CAREGIVER CULTURE, CAREGIVER EMOTIONAL AVAILABILITY, AND INFANT PAIN AT 12 MONTHS OF AGE

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INTRODUCTION / AIM

To examine how caregiver emotional availability mediates the relationship between caregiver culture and infant pain at 1 and 2 minutes post-needle.

METHODS

A subsample (N = 393) of infant-caregiver dyads with 12-month immunization data were selected from a longitudinal cohort following infants’ routine immunizations over the first year of life. Infant facial expressions of pain were coded at 1 and 2 minutes post-needle (NFCS; Grunau & Craig, 1987). Caregiver behaviours were coded for emotional availability (EAS; Biringen, 2008). Culture was operationalized by an objectively derived ‘individualism’ rating (Taras et al., 2012) of the caregiver’s self-reported culture.

RESULTS

Two separate mediation analyses revealed there was a significant indirect effect of caregiver culture on infant pain at 1 minute (AB = -.02; 95% CI [-.029, -.007]), and at 2 minutes (AB = -.014; 95% CI [-.033, -.005]) post-needle, through caregiver emotional availability.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

Caregivers who self-identified with cultures higher on individualism, had greater caregiver emotional availability, which in turn predicted lower infant pain behaviours at 1 and 2 minutes post-needle. The present study shows that individualism-collectivism constructs are related to caregiver behaviours when measured using a continuous, systematically developed scale. Moreover, the present findings support the theoretical framework of the DIAPR Model (Pillai Riddell et al., 2013), which postulates that culture has an indirect effect on infant pain responses, through the behaviours of the caregiver. The present findings further our understanding of one mechanism by which caregiver culture impacts infant pain expression.

OTHER AUTHORS

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