

# #MeToo at WSU Revisited: Victimization's Indirect Relationships with Food Addiction Symptoms

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## Intro

- Previous research suggests that dating and sexual violence victimization throughout the life span predict numerous adverse health outcomes including addictive behaviors, psychopathology, and physical health symptoms.
- Self-medication hypotheses posit that victims may drink heavily, use substances, or rely on food to cope with negative affect and psychological symptoms.

**Purpose:** To examine a self-medication hypothesis-driven model linking dating and sexual violence victimization with food addiction symptoms through their relationships with emotion regulation, impulsivity, and loss-of-control eating.

## Methods

### Participants

- 313 college student women age 18-25
- Racial/ethnic breakdown: 62% white/Caucasian, 14% Asian, 10% Black/African American, 1% American Indian/Native American, 8% >1 race, 5% not reported; 7% Hispanic/Latina
- Interested in dating men
- Not currently in treatment for mental health, weight loss, alcohol or substance use
- Completed 1 hour-long online survey; compensated \$25

### Measures

- *Intimate Partner Victimization*: 21-item CADRI; Wolfe et al. (2001)
- *Sexual Assault Victimization*: 21-item SES; Abbey et al. (2004); Koss et al. (2007)
- *Emotion Regulation Difficulties*: 36-item DERS; Gratz & Roemer (2004)
- *Impulsivity*: 30-item BIS-11; Patton et al. (1995)
- *Loss-of-Control Eating*: 24-item LOCES; Latner et al. (2014)
- *Food Addiction Symptoms*: 27-item YFAS; Gearhardt et al. (2009)

### Analytic Strategy

Path analysis models analyzed using Mplus version 7.3

## Results

- 79% of participants reported some form of intimate partner or sexual violence victimization since age 14.
- *Table 1*: All variables were significantly correlated with each other.
- *Figure 1*
- The more forms of both types of victimization women reported, the more emotion dysregulation and impulsivity they reported. The higher the emotion dysregulation and impulsivity levels, the more loss-of-control eating, and in turn, the more food addiction symptoms.
- Sexual violence victimization was significantly, directly associated with loss-of-control eating.
- Emotion dysregulation was significantly, directly associated with food addiction symptoms.
- Intimate partner and sexual violence victimization both had significant indirect effects on food addiction symptoms.

**Interpersonal violence victimization is related to both impulsivity and emotion regulation, which are both related to binge eating symptoms.**



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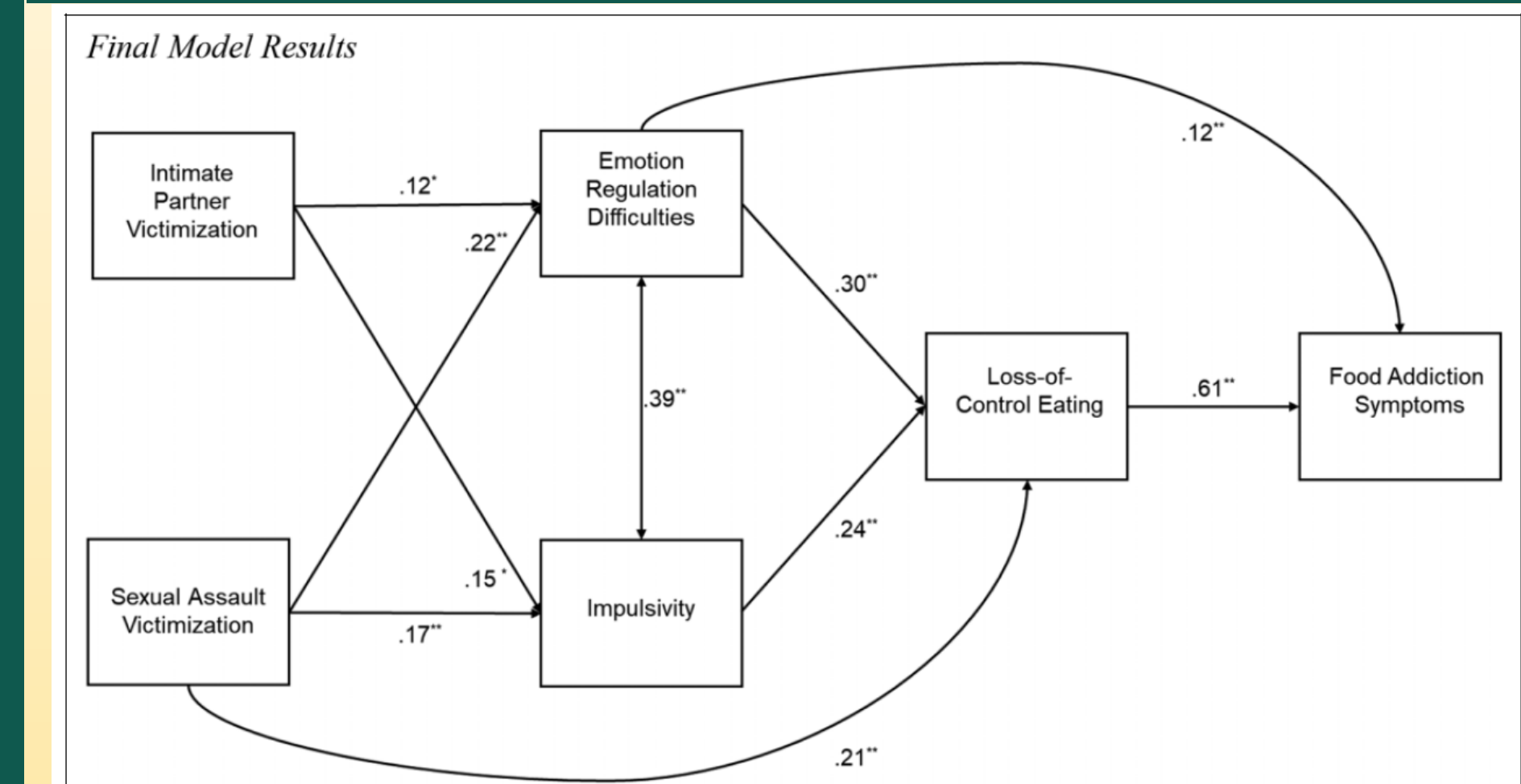
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Table 1

*Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for study variables (N = 313)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>1. SES</b>	--					
<b>2. CADRI</b>	.39**	--				
<b>3. DERS</b>	.26**	.20**	--			
<b>4. BIS-11</b>	.22**	.21**	.43**	--		
<b>5. LOCES</b>	.34**	.17**	.46**	.42**	--	
<b>6. YFAS</b>	.36**	.14*	.40**	.33**	.67**	--
<i>M</i>	3.52	5.53	69.14	59.05	1.92	1.95
<i>SD</i>	4.56	4.97	22.01	10.99	0.79	1.59

Figure 1



## Discussion

- Dating and sexual victimization in adolescence or emerging adulthood are related to executive functioning difficulties (i.e., elevated emotion dysregulation and impulsivity). In turn, executive functioning problems are related to higher binge eating symptoms (i.e., loss-of-control eating and food addiction symptoms).
- Clinicians and policy makers should honor the experiences of past victimizations in current health behaviors and utilize trauma-informed care practices.
- Future research should examine the role of trauma-informed interventions targeting emotional regulation and impulsivity to decrease binge eating symptoms.

## Public Health Implications

- Interpersonal violence victimization continues to be a ubiquitous issue for emerging adult college women.
- The relationships found between victimization, emotion regulation and impulsivity, and binge eating symptoms provide additional evidence that **violence victimization has far-ranging health implications.**
- **Public health interventions are needed to prevent gender-based violence.**