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Gender differences in depression: The association with repeat bully victimizations

Jennifer Hartman

The University of North Carolina, USA

There has been limited research focusing on the association of early childhood bully victimizations and levels of depression in adulthood. The present study investigates this relationship while controlling for prior levels of mental health as well as a variety of stressful events that occur in the participants' lives. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), a population-based longitudinal study of individuals who were between the ages of 12 and 16 as of December 31, 1996, repeat bully victimizations were assessed before the age of 12. These measures were associated with measures of depression beginning in late adolescence and into adulthood. Subgroup analyses were then conducted to explore the potential differences across categories of sex and race. Data indicate that repeat bully victimizations experienced before the age of 12 were associated with higher levels of depression in late adolescence and adulthood. Gender subgroup analyses revealed that these relationships were specific to females only; levels of depression for male respondents were not related to repeat bully victimizations. Race subgroup analyses revealed that whites were primarily affected in late adolescence while non-whites were impacted in adulthood. Being the victim of a bully during childhood serves as a marker for subsequent mental health problems in late adolescence and adulthood. Prevention and intervention programs aimed at reducing mental health problems would benefit by targeting bully victimization occurring early in the life course.

Biography

Jennifer Hartman currently serves as a consultant to multiple local community committees, including the Domestic Violence Advocacy Council; Women's Issue Committee for the League of Women Voters; Violence Committee for the Women's Summit and is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the UNC Charlotte Women and Gender Program. She teaches courses in research methods and introduction to criminal justice in the undergraduate curriculum and race, gender and justice at the graduate and undergraduate curriculum.

jhartman@uncc.edu

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