

THE MODERATING ROLE OF MINDFULNESS AND GENDER IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILD MALTREATMENT AND EXPRESSION OF AFFECTION

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INTRODUCTION

- Empirical findings highlight deleterious effects of different types of child maltreatment (CM) on couple satisfaction, especially expression of affection including sex (Bigras et al., 2015; Colman & Widom, 2004).
- The accumulated experience of different types of CM (i.e., cumulative child maltreatment – CCM) is associated with more complex and severe symptoms (Elliott et al., 2009; Hodges et al., 2013).
 - Including difficulties in intimacy with a partner (Davis et al., 2001) and dyadic adjustment (Godbout et al., 2006)

INTRODUCTION

- Mindfulness is a key variable to understand the impacts of CCM (Godbout et al., 2016):
 - Reduction of experiential avoidance
 - Increase of self-regulatory capacities
- Mindfulness is linked to higher couple satisfaction (Barnes et al., 2007; Wachs & Cordova, 2007).
- Few studies have documented the potential role of mindfulness in the relationship between CCM and expression of affection and sexuality in men and women.

INTRODUCTION – OBJECTIVE

- This study aims to **examine the moderating role of mindfulness in the link between CCM and expression of affection within an intimate bond, across gender.**



INTRODUCTION – PROCEDURE

- Procedure:
 - Recruitment through interns in clinical sexology (M.A. students)
 - Consulting for sexual and/or conjugal difficulties
 - Given questionnaires within the evaluation phase
 - Varied clinical settings:
 - Ex: Sexology Clinic at UQAM, hospitals, medical clinics

METHODOLOGY – PARTICIPANTS

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics

- $N = 199$ adults
 - 46,7% are in a common-law relationship or live with their partner
- Mean age = 38 years old
 - $SD = 13$ years; ranging from 17 to 73 years old
- 89,1% Canadians
- 88.4% heterosexuals
 - 4.5% homosexuals; 6.0% bisexuals; 1.0% other
- 64.2% workers
 - 12.8% students; 8.1% retired; 7.4% unemployed; 6.1% at home; 1.4% other
- Level of completed education: 41,7% University (across all levels)
 - 36.7% College; 18% High School; 3.5 % Elementary

METHODOLOGY – QUESTIONNAIRES

■ Cumulative Child maltreatment (range from 0 to 8)

- Early Trauma Inventory Self-Report (Bremner et al., 2007) and items derived from other studies on child maltreatment (see Briere et al., 2012; Godbout et al., 2011)
 - *Child sexual abuse; Parental physical and emotional abuse; Parental physical and emotional neglect; Witnessing parental physical and emotional abuse; Peer bullying*

■ Expression of affection

- Subscale of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Baillargeon et al., 1986; Spanier, 1976)
 - EX: agreement as to *demonstration of affection, sexual relations* and if *being too tired/occupied to have sex, not showing love* caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship

■ Mindfulness

- Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003)
 - EX: *I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present, I find myself preoccupied with the future of the past*

RESULTS – PREVALENCE

Table 2. Prevalence of child maltreatment in patients consulting in sex therapy

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Child sexual abuse (CSA)	52.8	22.2
Parental physical abuse	51.2	49.3
Parental emotional abuse	61.2	58.9
Parental physical neglect	22.1	27.4
Parental emotional neglect	73.6	68.5
Witnessing parental physical abuse	23.8	12.3
Witnessing parental emotional abuse	64.5	46.6
Peer bullying	61.8	67.1

RESULTS – MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Table 3a. Means and standard deviations (SD)

	Means (F/H)	SD (F/H)
Cumulative child maltreatment (CCM)	3.9 (4.1 / 3.5)	2.3 (2.3 / 2.1)

Table 3b. Means and standard deviations (SD) according to the number of trauma

	0	1-3	4	5 and +
Mindfulness	74.1 (10.1)	67.6 (12.8)	62.9 (13.2)	59.1 (12.8)
- Women	74.0 (9.3)	67.1 (12.0)	62.1 (12.7)	58.2 (12.4)
- Men	74.3 (12.3)	68.3 (14.0)	65.0 (16.0)	60.9 (13.6)
Expression of affection	8.0 (3.6)	7.5 (2.4)	6.3 (2.4)	6.6 (2.7)
- Women	7.6 (3.8)	7.3 (2.7)	6.4 (2.7)	6.6 (2.7)
- Men	8.6 (3.6)	7.8 (1.9)	5.8 (1.5)	6.6 (2.8)

RESULTS – CORRELATIONS

Table 4a. Correlations

	Mindfulness	Expression of affection
Cumulative child maltreatment	-.38**	-.19**
Cumulative child maltreatment - Women	-.42**	-.16
Cumulative child maltreatment - Men	-.29*	-.25*

Table 4b. Correlations

	Expression of affection
Mindfulness	.22**
Mindfulness - Women	.31*
Mindfulness - Men	.07

RESULTS – REGRESSION ANALYSIS

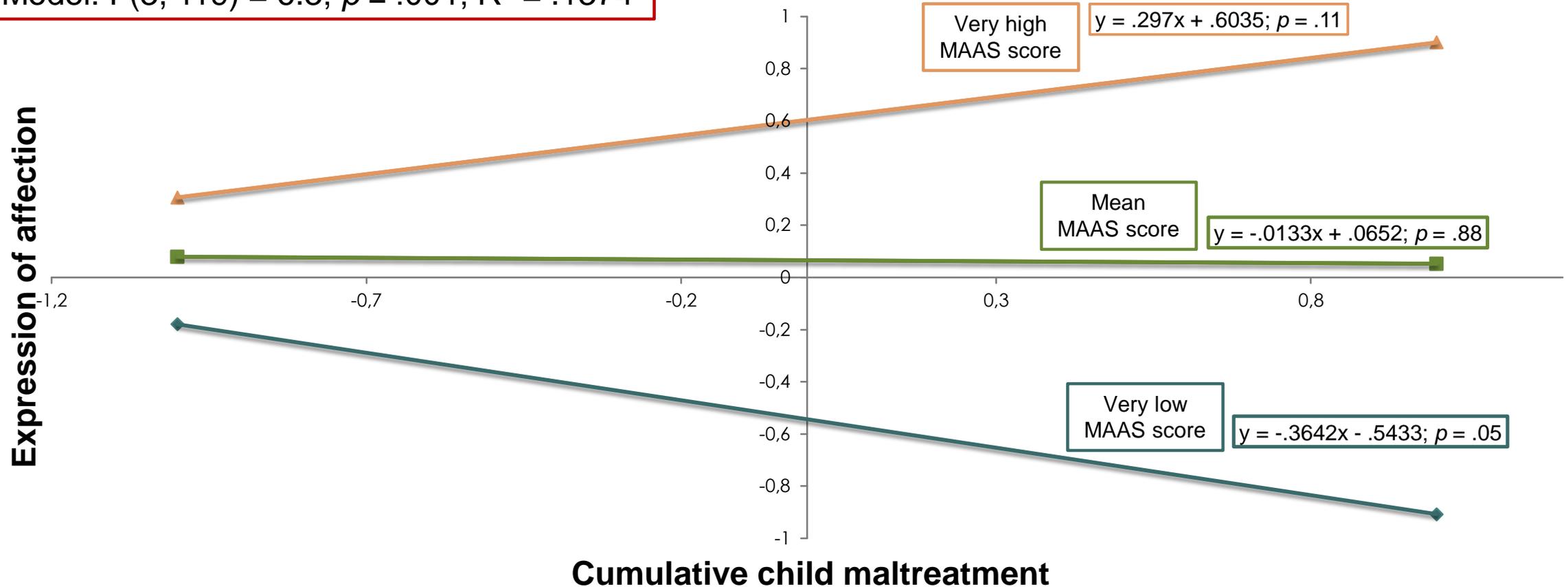
Table 5. Regression predicting how the patients are in agreement with their partners regarding expression of affection and sex

	coeff.	Se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Mindfulness	.0615	.1091	.5635	.5750	-.1562	.2791
Cumulative child maltreatment	-.3315	.1248	-2.6561	.0098	-.5805	-.0824
Interaction	.0083	.1148	.0722	.9426	-.2207	.2373

	coeff.	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Mindfulness	.3063	.1013	3.0236	.0031	.1057	.5069
Cumulative child maltreatment	-.0176	.0942	-.1873	.8518	-.2042	.1689
Interaction	.1766	.0848	2.0829	.0394	.0087	.3445

RESULTS – MODERATION MODEL IN WOMEN

Model: $F(3, 119) = 6.3; p \leq .001; R^2 = .1374$



CONCLUSION

- On average, nearly 4 different types of CM have been reported by the individuals who seek treatment for sexual and/or conjugal difficulties.
- In men and women, CCM was related with lower agreement regarding expression of affection.
- In women, however, mindfulness was found to act as a protective factor in the link between the CCM and difficulties with the expression of affection and sex.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations:

- Clinical sample in sexology, restricts the possibility to generalize our results to all
- Relatively small sample, a little more women

Future research:

- Verify the patterns for different types of child maltreatment
- Longitudinal study comparing the data before and after the therapy

CONCLUSION – CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Importance to assess the experience of various types of CM in clinical settings.
- Women consulting for sexual and/or conjugal difficulties may benefit from treatment that incorporate mindfulness elements such as *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)* (Teasdale, Segal, & Williams, 1995) and *Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT)* (Hayes et al., 1999) to increase their expression of affection and sexuality.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



QUESTIONS?

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