

# Prospective and Retrospective Measures of Child Maltreatment and Their Associations with Psychopathology: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

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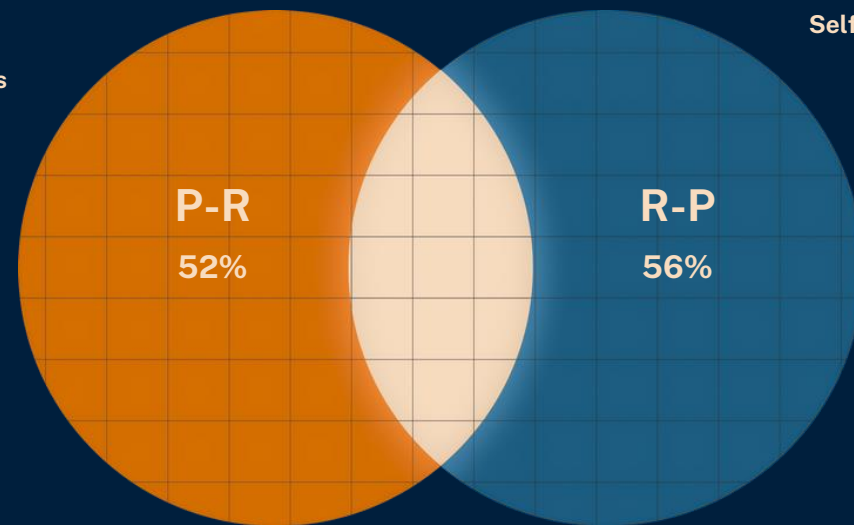
## INTRODUCTION

### Prospective measures

Informant reports or official records during childhood

### Retrospective measures

Self reports in adulthood



Agreement between prospective and retrospective maltreatment measures (Kappa = 0.19)<sup>1</sup>

## BACKGROUND:

Prospective and retrospective measures identify different individuals and therefore different constructs<sup>2</sup>

## RESEARCH QUESTION:

Do prospective and retrospective measures show differential associations with psychopathology?

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

To identify the most relevant measures for etiopathological studies and the most relevant targets for intervention

## METHODOLOGY

- **Preregistered** protocol
- Searched Embase, PsychInfo and MEDLINE
- Two-staged screening process with a-priori inclusion criteria
- 3000 records were identified, 1854 screened, and 24 selected
- **Multilevel random-effects meta-analyses** were used to pool the results for both **unadjusted** and **adjusted** associations between maltreatment measures and psychopathology
- **Unadjusted** analyses identified the association between prospective or retrospective measures and psychopathology
- **Adjusted** analyses **accounted for the overlap** between the measures, highlighting the unique contribution of each measure (**P-R** or **R-P** in the Venn diagram) by controlling for the influence of the other

## RESULTS

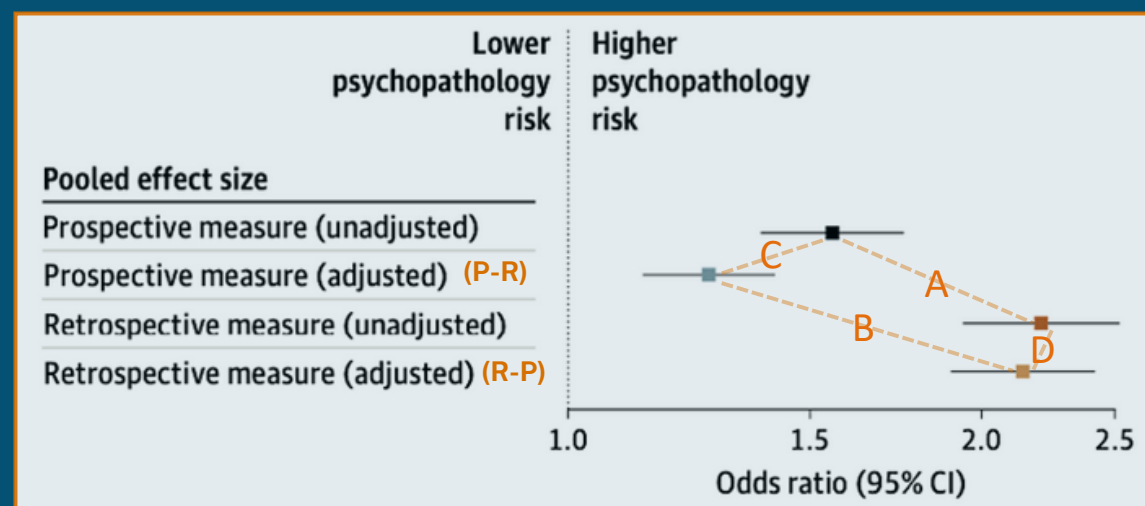
**k = 24**

**N = 15,485**

**51% female**

**21 years**

**188 unadjusted & 180 adjusted effect sizes**



**A:** in the **unadjusted** analyses, retrospective measures showed **44% stronger** association with psychopathology relative to prospective measures ( $p < .001$ )

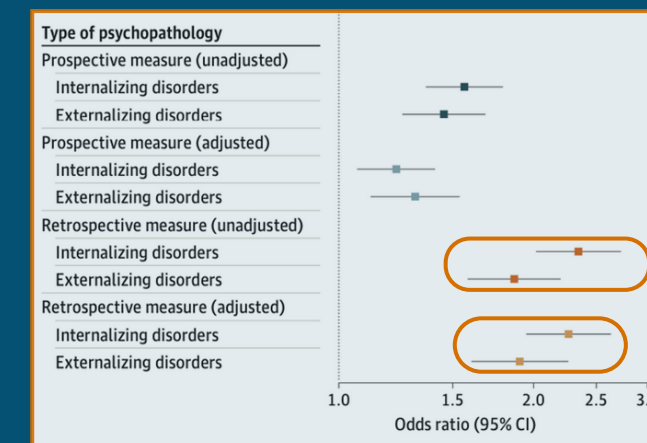
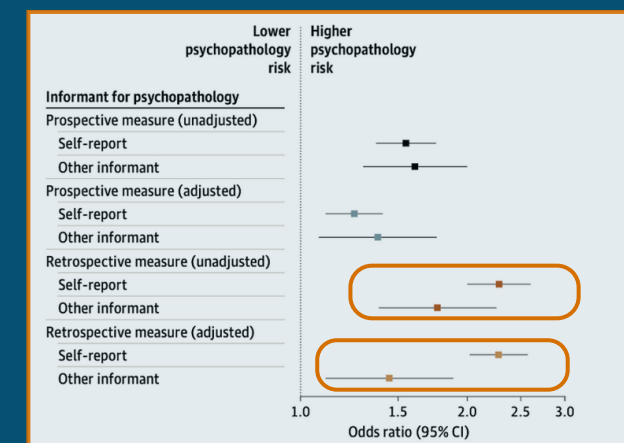
**B:** in the **adjusted** analyses, retrospective measures showed **69% stronger** association with psychopathology relative to prospective measures ( $p < .001$ )

**C:** for **prospective** measures, the adjusted association was **47% smaller** than the unadjusted ( $p = .01$ )

**D:** for **retrospective** measures, the adjusted association was **4% smaller** than the unadjusted ( $p = .74$ )

## MODERATION ANALYSES

Moderation analyses tested for maltreatment type, psychopathology type, prospective or retrospective measure type, self-report age, psychopathology informant, sex & study quality



## DISCUSSION

- Psychopathology showed a stronger association with retrospective measures, which capture **subjective appraisals and recall**, compared to prospective measures, which capture **third person accounts** of such events<sup>3</sup>
- The difference **increased** when prospective and retrospective measures were tested jointly for their independence
- Moderation results suggest that the stronger associations with retrospective measures, particularly for emotional disorders, may be inflated by **common-method bias** or **recall bias**<sup>4</sup>
- Or memories of maltreatment captured in retrospective reports may **causally influence psychopathology**<sup>5</sup>
- **Limitations:** **1.** Many studies did not include key confounders; **2.** Lack of available data on maltreatment age, severity and duration; **3.** Only 3 studies longitudinally assessed the relationship between retrospective measures and psychopathology

## CONCLUSION

- The findings highlight the potential **etiopathological role** of autobiographical memories captured by retrospective measures
- Supports **cognitive theories** of trauma related psychopathology<sup>6</sup>, focusing on subjective interpretation, conscious recall, and related schemas