A study of the relationship between cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression in the female students of the first grade of high school in Rezvanshahr

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Abstract:

Background and purpose: Regulation of emotions is strategies that are used to increase, decrease, or maintain the emotional experiences. This study aims to investigate the relationship between cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression in students.

Method: this study is descriptive and correlational. 100 female first grade high school students were selected randomly. The tests completed Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) and Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (1992). Finally, the data were analyzed using Pierson correlation coefficient.

Findings: the results of eth study showed that there is a positive significant relationship between cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression.

Conclusion: faults of any kind in the regulation of emotions can make the individual vulnerable against emotional problems like aggression.

Keywords: strategies of cognitive regulation of emotions, aggression, female students.
Introduction

Regulation of emotions is strategies that are used to increase, decrease, or maintain the emotional experiences. The sources of regulation of emotions are emotional, cognitive and social transformation. Malfunction in these strategies can play an important role in creating and maintaining mental disorders. In fact, the concept regulation of emotions is so pervasive and comprises of a wide range of conscious and unconscious physiologic, behavioral and psychological processes (Vahedi, Hashemi and Einipour 1392).

Regulation of emotion is a process through which individuals adjust their emotions in a conscious or unconscious manner (Bargh & Williams 2007) to respond properly to the environmental demands (Thompson 1994; Campbell and Barlo 2007; Cole, Martin and Dennis; quoted from Hassani et al 2013). In everyday life, individuals use regular strategies to adjust the intensity or the kind of their emotional experiences or the demanding event. In additions to these results, studies show that the regulation of emotion is totally mixed with psychopathological patterns (Mennin & Farach 2007).

Investigations on psychological texts and studies indicate that the regulation of emotions is an important factor on health and functioning well in social interactions (Cicchetti et al 1995; quoted from Yousefi 1389) and deficiencies in it as associated with internalizing disorders (like depression, anxiety, social isolation) and externalizing disorders (like crime and aggressive behavior) (Eisenberg et al 2001).

Therefore, the strategies of cognitive regulation of emotions can be one of the influential factors on aggression. Aggression is one of the important issues of life and the problems caused by it are of the most significant reasons children and adolescents are referred to get psychological helps. This term is used to describe many of the behaviors like bad temper, dispute, coercion, damaging personal effects, fighting and cruelty. Of the aggressive behaviors, anger is an intense and satisfying emotional response that prepares one to cope with potential threats and cause problems at work, interpersonal relationships and the quality of life (Sadock, Kaplan & Sadock 2007; quoted from Vaziri and Lotfi Azimi 1390).

Additionally, recent studies show a relationship between anger and the strategies of regulation of emotions. Besharat et al (2015) showed that the dimensions of anger are related to the maladaptive strategies of regulation of emotions. Also, a study done by Szasz et al (2011) showed that the strategies of regulation of emotions predict the way anger is expressed and experienced. Beck (1991, quoting from Besharat et al 2015) believes catastrophizing, blaming others and rumination (which are maladaptive strategies of cognitive regulation of emotions) related to anger.

This paper tends to investigate whether there is relationship between the strategies of cognitive regulation of emotions and anger in students.

Method and research sample

Based on purpose and subject, this study investigates the relationship between the strategies of regulation of emotions and aggression. This study is descriptive and correlational.
The statistical population of this study comprises of all the female students of the first grade of high school in Rezvanshahr.

In this study, 100 female students of Fatemeh Zahra (SA) high school in the first grade in Rezvanshahr were selected through random sampling.

Research Tools

A) Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ): the cognitive regulation of emotions is developed by Garnefski et al (2001). This is a multi-dimensional questionnaire and a self-reporting tool containing 36 items with a form for adults and children. The cognitive regulation of emotions evaluates nine cognitive strategies namely self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, perspective-taking, catastrophizing, and blaming others. Garnefski et al reported a desirable validity and reliability for this questionnaire. The Persian version validated by Samani and Jokar (2008).

B) Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (1992): Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire contains 29 items. It is standardized for individuals between 18 to 22 years of age and ranges from Totally like me (5 marks) to Not like me at all (1 mark). This questionnaire evaluates four behavioral factors namely physical aggression (9 items), verbal aggression (5 items), anger (7 items) and distrust (8 items). One of the items (Number 7) is rated conversely. In the study done by Samani (2008, quoted from Sayarpour et al 2012) these factors are grouped into motive or instrumental component (physical and verbal aggression), emotional component (anger) and cognitive (distrust) and finally there are determined 7 items for physical and verbal aggression, 6 items for irritation, 7 items for anger and 7 items for distrust out of the total of 27 items. The aggression questionnaire shows a desirable validity and reliability. The results of test-retest coefficient for the four subscales (with an interval of nine weeks) are 0.80 to 0.72 and the correlation for the four subscales is 0.38 to 0.49. In order to study the internal validity of the scale, Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used and the results showed an internal consistency of the subscale to be 0.82 for physical aggression, 0.81 for verbal aggression, 0.83 for anger and 0.80 for hostility.

Findings

First, the descriptive indexes of the variables under study are investigated and then the data are analyzed for the hypothesis test.

Table 1 shows the descriptive indexes of the regulation of emotions and anger in the study sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The descriptive indexes of cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression
cognitive regulation of emotions

Aggression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 provides the results for Pearson correlation test for the two variables of cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression.

Table 2. The correlation coefficient of cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression

Table 2 shows there is a significance correlation between cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression because the significance level calculated is 0.024 which is less than 0.05 (the selected significance level), meaning the higher individuals score on cognitive regulation of emotions, the higher they will on aggression, and vice versa.

Discussion and conclusion

Although some of the authors have tried to associate aggression with instinctive motivations and the like, studies show that the sources of aggression are neither motivations to be hostile nor the drives caused by failure. People assault each other because they have learned aggressive reactions and expect to be rewarded or have already gained the rewards. Anger and aggression are global emotions that can be found in all the cultures. Aggression is one of the important issues at the age of adolescence and controlling anger is the skill to be learned by individuals. Otherwise, this behavior, in case repeated continually, can have negative influences on one’s individual and social interactions. Regulation of emotions through cognitions is an inseparable part of everyone’s life helping them, in case they face stressful or threatening events, to manage or adjust the emotions or feelings and not to be overloaded by emotions (Granovski et al. 2001).

Analyzing the hypothesis of the study, saying there is a relationship between cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression, shows that there is a significant positive correlation between cognitive regulation of emotions and aggression, meaning deficiency of any kind in the regulation of emotions can make the individual vulnerable against emotional problems. Ochsner & Gross (2005, quoted from Zare and Salgi 2013) believed the strategies of regulation of emotions are the individuals’ way of thinking after a negative experience or a stressful event. Research show that children receive the aggressive behaviors as a model from the society and the society is influential on creation and re-creation of behaviors of this kind. Therefore, through
developing the strategies of cognitive regulation of emotions focusing primarily on identifying the emotions and finally on controlling them, one can contribute to control the aggressive behaviors in adolescents. The findings of this study are consistent with and support that of Besharat et al (2015) that showed there is a relationship between the dimensions of anger and maladaptive strategies of regulation of emotions, that of Saz et al (2011) that showed the strategies of regulation of emotions predict the way anger is experienced and expressed, and also that of Beck (1991 quoted from Besharat et al 2015) that states catastrophizing, blaming others and rumination (that are maladaptive strategies of regulation of emotions) are associated with anger.
References


