

Research Paper

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

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ABSTRACT

The study examines relationship among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of using psychological help among Generation Z. A total of n=306 young adults aged 18 to 25 years of Pune, India, were administered standardized measures, such as Kundu Neurotic Personality Inventory, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help Scale (SSOSH). The hypothesis was that neuroticism and emotional dysregulation would have a positive relationship with self-stigma and be a strong predictor of self-stigma. Correlational analysis results showed that there were strong positive correlations between neuroticism and emotional dysregulation, neuroticism and self-stigma, and emotional dysregulation and self-stigma. Moreover, the regression analysis found that emotional dysregulation was a significant predictor of self-stigma, but neuroticism was not found to be a significant independent predictor. The results indicate that emotional regulation problems are a key factor contributing to the augmentation of self-stigma regarding the use of psychological assistance among Generation Z members.

Keywords: *Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation, Self -Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help, Gen Z*

Mental health has become a major issue over the past few years, especially among the youth. Young adults and adolescents often deal with emotional stress and anxiety, mood changes, and other psychological issues. The issues usually are affected by various factors like academic pressure, social expectations, career uncertainty, family concerns, and increased influence of social media. Consequently, it has become more crucial today to study the psychological state of young people in the framework of a modern study.

The current paper will address the current generation Z (Gen Z), which includes people born between 1997 and 2012 and can be referred to as the so-called digital natives. This generation has been nurtured in a world full of smartphones, the internet, and social media sites. As much as technological advancements have increased the level of connectivity and access to information, it has also come with new challenges to mental health. Social

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Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO) and the need to succeed academically and socially can be harmful to the emotional well-being. Such experiences tend to add to the stress levels, emotional instability and susceptibility to psychological distress in young people.

The personality is an important factor that influences the emotional experiences and reactions of an individual to stress. One of the personal traits is neuroticism which has been closely observed to be a major factor that is linked with psychological distress. Neuroticism is a characteristic describing a propensity towards negative emotions like anxiety, sadness, irritability and emotional unsteadiness. Neurotic individuals are more susceptible to stress and are more prone to perceiving situations as threatening which may result in maladaptive coping strategies and the emergence of more psychological challenges. Historically, the neuroticism concept can be dated back to the initial psychoanalytic ideas suggested by Sigmund Freud who assumed neurotic inclinations to be a result of unresolved internal conflict. These concepts were later elaborated by theorists like Carl Jung and today neuroticism is part of the five main dimensions of personality introduced by modern personality psychologists like Goldberg, Norman and McCrae as part of the Five Factor Model of personality. Hans Eysenck also gave it more weight by terming it as a continuum between emotional stability and emotional instability. The stresses of contemporary living, such as academic rivalry, social media exposure, and ambiguity regarding future prospects, could exacerbate neurotic tendencies, so it is a vital variable in explaining mental health outcomes in the context of Generation Z.

Neuroticism is closely allied to the notion of emotional dysregulation, or the inability to cope with and respond to emotional experiences. Emotional regulation is a crucial psychological process which helps people to know, manage and express emotions in a balanced way. Nevertheless, when people find it hard to engage in such processes, they can become emotionally dysregulated, that is, to have highly influential emotional responses, impulsiveness, and inability to restore their emotional balance. These challenges may have adverse impacts on interpersonal relationships, educational achievement, and well-being. Emotional regulation is a concept that has been widely researched, James Gross came up with the process model of emotion regulation that identifies different strategies that people employ in controlling their emotions. In case of failure of these strategies, emotional dysregulation could be reached, causing an increase in emotional distress. Social comparison, digital exposure, and high expectations are among the factors that lead to more emotional difficulties among Generation Z, and emotional dysregulation is a field of concern.

Although people are going through psychological distress, not many people are willing to consult professional psychologists. Self-stigma is one of the major obstacles to the help-seeking behavior. Self-stigma can be defined as the internalization of adverse societal beliefs and stereotypes in regard to mental health and psychological services. Self-stigmatized persons might feel weak, inadequate or incapable when they seek assistance and this results in shame and embarrassment. This stigmatization is usually internalized in a way that it makes people not seek mental health services even when they know that they need them. Erving Goffman was the first to examine the concept of stigma in terms of socially devalued qualities resulting in discrimination and exclusion. Researchers like Corrigan later pointed out that there is a difference between public stigma and self-stigma and that there is a psychological consequence of internalized negative beliefs. Vogel et al. (2006) also

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

conceptualized the self-stigma in the context of help-seeking and determined it to be a significant obstacle to psychological services.

Self-stigma is more common among young people, including Generation Z, who are highly swayed by the perception of peers and societal expectations. Fear of being judged, labelled, and misunderstood is another factor that may keep them away as they may not want to seek professional help. Other factors that ensure stigma persistence include cultural beliefs, family attitudes and absence of mental health awareness. Although there is more awareness regarding mental health in recent years, the issue of stigma persists in most communities and affects the attitudes towards the help-seeking behavior. Consequently, people might prefer to manage their challenges by themselves instead of getting professional help and this can worsen their mental conditions.

The connection between neuroticism and emotional dysregulation and self-stigma is especially significant when exploring help seeking behavior among Generation Z. The high neuroticism individuals can be characterized by an extreme level of emotional distress, and the emotional dysregulation individuals can have difficulties with emotion regulation. These aspects, together with self-stigma, can greatly decrease the chances of psychological assistance. Thus, the analysis of these variables, in combination, can reveal a more in-depth picture of the psychological difficulties that young individuals have.

Mental health problems in the Indian context are usually affected by the socio-cultural factors such as stigma, ignorance and limited access to mental services. Despite the slowly growing awareness of the issue, a good number of people remain reluctant to seek assistance because of the fear of being judged and meeting the expectations of society. Though Generation Z is more exposed to mental health information, they still have barriers of stigma and emotional difficulties. These dynamics will be critical in understanding the ways to create effective interventions and encourage positive attitudes towards mental health.

Thus, the current research will address the connection between neuroticism and emotional dysregulation and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among Generation Z members. Through the variables, the study aims at offering details concerning factors that affect the mental health attitudes and practices of the youths. The conclusions of this study can be used to create specific mental health awareness campaigns, decrease stigma, and make individuals with mental health issues accept the help of a professional psychologist when required.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To examine the relationship among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among GenZ.

Objective

1. To examine the relationships among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among Gen Z.
2. To understand how neuroticism and emotional dysregulation self-stigma in seeking psychological help among Gen Z.

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

Hypotheses

1. There will be a positive relation between neuroticism and emotional dysregulation among Gen Z.
2. There will be a positive relation between neuroticism and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among Gen Z.
3. There will be a positive relation between emotional dysregulation and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among Gen Z.
4. Neuroticism and emotional dysregulation will significantly predict self-stigma of seeking psychological help among Gen Z.

Sample

The study initially collected data from a total of 319 Generation Z participants, including both males and females, aged between 18 and 25 years, from diverse educational backgrounds. After conducting outlier analysis, some responses were excluded to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data. Consequently, the final sample comprised 306 participants. A purposive sampling technique was initially used, followed by snowball sampling to recruit additional participants. All participants voluntarily took part in the study and provided informed consent.

Measures

The questionnaires that were used in the current study had five sections. In the first part, a form of informed consent was given, where the participants were informed about the aim of the study, confidentiality of their answers, and their free will to take part. The second part was the gathering of demographic and general data of the participants. The third part evaluated neuroticism, the fourth part evaluated emotional dysregulation and the fifth part evaluated self-stigma of seeking psychological help with standardized psychological measures.

Demographic Assessment: This was the first part of the survey, a demographic sheet that was aimed at collecting some basic and pertinent data about the survey participants. It comprised of email address, name, age, gender, and educational qualification. Besides these, some questions were also added to obtain some prior understanding of the emotional experiences of the participants and their behaviour of seeking help. These were the questions of how often mood swings or emotional changes happen, the inability to control emotions when angry, the fear of being judged (which makes people avoid seeking psychological help), and the experience of help-seeking (in case it is possible). These reactions gave some background information in terms of context to gain a better insight on the psychological profile of the participants.

1. Neurotic Personality Inventory (K.N.P.I.): This was a standardized personality measure, which was used to measure neuroticism, and was developed by Dr. Ramnath Kundu. The scale is aimed to assess emotional instability, anxiety, mood fluctuations and stress vulnerability. It is composed of various items to which the participants will respond according to their common feelings and behaviors. The greater the scores in the scale, the more the neuroticism and emotional instability.

2. The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS): It was a standardized scale of psychological problems, which is called Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) and was developed by Gratz and Roemer (2004). This scale measures the challenges of

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

emotional awareness, understanding and regulation. It involves impulsivity, clarity of emotions and control of emotional responses. An increase in scores indicates that there are more problems with controlling emotions.

3. Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help (SSOSH) Scale: The scale of self-stigma was evaluated with the help of a standardized Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale by Vogel et al. This scale is used to determine how much people internalize the negative beliefs regarding seeking psychological help. It is made up of objects that present a sense of shame, weakness, or incompetence connected with seeking help. Greater levels of self-stigma are based on higher scores.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Individuals belonging to Generation Z, aged between 18 to 25 years.
2. Both male and female participants were included in the study.
3. Participants residing in Pune city, India.
4. Individuals from diverse educational backgrounds.
5. Participants who were able to understand and respond to the questionnaire in English.
6. Individuals who provided informed consent and were willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Individuals below 18 years or above 25 years of age.
2. Participants who did not complete the questionnaire fully or provided incomplete responses.
3. Individuals who were not residents of Pune city.
4. Participants who were unwilling to give consent for participation.
5. Responses that appeared inconsistent or not genuine were also excluded from the analysis.

Procedure

The current research was carried out to examine the relationship among neuroticism, emotional regulation, and self-stigma of psychological help seeking in Generation Z. Before data collection, the goals and objectives of the study were well articulated to the participants and informed consent was given by all the respondents. Online survey method was used as a data collection method. The questionnaire was made on the basis of standardized psychological scales and a self-made demographic sheet. The survey link was distributed among respondents between the age of 18-25 years living in Pune, India. The selection of appropriate participants was based on a purposive sampling, and then a snowball sampling, in which participants were asked to forward the survey link to other people, who met the inclusion criteria. The questionnaire comprised of several parts, such as the informed consent and demographic information and standardized measures of neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma towards seeking psychological help. The participants were asked to read all items and to answer truthfully depending on their own experiences. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and advised that their answers would only be utilized in academic and research purposes. The study initially collected data from the total 319 Generation Z participants, including males or females aged 18 to 25 years

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

with different educational backgrounds. During the data collection period, 309 responses were found to be valid at the preliminary screening stage. Subsequently, any response was thoroughly filtered on completeness, consistency and accuracy. To ensure the reliability of the findings, incomplete and inconsistent responses were excluded as well as the outlier responses. Consequently, the final sample comprised 306 participants. The data was collected according to the standard scoring procedures of the respective scales. Reverse scoring was used where needed and total scores calculated. The data were then tabulated and ready to get statistical analysis to determine the relationship between the study variables. Each of the participants participated in the study on a voluntary basis and gave an informed consent.

RESULTS

The Aim of the study was to examine the relationship among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among Generation Z individuals. After completion of data collection, a total of 309 valid responses were obtained and analyzed. The collected data were systematically scored according to the standard scoring procedure of the respective psychological scales, including necessary reverse scoring wherever applicable. The data were then organized and subjected to appropriate statistical analysis, such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, in order to examine the relationship and predictive effects among the variables. The results obtained from the analysis are present below in a structured manner to test the stated hypothesis and to understand the nature and strength of the relationship among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of seeking psychological help.

Correlational Analyses

Correlations			
	Neuroticism	Emotional Dysregulation	Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help
Neuroticism	1		
Emotional Dysregulation	.511**	1	
Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help	.277**	.441**	1

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

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

Correlations									
	Neuroticism	Emotional Dysregulation	Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help	Non-acceptance	Goal	Impulse	Awareness	Strategies	Clarity
Neuroticism	1								
Emotional Dysregulation	.511**	1							
Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help	.277**	.441**	1						
Non-acceptance	.347**	.717**	.267**	1					
Goal	.387**	.749**	.294**	.454**	1				
Impulse	.391**	.749**	.317**	.500**	.440**	1			
Awareness	.244**	.596**	.315**	.318**	.294**	.344*	1		
Strategies	.439**	.827**	.386**	.476**	.650**	.512*	.359**	1	
Clarity	.344**	.573**	.277**	.244**	.305**	.382*	.268**	.358*	1

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

The correlation analysis in Table 2 examined the relationships among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among 306 participants.

The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between neuroticism and emotional dysregulation ($r = .511$, $p < .01$), indicating that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism tend to experience greater difficulties in regulating their emotions. This suggests that emotionally unstable individuals are more likely to struggle with managing and responding to their emotional experiences.

A significant positive correlation was also found between neuroticism and self-stigma of seeking psychological help ($r = .277$, $p < .01$). This indicates that participants with higher neuroticism scores were more likely to hold negative beliefs or feelings about seeking psychological support.

Further, emotional dysregulation showed a significant positive correlation with self-stigma of seeking psychological help ($r = .441$, $p < .01$). This suggests that individuals who have more difficulty understanding, accepting, and managing their emotions are also more likely to internalize stigma related to seeking mental health assistance.

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

Overall, all study variables were positively and significantly related to each other at the 0.01 level. These findings support the study hypotheses and suggest that neuroticism and emotional dysregulation are important psychological factors associated with self-stigma of seeking psychological help.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationship among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of seeking psychological help among Generation Z individuals. The findings of the study provide important insights into how personality traits and emotional processes influence help-seeking attitudes among young individuals.

The results of the correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between neuroticism and emotional dysregulation. This finding supports the first hypothesis and indicates that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism tend to experience greater difficulties in regulating their emotions. This is consistent with existing literature, which suggests that individuals high in neuroticism are more emotionally reactive, experience frequent negative affect, and have difficulty managing stress effectively. The finding aligns with personality theories that conceptualize neuroticism as a predisposition toward emotional instability and vulnerability to psychological distress.

Further, the study found a significant positive relationship between neuroticism and self-stigma of seeking psychological help. This supports the second hypothesis and suggests that individuals with higher neurotic tendencies are more likely to internalize negative beliefs about seeking help. Such individuals may perceive help-seeking as a sign of weakness or inadequacy, which can increase feelings of shame and reluctance to access psychological services. This finding is in line with previous research indicating that individuals with higher emotional vulnerability often exhibit negative self-perceptions and heightened sensitivity to social evaluation.

The results also demonstrated a significant positive relationship between emotional dysregulation and self-stigma of seeking psychological help, thereby supporting the third hypothesis. Individuals who experience difficulties in managing their emotions may develop maladaptive coping strategies and negative self-beliefs, which in turn contribute to higher levels of self-stigma. Emotional dysregulation may intensify feelings of helplessness, confusion, and self-criticism, making individuals less likely to seek professional help despite experiencing distress.

The regression analysis provided further insights into the predictive relationships among the variables. The overall model was found to be significant, indicating that neuroticism and emotional dysregulation together contribute to explaining self-stigma of seeking psychological help. However, among the two predictors, emotional dysregulation emerged as a significant predictor, whereas neuroticism did not significantly predict self-stigma when considered independently. This suggests that although neuroticism is associated with self-stigma, its effect may be indirect and mediated through emotional dysregulation. In other words, individuals high in neuroticism may develop difficulties in regulating their emotions, which in turn increases their self-stigmatizing beliefs about seeking help.

These findings highlight the central role of emotional dysregulation in influencing help-seeking attitudes among Generation Z. While personality traits such as neuroticism provide

Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

a predisposition basis for emotional difficulties, it is the inability to effectively regulate emotions that appears to have a more direct impact on self-stigma. This emphasizes the importance of focusing on emotional regulation skills in mental health interventions.

In the context of Generation Z, these findings are particularly relevant. This generation is exposed to multiple stressors, including academic pressure, social comparison through social media, and uncertainty about the future. Such factors may contribute to increased emotional difficulties and negative self-perceptions. Despite growing awareness about mental health, stigma continues to act as a major barrier to help-seeking. The findings of this study suggest that addressing emotional dysregulation may play a crucial role in reducing self-stigma and promoting positive attitudes toward seeking psychological help.

From a practical perspective, the study highlights the need for mental health programs that focus on improving emotional regulation skills among young individuals. Interventions such as emotional awareness training, cognitive restructuring, and coping skill development can help individuals manage their emotions more effectively and reduce negative self-beliefs. Additionally, efforts should be made to reduce stigma through awareness campaigns, psychoeducation, and normalization of help-seeking behavior.

In conclusion, the present study contributes to the existing literature by demonstrating the interconnected role of neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma in shaping help-seeking behavior among Generation Z. The findings underscore the importance of addressing emotional and personality-related factors to promote better mental health outcomes and encourage individuals to seek professional psychological support without fear or hesitation.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this chapter revealed important insights into the relationships among neuroticism, emotional dysregulation, and self-stigma of seeking psychological help. The data analysis showed that all three variables were significantly and positively correlated, indicating that higher levels of neuroticism and emotional dysregulation are associated with higher levels of self-stigma among Generation Z individuals.

Further, the results demonstrated that emotional dysregulation has a strong and significant impact on self-stigma. Individuals who experience greater difficulty in managing their emotions are more likely to internalize negative beliefs about seeking psychological help. Although neuroticism was positively related to self-stigma, it did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression analysis, suggesting that its influence may be indirect or mediated through emotional dysregulation.

The reliability analysis indicated good internal consistency for most of the scales, though the self-stigma scale showed relatively lower reliability, which should be considered while interpreting the results. Overall, the findings supported most of the hypotheses, with the final hypothesis being partially accepted.

The results highlight the crucial role of emotional regulation in shaping help-seeking attitudes and reducing self-stigma. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at improving emotional regulation skills may help in decreasing stigma and promoting better mental health help-seeking behavior among young individuals.

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Relationship among Neuroticism, Emotional Dysregulation and Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help among Gen Z

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Conflict of Interest

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