Coping Mediates the Effects of Optimism on Health Status and Quality of Life

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Introduction
Dispositional Optimism
• general and stable personality disposition defined by positive expectations
• predicts general well-being, psychological adjustment, physical health, higher quality of life (QoL)

Coping
• strategies used in response to stress
• important mediator of optimism’s effects
• optimists cope differently than pessimists
• benefits of optimism operate through differences in coping with stressor
  • active: attempt to change
  • avoidant: do not directly address

Measures
• Optimism: LOT-R Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R)
• Active and avoidant strategies: Brief COPE
• QoL: rate QoL and satisfaction with QoL (scale of 1-10)
• Physical and mental health status: RAND-36

Data
• community-based sample, n=640

Analysis
• tested for the mediation effects of coping
• used factor analysis to construct latent variables
• optimized measurement model (confirmatory factor analysis) using Lagrange Multiplier
• performed structural equation modeling
  • model testing with split-half design
• good fitting model if:
  • Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) < 0.05
  • Chi² p-value > 0.05
  • fit indices > 0.9
  • Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI)

Conclusions
• good fitting models, reasonably explain data
• coping mediates optimism’s effect on QoL and health status
• higher optimism leads to more active and less avoidant coping
• QoL and health status ratings increase with active and decrease with avoidant coping

Implications
• dispositional optimism may be difficult to change
• identifying coping mechanisms provides a target for behavioral intervention and change to reduce stress and improve health

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