in the relationship between child maltreatment and current cigarette smoking. Using a prospective cohort design, children (ages 0-11) with documented cases of abuse and neglect during the years 1967 to 1971 were matched with children without such histories on the basis of age, sex, race/ethnicity and approximate family social class and followed up into adulthood. Abused and neglected individuals and non-maltreated matched controls were followed up and interviewed using a series of structured and semi-structured interviews and rating scales that included assessments of smoking behavior, current psychopathology, negative coping, and past year traumas and victimization experiences. There were multiple phases in the study. This study used data from the second set of interviews conducted between 2000-2002 and the third wave of interviews that were conducted in 2003 to
2005. Current psychopathology, negative coping, and past year traumas and victimization experiences were assessed during the second wave of interviews (M=39.5-years old). Cigarette smoking was assessed during the third wave of interviews (M=41.2-years old). Child abuse and/or neglect was associated with increased risk for current cigarette smoking in middle adulthood and was found to predict current psychopathology, negative coping, and past year traumas and victimization experiences. Only current psychopathology mediated the relationship between child abuse and/or neglect and current smoking. Separate analyses for males and females revealed significant sex differences. Child abuse and/or neglect was associated with an increased risk for current cigarette smoking for females only. Child abuse and/or neglect was associated with current psychopathology and past year traumas and victimization experiences for males and females and was found to be associated with negative coping for males only. These results suggest the importance of considering the roles of current psychopathology and coping styles in cigarette smoking prevention and intervention among the maltreated population.