

Relationship between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Emotional Regulation among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The study intends to analyze the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and emotional regulation among young adults of age range 18 – 28. The sample data of N=140 was collected from young adults of the specific age group who resides in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The psychometric tools used were interpersonal sensitivity scale and emotional regulation scale. The data was analyzed using SPSS and using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression. The findings depicts that there is significant correlation between cognitive reappraisal and fragile inner self, between expressive suppression and interpersonal awareness, between expressive suppression and timidity and between expressive suppression and fragile inner self. Based on the analysis there also existed a significant influence of emotional regulation on interpersonal awareness and timidity. The study shows that the certain sub scales of interpersonal sensitivity and emotional regulation are interrelated and influence each other.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Sensitivity, Emotional Regulation, Young Adults*

Interpersonal sensitivity, the sensitivity towards behaviors and feelings of other people has been identified as a stable personality trait (Boyce & Parker, 1989; Sakado et al., 1999). It is a personality trait made up of four components, i.e., interpersonal awareness, separation anxiety, timidity and fragile inner-self (Boyce and Parker, 1989, Boyce et al., 1998).

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to effectively exert control over one's emotions through a wide range of strategies to influence which emotions one has, experiences, or expresses (Gross, 2003). Early neurobiological development, temperamental differences, the young child's conceptual grasp of emotion, coping mechanisms, and sense of self all play a role in how emotion regulation develops. It is also guided by social influences: parental coaching, modelling, direct interventions, conversation, the quality of the parent-child relationship, and the unique influences of peers and siblings. (Thompson et al. 2008)

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Need and significance

The development of healthy social relationships is one of our most fundamental needs. The upkeep of healthy social ties satisfies the need for acceptance and belonging. People are highly motivated to form durable and committed interpersonal connections. People make decisions that radically affect important areas of their lives during the period when adulthood looms, especially between the ages of 18 and 28. The growth of autonomy, the formation of an identity, environmental adaptation, educational goals, and the emergence of healthy interpersonal relationships are some of the key demands that plague this time. Social competence is one of the key ideas governing young people's capacity to create and maintain healthy social relationships. And this stability is attained by the development of self-regulation. Emotions thus contribute to a major part of this development. The orientation of a proper relation is bound by the extent and number of emotions that it is connected with. Especially the pandemic too played a vital part, being an eye opener on how being with and away from loved ones affected the world population.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The findings from the study indicated that psychological resilience was substantially influenced by emotional self-efficacy and interpersonal sensitivity. In addition, it looked at social competency, which was predicted by allowing emotions to help with reasoning. Emotional state had an impact on social relationships. According to Blair et al. (2015), emotional stability is a component of all social interactions, and there is a link between the two (Aydogdu et al., 2017). Similar findings had been obtained from the study in which the goal of the study was to find out how emotional regulation training affected students' social adjustment and interpersonal sensitivity. The findings indicated that the interpersonal sensitivity in the experiment was decreased by emotional management training. It is advisable to highlight the emotional components of students in educational programmes since emotional management training might lessen interpersonal sensitivity. (Hashemy, Byramy, & Ashory, 2017). In addition, although research on the interaction of emotional and interpersonal dysfunction in people with non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is scarce, both appears to be a key component of NSSI. Positive interpersonal interactions may reduce negative emotions that arise after stressful situations in people with NSSI, suggesting that interpersonal emotion regulation may be important for this population. (Berghoff et al., 2022). Previous research has also found that increasing self-compassion is connected with increased ability to manage emotion. Self-compassion reduces anxiety by making emotional regulation easier (Neyestani et al., 2023).

Interpersonal sensitivity and emotional dysregulation are linked to borderline personality disorder (BPD). Results showed that BPD characteristics predicted higher levels of both negative and positive emotions in response to everyday stressors, and that these characteristics interacted with the kind of stressor to predict impulses and actions. These results imply that individuals with high levels of BPD traits may have less effective social emotion regulation. (Dixon-Gordon et al., 2021). The study pointed out on the clinical aspect of the disorder affecting emotional regulation.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

To investigate the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and its components with emotional regulation among young adults.

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Variables and operational definitions

The variables used for the study are interpersonal sensitivity and emotional regulation.

1. Interpersonal sensitivity is the ability to be sensible and liable to the emotions of others and of oneself.
2. Emotional regulation is the ability to manage and engage in activities that enables to formulate one's emotions.

Hypotheses

There is no significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and emotional regulation among young adults.

Sample

A sample of 140 college students were selected for the research study.

Inclusion criteria

- The sample includes the adult college students of age range 18-28.
- Students who can read and comprehend English language.

Exclusion criteria

- Physically and mentally disabled adults and adults ranging from 29 years and above.
- Students of age 17 years and below
- People without access to internet facility are excluded in this study.

Assessment Tools

- **Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure or IPSM**
The tool used for interpersonal sensitivity is interpersonal sensitivity measure developed by Boyce & Parker 1989. The IPSM generates a total score as well as five sub-scales scores: interpersonal awareness, need for approval, separation anxiety, timidity and fragile inner self. With a total of 36 items. The IPSM is reliable and valid in depressed populations, with high internal consistency and stable scores over time, similar to the neuroticism scale. (0.77). The clinical judgement of interpersonal sensitivity correlated highly with IPSM scores ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the validity of the measure. (Boyce & Parker, 1989)
- **Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)**
The 10-item Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was developed by Gross and John (2003). The 10-item scale measures respondents' tendency to regulate their emotions in two ways: Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression. The ERQ showed a substantial correlation with academic emotion, psychological well-being, and subjective well-being, demonstrating its validity ($r = 0.17$ 0.41, all p is 0.01). The ERQ had good internal consistency and reliability, with Cronbach's alpha value of (0.73 0.82). (Wang et al., 2020)

Research design

In the research study convenient sampling method was used. Questionnaire on interpersonal sensitivity and emotional regulation were circulated online considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria and a total sample of 140 were collected.

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Statistical Technique

The statistical techniques used for the study were inferential and descriptive statistics. Measures of descriptive statistics used are mean and standard deviation. Measures of inferential statistics used are correlation and linear regression using SPSS software.

RESULT

Table 1 The Spearman's Correlation Table for The Subscales of Interpersonal Sensitivity and Emotional Regulation with Mean, SD and p value

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Emotional Regulation										
1. Cognitive Reappraisal	140	28.55	6.08	-						
2. Expressive Suppression	140	17.12	5.11	.058	-					
Interpersonal Sensitivity										
3. Interpersonal Awareness	140	19.51	3.40	-.012	.393**	-				
4. Need for Approval	140	19.16	2.81	.044	-.050	.432**	-			
5. Separation Anxiety	140	17.10	3.65	-.042	.137	.553**	.469**	-		
6. Timidity	140	16.70	3.65	.007	.318**	.499**	.429**	.448**	-	
7. Fragile Inner Self	140	10.11	2.53	.182*	.290**	.427**	.117	.528**	.414**	-

* p <.05 (2-tailed), ** p <.001 (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows the spearman's correlation between subscales of emotional regulation (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression) and interpersonal sensitivity (interpersonal awareness, need for approval, separation anxiety, timidity and fragile inner self).

It can be further inferred that there exists significant correlation between cognitive reappraisal and fragile inner self with a p value of .182*, significant p value of .393** between expressive suppression and interpersonal awareness, significant p value of .318** between expressive suppression and timidity and a significant p value of .290** between expressive suppression and fragile inner self.

There also exist correlation between interpersonal awareness and need for approval (p .432**), separation anxiety (p =.553**), and timidity(p=.499**) and fragile inner self (p=.427**). And a significant correlation between need for approval and timidity (p=.429**), separation anxiety (p=.469**). And a correlation between separation anxiety with timidity(p=.448**) and fragile inner self (p=.528**). A significant correlation between timidity and fragile inner self with a p value of .414**.

Table 2 Regression table with emotional regulation and sub scales of interpersonal sensitivity

Variables	1			2			3			4			5		
	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE
Constant		34.38	3.86		49.6	4.7		44.69	3.28		38.39	3.14		46.47	2.82
Interpersonal Awareness	.244	.578	.195												
Need for approval				-.206	.243	-.072									
Separation Anxiety							.057	.188	.026						
Timidity										.436	.184	.197			
Fragile inner self													-.080	.271	-.025
R ²		.060			.005			.001			.039			.001	
Δ R ²		.053			-.002			-.007			.032			-.007	

Table 2 shows regression table with emotional regulation and the sub scales of interpersonal sensitivity. From the results it can be inferred that there is significant influence of constant with interpersonal awareness and with a B value, Beta value Standard Error, R² and Adjusted R² values of .578, .244,.195, .060 and .053. And a significant influence of constant with timidity with corresponding B value, Beta value, Standard error, R² and Adjusted R² values of .184, .436, .197,.036 and .032.

It's evident that there is a better visibility of the strength of relation with emotional regulation and interpersonal awareness. A better understanding of oneself is always the key to better regulation of emotions. The better one gets in touch with ones likes, dislikes and importantly one's current state of mind it helps in better revival of emotions and in coming up with strategies that would benefit the process.

In addition, timid behaviours too found out to pave way for stronger emotional regulation, this might be due to the idea that when there is a lack perceived in one's level of self-confidence, may it be in understanding one's emotions of one's strengths and weakness it automatically leads to a mindset of lacking proper regulation of emotions, it can either be a burst out or a suppression, this too can be the reason social learning to some extent.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and emotional regulation. From the results it is evident that there is significant correlation between cognitive reappraisal and fragile inner self, this might be due to the fact that being a bit lighter minded gets to the point where things affect you the most even the slightest of it, in order to negate the fullest feeling of downfall the best method is to reframe things in a way that it helps to handle the harm better. Though its useful to the very extend it is also a manner of moving away from the reality. Restructuring of situations and events are useful when there is a complete brake down taking place. Previous research has found that increasing self-compassion is connected with increased ability to manage emotion. Self-compassion reduces anxiety by making emotional regulation easier (Neyestani et al.,2023).

There is a significant correlation between fragile inner self and expressive suppression, which might indicate that brittle minded people tend to suppress their emotions as they are more conscious about their self and their emotions, which restricts them from expressing oneself. This could also be due to the fear of negative evaluation during social interactions. In addition, the personality type that they possess. The findings require better additional studies on the concepts as there isn't much studies accepting or rejecting the findings.

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In addition, a significant correlation between interpersonal awareness and expressive suppression. People with a better understanding of their needs and limitations are good at modulating one's expression. Mostly the ones who are a bit more into oneself when it comes to interactions and people with better introspective skills are good at proper understanding of one's emotions and then venting it out in different ways especially suppressing them, which is not always a better measure. They are better observers, they respond than reacting. Studies had depicted significant relation with emotional regulation and social interaction in general (Aydogdu et al., 2017).

And a significant correlation between timidity and expressive suppression this might be due to the lack of courage that one holds which causes them to withdraw from expressing oneself out loud. The internal strength from within plays a major role in expressing or ventilating one's thoughts feelings and even one's behaviour. And the feeling of confidence comes from various experiences one's possess. Studies depicting the above findings are found to be scarce. And more studies had to be conducted.

CONCLUSION

Emotional regulation and interpersonal sensitivity seem to play an important role in better understanding oneself and in a proper expression of modulating one's emotions thereafter. Thus, it was evident that there is a significant relationship between cognitive reappraisal and fragile inner self, expressive suppression and fragile inner self, expressive suppression and interpersonal awareness and between timidity and expressive suppression. In addition, a significant influence of emotional regulation on timidity and interpersonal awareness. In an era where people gradually shrink into the screens that they are around, there exist a strong importance of understanding the relevance of emotionally twined individuals and its effect on the inter and intra personal relations. The present technological era by itself shows the significance of studies based on how the emotions and interpersonal connections are bound to each other.

Limitation

There exists a need for more and in-depth studies on the topic as the researcher couldn't find many. More sample size could have been included. Though the study did not purposely exclude the illiterate from being part of the study, it is nearly impossible for any illiterate to participate.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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