

Effect of Emotional Regulation and Self Control on Experiences in Close Relationships among Young Adults

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Abstract: *The capacity to control emotion is important for human adaptation especially in close relationships. Also, according to the previous theories human behaviour is automatically driven by selfish impulses and the willingness to put one's own needs ahead of others. The present research tested the hypothesis that, emotional regulation and self control or the willingness to sacrifice has any positive relationship to the experiences in close relationships. The sample consisted of 100 participants and the findings suggested that there is a positive correlation between the variables.*

Keywords: emotional regulation; self control; close relationships

1. Introduction

Emotional regulation means an individual's attempt to change the emotional process with any given circumstance. For instance, when a teacher tries to rethink the situation to feel less angry or not let anger displayed in his or her voice. This shows the concept of emotional work which is defined as "the effort to control necessary to express emotion during interpersonal communication" (Morris and Feldman, 1996) It is difficult, if not impossible, to dissect empirically the processes of generation and regulation of emotions (Gross, et al., 2011). This distinction is useful to understand the age differences in emotional responses to affective events.

Emotions can be regulated in different ways. The influential emotional regulation model (1998) discerns five families from strategies for regulating emotions according to when they arbitrate in the process of generating emotions. Background-based approach intervenes before the emotional process has fully developed and, therefore, before the emotional response has fully activated. Changing the situation (for example, saying something to calm an unhappy client), attention deployment (eg, ignoring a rude customer's comment) and cognitive change (for example, reformulating the nasty telephone conversation as a learning opportunity) The adaptation strategies described in the transactional stress model (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) can be placed within this framework; problem-oriented adaptation falls predominantly in changing circumstances, and emotion-oriented adaptation falls under one (eg, emotional support) or cognitive change (eg, revaluation). The family of response-oriented strategies addresses the emotional response itself. Therefore, they act after the emotional response has evolved completely. An example is the elimination of any external sign of anger by feeling subjectively and physiologically angry by individuals. A distinction between the strategies proposed by Lawrence et al. (2011) is that between the regulation of emotional experience (including the four families of strategies focused on the antecedent) and the regulation of the expression of emotion (including strategies of suppression or amplification response).

The extent to which individuals adopt supportive and precluding policies when pursuing goals affects the degree to which they engage in negative relational behaviors, the reasons for adopting certain positive relationships, and the circumstances in which other positive behaviors promote most from their relationships. One line of research examined the association of individual differences in regulatory direction with assessments of romantic alternatives (Finkel, Molden, Johnson and Eastwick, 2009). People with a strong promotional focus tend to worry, positively and actively evaluate potential alternative partners to a greater degree than those with a strong prevention approach. In addition, the negative association between engagement with their current partner and the evaluation of potential alternatives to that partner is less for people oriented to promotion than for people focused on prevention

Another line of research has examined how complementarily in the regulatory orientations of relational partners affects relational well-being (Bohns et al., 2010). Many researchers suggest that similarity predicts attractiveness and quality of the relationship more strongly than complementarily (eg, Byrne, 1971, Gonzaga, Campos and Bradbury, 2007) and Fragale, 2003). However, for partners working together to achieve common goals, complementarily in regulatory direction can be beneficial because it allows couples to coordinate their objectives so that each partner has the primary responsibility for the shared objectives that correspond to their preferred strategy. The more advocacy partner could pursue demands that require desirable strategies, and the more prevention-oriented partner could undertake tasks that require vigilant strategies. In support of this logic, a series of studies have shown that complementarily in the guidelines of the regulatory guide predicts satisfaction, commitment and adjustment of relationships, but only for highly interdependent partners who share objectives. As with approximation and avoidance orientations, research on regulatory management has suggested that interpersonal outcomes will vary according to the objectives pursued by people in relationships, but also according to how people pursue those goals

For decades, psychologists have assumed that the natural impulse of people is to be selfish and requires the will to

overcome this natural tendency and act in a pro-social way (eg Baumeister, Heatherton and Tice, 1994, Baumeister, Vohs, Tice, 2007). The theory of interdependence, for example, suggests that the departure of people of their own interest requires a process of deliberation called energy transformation and motivation (Kelley and Thibaut, 1978, see also Dehue, McClintock and Liebrand, 1993). With the transformation of motivation, people often renounce their immediate impulses and instead adopt prosocial responses based on broader values and relational considerations. In support of this idea, previous research has shown that when people do not engage in the transformation of motivation because they are under pressure or something autonomous, they are more likely to be selfish and 'helping strangers' (DeWall, Baumeister, Gailliot and Maner, 2008). They are also less likely to engage in prosocial behaviors such as accommodation, forgiveness and conflict management in a non-aggressive way (Balliet, Li and Joireman 2011 Finkel and Campbell, 2001, Finkel DeWall, Slotter, 2009 Foshee and Pronos, Karremans, Overbeek, Vermulst and Wigboldus 2010 and Yovetich and Rusbult 1994).

Need of the Study

Now is the time to take a closer look at the experiences in close relationships to outline the context of emotional regulation and self. We need to encourage people to recognise that emotional qualities, their reflection into self and how this in turn has an effect on the relationships by providing interventions and counselling wherever necessary.

Objectives

The present study aims at

- To assess the relationship between Emotional Regulation and Experiences in Close Relationship
- To assess the relationship between Self Control and Experiences in Close Relationship

Hypotheses

- There will be significant relationship between Emotional Regulation and Experiences in Close Relationships
- There will be significant relationship Self Control and Experiences in Close Relationships

2. Method

Sample

Purposive random sampling method was employed for the data collection. The sample included 100 participants aged between 20 and 29 living in India. A total of 50 male (50%) and 50 female (50%) participants took part in the study.

Tools

Demographical variables

Standardized questionnaires were used to collect data and the demographic information such as name, age, gender and place was collected.

- *Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S)*

This is a 7 point scale given by Wei, M., Russell, D. W., Mallinckrodt, B., & Vogel, D. L. (2007) ranging from “1 = Never” to “7= Always” with reliability and the validity of the scale was satisfactory and the tool had high reliability of 0.72 and validity of 0.79.

- *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)*

This is a 10-item scale designed to measure respondents' tendency to regulate their emotions given Ochsner, K. & Gross, J. in 2005. Respondents answer each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and the reliability and the validity being 0.53 and 0.68 respectively.

- *10-Item Self-Scoring Self-Control Scale*

This was given by Tangney, J.P., Baumeister, R.F., Boone, A.L. (2004) and is a 5 point scale ranging from “1= None of the time” to “5= All of the time” and the reliability and validity being 0.44 and 0.58 respectively.

Procedure

Data was collected using standardized questionnaires from the respondents where participant was given three questionnaires. They were explained in an easier way to make them understand. Any misconceptions or doubts were removed.. The following instructions were provided- “Here are a set of questionnaires to measure the emotional regulation, self control and experiences in close relationships. Please rate yourself after reading the scale. The first answer that comes into your head is probably the right one for you. If you find some of the questions difficult, please do ask me.” Participants were also informed that there are no right or wrong answer. Confidentiality of the study was emphasized. They were informed that the data will be used for academic purpose only.

Ethical considerations

The data were anonymized with careful protection on confidentiality. Approval was obtained from the guides at Amity University, Haryana prior to data analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 16 (SPSS 16.0). A correlation analysis was constructed among all the variables in the study. The relationship between emotional regulation and experiences in close relationships as well as between self control and experiences in close relationship was tested using Pearson correlation analysis. The participant's Emotional regulation score, Self control score and Experiences in close relationship score was entered. The amount of missing data for all the independent and dependent variables tested was less than 5% to ensure quality of data and generalizability of the research conclusions.

3. Result and Discussion

Table 1: Showing the Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Regulation	100	17.00	62.00	33.613	6.271
Self Control	100	11.00	35.00	21.643	4.355
Close Relationships	100	37.00	72.00	43.4038	5.065
Male Female	100	1.00	11.00	1.4744	.9162
Valid N (listwise)					

Table 2: Shows Correlation between Emotional Regulation and Experiences in Close Relationships

	Experiences in Close Relationships
Emotional Regulation	.785**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

From the above table it is clear that there is significant correlation at 0.01 level between Emotional Regulation and Experiences in Close Relationships. For emotional regulation and experiences in close relationships, a value of .785 significance was obtained.

Table 3: Shows Correlation Self Control and Experiences in Close Relationships

	Experiences in Close Relationships
Self Control	.668**

From the above table it is clear that there is significant correlation at 0.01 level between Self Control and Experiences in Close Relationships. For self control and experiences in close relationships, a value of .668 significance was obtained.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Shows the T- Test among Male and Female

		Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Emotional Regulation	Male	31.3913	4.0369	-0.078	0.871
	Female	32.6365	3.9675		
Self Control	Male	19.8776	7.1035	0.269	0.594
	Female	21.6438	5.469		
Close Relationships	Male	43.6136	9.8901	0.366	0.601
	Female	46.5515	10.9088		

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation and the maximum and minimum values of the results obtained from a total of 150 samples. Mean values of 33.613, 21.643 and 43.4038 were obtained for emotional regulation, self control and experiences in close relationships respectively.

From the above table it is clear that there is significant correlation at 0.01 level between Emotional Regulation and Experiences in Close Relationships. For emotional regulation and experiences in close relationships, a value of .785 significance was obtained.

The above result was obtained with the help of SPSS 16.0. According to the results obtained, it is seen that there is a positive correlation between regulation and experiences in close relationships among youth. Study conducted by Butler et al., 2003 also shows that reappraisal strategies for regulating one's emotions predict positive relationship outcomes, whereas suppression strategies for regulating one's emotions

From Table 3 there is significant correlation at 0.01 level between self control and experiences in close relationships among youth as is evident and a value of .668 was obtained which is significant. According to the results obtained, it is seen that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. Individuals who make sacrifices in their relationship for approach reasons, such as to develop a closer relationship with their partner or to feel good about themselves, subsequently experience better relationship

adjustment and are less likely to break up with their partner in the following month (Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005). Conversely, individuals who make sacrifices for avoidance reasons, such as to prevent their partner from seeing them negatively or to avoid feeling guilty, subsequently experience worse relationship adjustment and are more likely to break up with their partner.

Table 4 shows T-test analysis which says that gender i.e., male and female plays no role on the variables of the study. There was no significance on emotional regulation, self control and experiences in close relationships among males and females. A standard deviation of 4.03 and 3.96 was obtained for males and females respectively for emotional regulation, 7.10 and 5.46 for self control and 9.89 and 10.90 for experiences in close relationships. The t-values obtained when equal variances were assumed and not assumed were -.078 and -.077 respectively for emotional regulation, .269 and .267 for self control and .366 and .364 for experiences in close relationships.

4. Limitations

There are several other reasons that have an impact on the experiences in close relationships such as temporary life circumstances. Thus, we cannot imply that just one factor has a potential cause of the result obtained. Also, the study used only one type of population i.e., young adults who may be undergoing a particular life transition. We can generalize the findings only by replicating the study on different populations. However, studies conducted on youngsters can be of great importance as well.

5. Conclusion

This research adds knowledge on the associations between emotional regulation and self control on close relationships. A significant correlation was found between emotional regulation and experiences in close relationships as well as between self control and experiences in close relationships. However, there was no significant difference between males and females. From the study conducted, with higher regulation of emotions and self control there is a good chance of having a positive experience in relationships. We as psychologists must provide the necessary interventions to help individuals better regulate their emotions.

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