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Role of self-worth contingencies on sleep quality due to discrimination and depressive symptoms

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Introduction

- Perceived discrimination of African American undergrad college students was associated with psychological and emotional problems such as depression (Chao, Mallinckrodt, & Wei, 2012).
- Subtle forms of discrimination, in both the school and the workplace, are predictors of negative physical health conditions like low energy levels and fatigue (Nadal et al., 2017).
- Contingent self-worth, fluctuating self-worth due to experiences such as perceived approval, was shown to be a vulnerability factor for depressive symptoms (Crocker & Knight, 2005; Crocker et al., 2003).
- According to Zahn and colleagues (2015), low self-worth and feelings of worthlessness, often appeared to occur consistently with lack of energy.

Purpose of Study

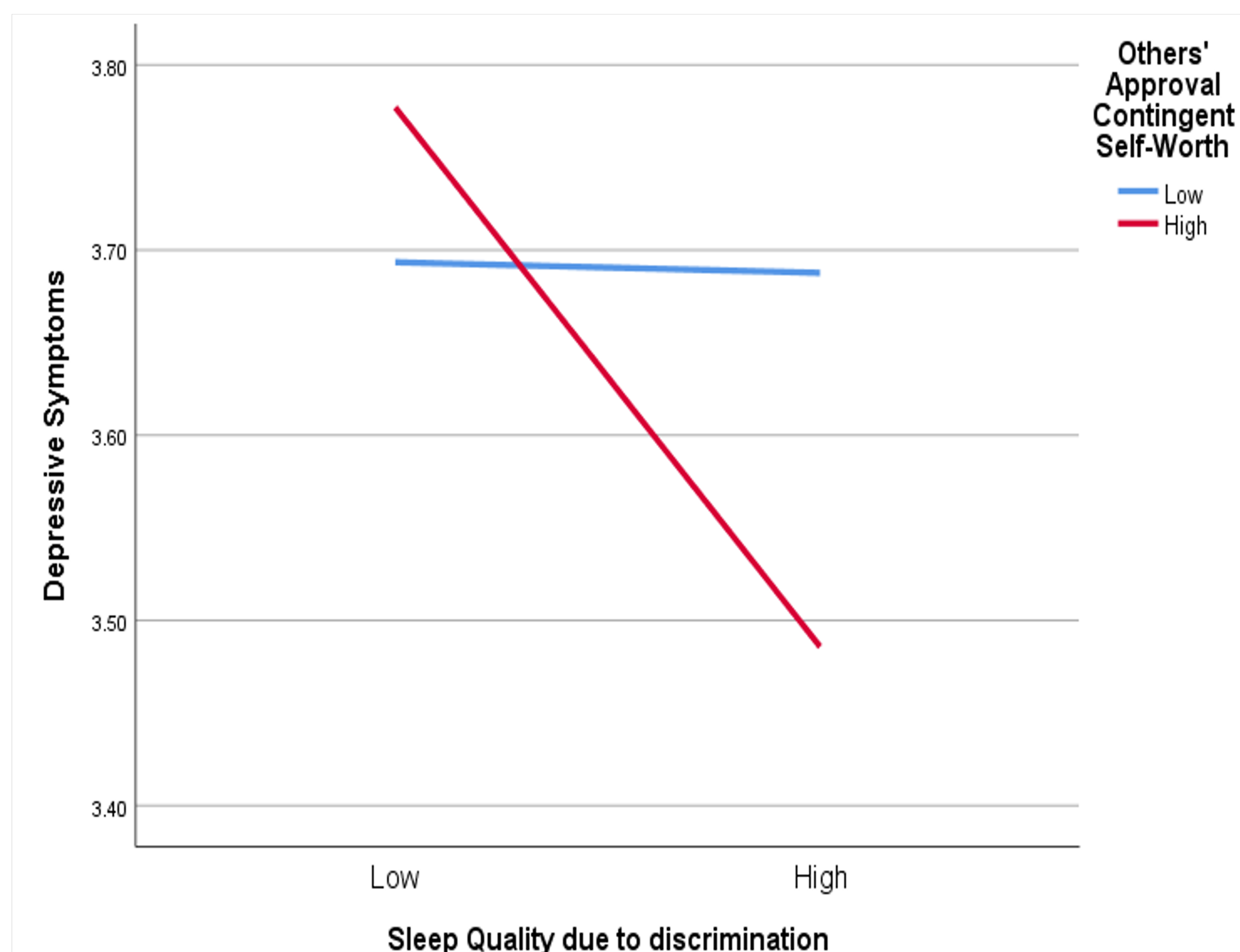
The purpose of the present study was to examine the moderating role of contingent self-worth (i.e., others' approval) on the link between experiences of discrimination at work or school and depressive symptoms, after controlling for age, experiences of gendered racial microaggressions, and gendered racial socialization.

Method

- The study consisted of 206 Black/African American women between the ages of 18 and 55 ($M=33.24$, $SD=8.46$).
- Majority of the sample was employed (97%) and about 30% were enrolled in a two- or four-year university.
- Participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and a large southeastern university's SONA systems.
- Participants completed questions assessing their sleep quality due to discrimination, depressive symptoms (i.e., energy and emotion levels), self-worth contingencies (i.e., self-worth based on others' approval), silencing and marginalizing gendered racial microaggressions, and gendered racial socialization process.

Results

- The moderation model was assessed via the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) within SPSS v.26 using 5,000 bootstrapped samples.
- Moderation analysis revealed a statistically significant interaction between sleep quality due to discrimination and others' approval-contingent self-worth on depressive symptoms (i.e., energy and emotions), $b=-.07$, $SE=.04$, 95% CI [-.14, -.01], $p=.04$.
- To interpret the statistically significant moderation effect, we used Hayes's PROCESS v.3 (2017) Johnson-Neyman and bootstrap analysis.
- Findings revealed that others' approval-contingent self-worth is a significant moderator of the link between sleep quality due to discrimination and depressive symptoms at higher levels of self-worth contingencies only, $b=-.20$, $SE=.07$, 95% CI [-.33, -.06], $p=.00$.
- More specifically, among those who higher self-worth contingencies, those who reported poor sleep quality due to discrimination reported greater depressive symptoms compared to those with better sleep quality.



Discussion

- Self-worth contingencies exacerbated the impact of sleep quality due to discrimination on depressive symptoms. Those who reported their others' approval contingent self-worth and poorer sleep quality due to discrimination reported greater depressive symptoms.
- Increasing awareness of how discriminatory events and self worth impact sleep quality and depressive symptoms could potentially enhance existing mental health interventions by incorporating the development of protective factors against those racially discriminatory events into treatment modalities.
- Future research could explore the relationship between self worth contingencies, racial discrimination, and other psychological and psychosomatic symptoms such anxiety.
- Future inclusion of African American men's discriminatory experiences as well as gender norms such as stoicism, may reveal more information of interactions and moderation effects unique to men in the African American community.

LIMITATIONS

- An entirely women sample may limit generalizability to those of different identities. Gender bias could have possibly limited the exploration of discrimination-affiliated experiences based on intersection of race and non-traditional gender identities (e.g., Black transwomen and Black non-binary).
- Majority of the sample being college students may have also limited the generalizability of the test. The interactions, observed, may be more accurately assessed with a more representative sample size.

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