



Promoting Positivity: The Interaction of Optimism and Coping on Depression

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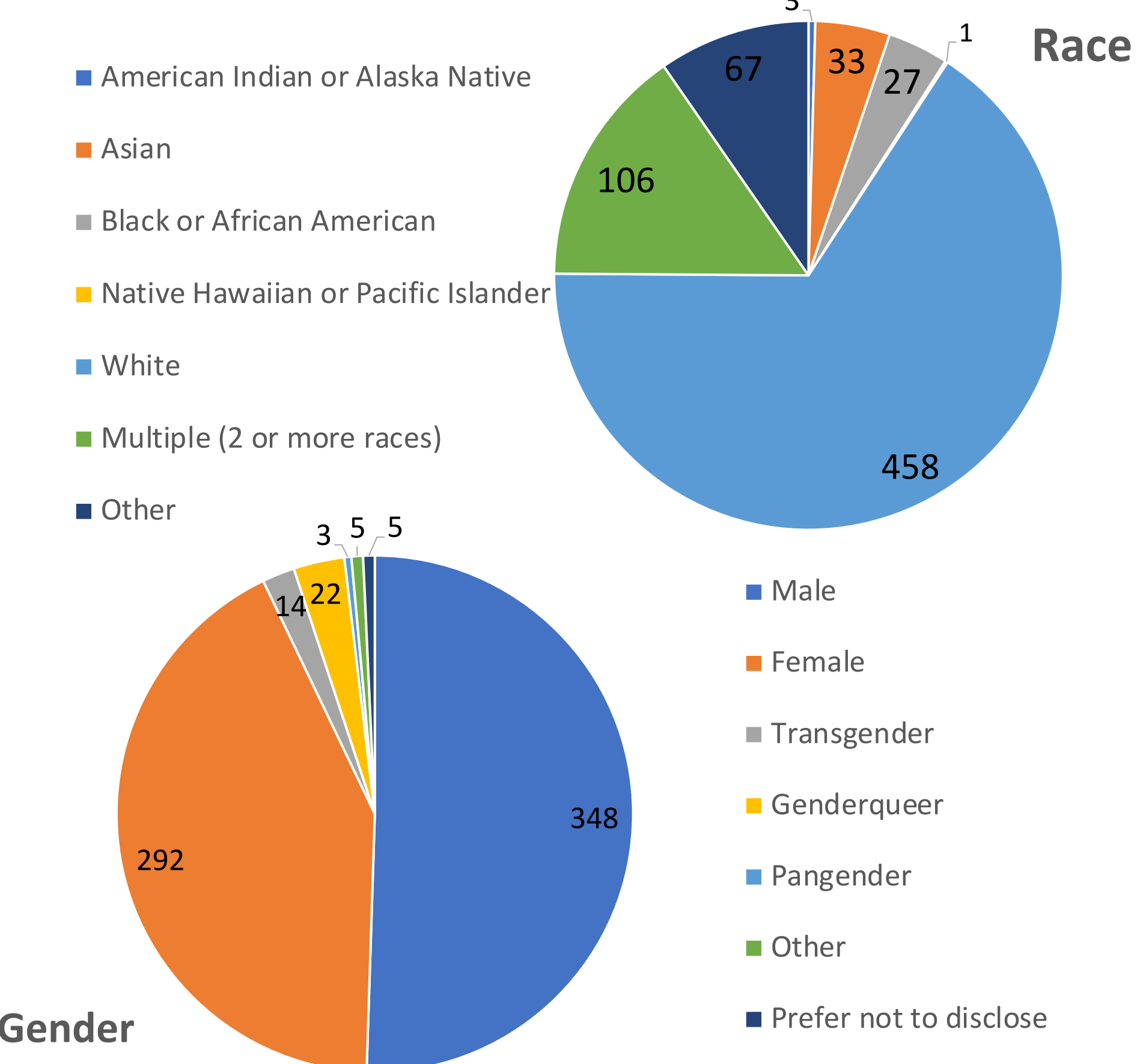


Introduction

- Maladaptive coping has been shown to be detrimental in the treatment of depression in adults, impeding therapeutic approaches that work to enhance these skills for clients with depression (Adler et al., 2015).
- Research has suggested the importance of optimism is an additional factor influencing mental health outcomes and impacting coping skill strategies (Nes & Segersrom, 2006).
- Optimism refers to a general disposition to expect positive outcomes in the future. According to previous research, optimism has been shown to have a positive impact on both mental and physical health, and coping with aversive events (Conversano, et al., 2010).
- Research has shown that optimism is associated with an increase in problem-solving coping and fewer depressive symptoms for individuals during their first year of college (Brissette et al., 2002).
- While there are many factors that impact depressive symptoms, there is a lack of research addressing the impact of optimism in relation to both coping and depressive symptoms.

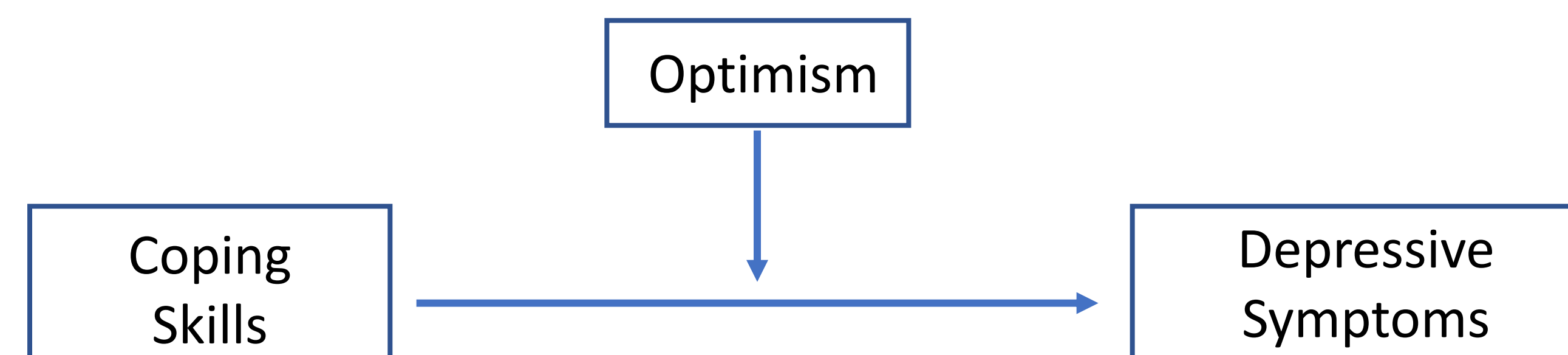
Demographics

Participant ages ranged from 19-25 ($M = 21.52$, $SD=2.03$)



Methods

- Data for the current study were collected through an international survey between May 2016 and March 2017 using the Qualtrics online platform.
- This survey examined the supports youth and young adults need for social-emotional development.
- Participants' ages ranged from 13 to 25 years old, with 1,178 youth (ages 13-18) and 4,154 young adults (ages 19-25).
- The current study focuses on the sample of young adults who filled out measures analyzing self-reported perceptions of coping skills, optimism, and depressive symptoms ($n=695$).
- Constructs were measured using the *Brief Resilient Coping Scale* (Sinclair, 2004), a 4-item scale assessing *Optimism* (Sabatelli & Anderson, 2005), and the *Beck Depression Inventory* (Beck, 1996).
- It was hypothesized that there would be a moderating effect of optimism on the influence of coping skills on depression.



Results

- To test optimism as a potential moderator, preliminary correlational analyses were conducted to determine if there were significant relationships between perceived coping skills, optimism, and depressive symptoms. Results did not find a significant correlation between all of these variables.
- Correlational results indicated a significant positive relationship between reported optimism and perceived coping ($r(695) = .221$, $p < .001$) and a significant negative relationship between optimism and depressive symptoms ($r(695) = -.330$, $p < .001$).
- A simple linear regression was conducted to explore the relationship between optimism and depressive symptoms. Results from the simple linear regression found that the model was significant ($F(695) = 84.965$, $p < .001$), indicating optimism significantly predicted depressive symptoms and explained 10.97% of the variance in reported depressive symptoms.

	Optimism	Coping	Depression
Optimism	-		
Coping	.221**	-	
Depression	-.330**	-.057	-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Regression Results for Optimism, Perceived Coping, and Depression					
	B	SE(B)	β	t	p
Optimism	-4.327	1.259	-.573	-3.438	.001
Coping	-.191	.608	-.013	-.314	.754
Coping x Optimism	.475	.324	.252	1.468	.143

Discussion

- The current study suggests that higher levels of optimism are related to lower depressive symptoms in young adults.
- Previous research has found a relationship between optimism and coping, suggesting those who show higher levels of optimism tend to use more problem-focused coping strategies (Puskar et al., 1999).
- However, the current study suggests there are factors, such as optimism, that may be more salient for adaptive coping.
- Findings underscore the need to promote optimism as an initial intervention for individuals presenting with depressive symptoms.

Implications

- When working with clients, there may be factors such as optimism, that contribute to the development of successful coping skills.
- Understanding barriers that keep clients from making progress in therapy can help to address initial treatment concerns.
- School Psychologists and other mental health professionals should advocate for the implementation of skills that promote optimism.

References

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