



Examine The Experiences Of Disappointment And Regret: A Study On Self-Conscious Emotions

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Abstract

Self-conscious emotions emerge as a result of our understanding of societal norms, guidelines, and objectives. Strong negative emotions often arise from the consequences of significant decisions. Regret and disappointment, due to their prevalence and intricate links to decision-making processes, have garnered significant attention from researchers. This study specifically examines how regret and disappointment differ based on academic status and gender. Although the study employs a mixed-method design, however, the current reading focuses solely on the quantitative data. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is employed to assess the differences. The findings highlight significant distinctions among graduate and postgraduate students concerning the experiential aspects of regret and disappointment.

Keywords: Regret, Disappointment, Experiences, Self-Conscious, Emotions

Introduction

Self-conscious emotions arise as a result of our comprehension of societal norms, guidelines, and objectives. These emotions are influenced by our self-perception and our perception of how others view us. They encompass feelings such as pride, regret, and embarrassment, disappointment, guilt and shame (Harter, 1999; Tangney & Dearing, 2003). Intense negative emotions often stem from the outcomes of significant decisions. For example, individuals may experience profound unhappiness after purchasing a motorcycle that turns out to be damaged or entering a relationship that doesn't align with their expectations (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017). Similar emotions, although perhaps less intense, can arise in everyday scenarios, such as buying a product on sale only to discover it's available at an even lower price later or enduring a disappointing movie at the cinema (Gilovich & Medvec, 1994). These common emotional reactions of regret and disappointment have been extensively studied by researchers due to their prevalence and their intricate connection to the decision-making processes that shape our lives (Loomes & Sugden, 1986). Understanding these emotions provides valuable insights into how individuals cope with the outcomes of their choices and adapt to future situations.

Similarly, these situations are occurring in the students' academic life. Studies revealed that regret and disappointment are often triggered as common emotions.

These emotions can arise when students perceive that they have not met their own standards or expectations, leading to a sense of fulfillment and a wish to change past actions or decisions (Tugade, 2011). Therefore, Regret is usually triggered by comparing the actual outcome of a choice with a better result that might have occurred if a different decision had been made. In contrast, disappointment arises from comparing the actual outcome with a more favorable result that could have arisen from the same choice.

These alternative outcomes might be real or constructed through counterfactual thinking. The conditions leading to regret and disappointment differ, as illustrated by the distinction between a child being disappointed by the Tooth Fairy's forgetfulness and the parents regretting the oversight. Correspondingly, the academic students often experience regret and disappointment during their academic pursuits. These emotions may be stem from academic underperformance, missed opportunities, or unfulfilled expectations and so (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007) In this way, the aim of the current research is to find out the situations that generate the emotions of disappointment and regret among the academic students. Because, the emotions of regret and disappointment differ in experiential content and limited empirical evidence are happen due date. Therefore, the study seeks to determine if regret and disappointment are fundamentally similar emotions with distinct names or if they are separate emotions with unique characteristics. Previous research comparing these emotions has been scarce, with one study highlighting differences in terms of self-agency and attention.

Insights into regret come from studies where participants wrote about their major regrets. These accounts revealed that personal responsibility plays a central role in the experience of regret (Medvec et al., 2011). Similarly, another study showed that emotions can be differentiated by feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotive goals. In that study, participants were asked to recall experiences of negative emotions, including regret (Larsen et al., 2017).

In this manner, we hypothesized that regret and disappointment differ in the context of academic status and gender bases. This prediction suggests that participants asked to describe intense episodes of these emotions will reveal distinctions consistent with the notions that regret emerges when one feels responsible for an unwanted outcome, while disappointment arises when outcomes fall short of expectations.

Objective:

- 1 : To explore how social emotion of disappointment and regret is distributed in terms of situation occurrence.
- 2 : To examine the experiences of disappointment and regret among the graduate and post-graduate academic students.
- 3 : To see the differences of disappointment and regret experiences on the basis of demographic of gender.

Hypothesis

- 1 : There will be the significant difference in the disappointment and regret distributed on the basis of situation occurrence.
- 2 : There will be the significant differences in feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions and emotive goals of disappointment and regret social emotions among the graduate and post-graduate academic students.
- 3 : There will be the differences in the social emotions of disappointment and regret on the basis of different demographics of gender.

Method

Participants and Design

The post graduate and graduate students at Aligarh Muslim University (N = 144; 87 females, 57 males; ages ranged from 18 to 27, with mean of 22.53 years) participated in partial fulfillment of a course requirement, *See table 1*. The study was focused on the sequential method design in which the research first focuses on the qualitative data and then quantitative data has been collected. In qualitative design the participants were asked to recall an event in which you feel the emotions of disappointment and regret and explain it briefly and mention the occurrence of the situation. After qualitative design, the quantitative data was collected by using the regret and disappointment questionnaire of Roseman et al. (1994). However, the present paper focuses on the quantitative data only.

Table 1
Socio-Demographic Distribution of Participants (N=144)

Socio-demographics	N	%
Gender		
Female	87	60.4
Male	57	39.6
Educational Qualification		
Graduate	82	56.9
Post Graduate	62	43.1
Religious		
Non-Muslim	81	43.8
Muslim	63	56.3
Economic Status		
Low	43	29.9
Average	61	42.4
High	40	27.8

Note. $M_{age}=22.53$

Procedure and Materials

Before collecting data, a comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose and a consent form were provided to each participant. Participants were instructed verbally to recall an event from their past that brought about feelings of regret and disappointment. Clear instructions were given for the specific conditions of regret and disappointment. Additionally, participants were guided through a quantitative questionnaire adapted from Roseman et al.'s work (1994) to assess various aspects of their emotional experience, including feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals. Each of these five response types was evaluated using four statements related to their recalled emotion. Within each set of four items, two were designed to measure responses typically associated with regret, drawing from Roseman et al.'s (1994) work, and the remaining two aimed to gauge responses commonly linked to disappointment. Participants were asked to rate the extent of their feelings on a 9-point scale, ranging from "not at all" (1) to "to a very great extent" (9). It was

anticipated that participants recalling regretful events would exhibit higher scores on the regret-related items, while those recalling disappointing events would show higher scores on the disappointment-related items.

Results

Before conducting the statistical analyses, a data screening process was undertaken to ensure the cleanliness and adherence to essential assumptions required for the parametric tests, such as the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) used in this research. Additionally, the study's findings were presented following the guidelines outlined in the APA 7th edition publication manual (APA, 2020).

Fig 1

Frequencies of Subjective Feeling State Situation Occurrence of Disappointment and Regret (N=144)

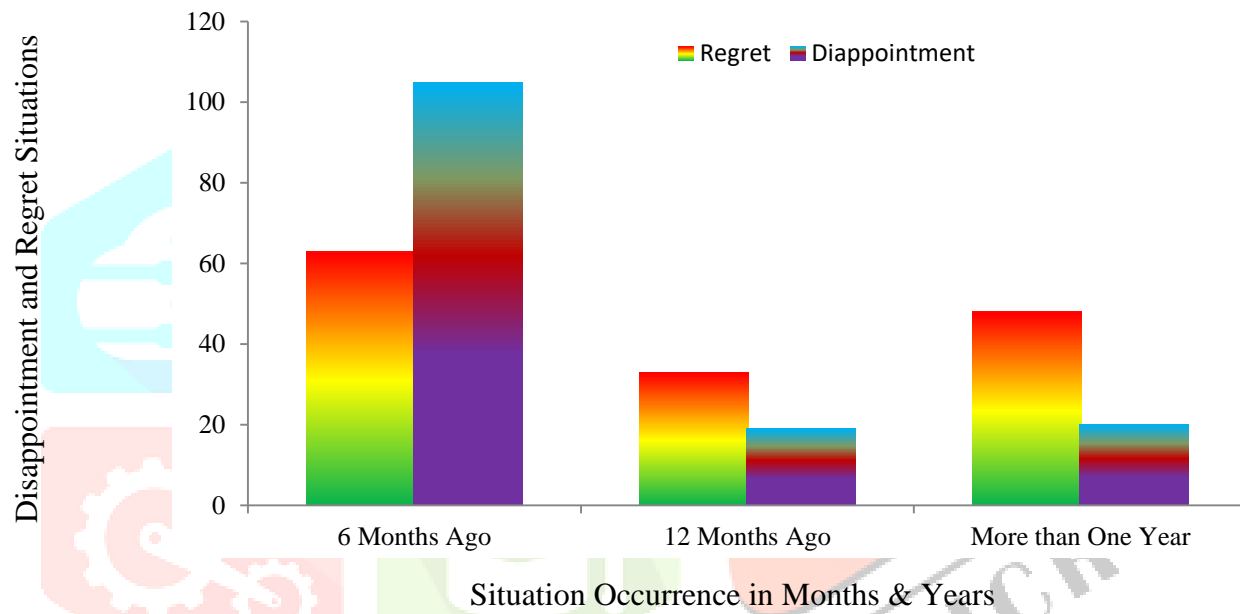


Figure 1 displays the scores for events that took place in the lives of academic students. The graph reveals a notable trend: both disappointment and regret have a higher frequency of occurrence within the initial six months compared to the twelve-month period or beyond. This pattern is consistent for both regretful and disappointing situations. However, the data clearly indicates that disappointment is much more frequent than situations leading to regret.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One- Way Analysis of Variance in the Experiences of Disappointment and Regret Among the Graduate and Post-Graduate Academic Students (N=144)

Measures	Graduate		Post-Graduate		F(1,143)	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD		
Regret Feelings	13.31	1.02	9.54	2.77	104.538***	.43
Disappointment Feelings	6.48	1.64	8.47	2.24	34.595***	.19
Regret Thought	13.53	1.04	10.02	3.19	69.68***	.33
Disappointment Thought	6.48	1.64	8.46	2.25	34.595***	.19
Regret Action Tendencies	13.27	0.69	9.41	2.79	113.455***	.32
Disappointment Action Tendencies	6.13	1.48	8.41	2.36	44.933***	.24
Regret Actions	13.10	1.01	9.54	2.77	93.474***	.39
Disappointment Actions	6.48	1.64	8.46	2.24	34.595***	.19
Regret Emotivational Goals	13.31	1.09	9.54	2.77	104.538***	.42
Disappointment Emotivational Goals	6.48	1.68	8.46	2.24	34.595***	.19

*** $p < .001$

Note. Post Graduate $n=62$, Graduate $n=82$

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and F-values for the dimensions of regret and disappointment among graduate and post-graduate academic students. The results indicate significant differences in the means across various dimensions of regret, such as feelings ($F(1,143) = 104.538$, $p < .001$ ***), thoughts ($F(1,143) = 113.455$, $p < .001$ ***), action tendencies ($F(1,143) = 113.455$, $p < .001$ ***), actions ($F(1,143) = 113.455$, $p < .001$ ***), and emotivational goals ($F(1,143) = 113.455$, $p < .001$ ***), with graduate students displaying higher levels of regret feelings compared to post-graduate students. Furthermore, significant mean differences were also observed in the dimensions of disappointment, including feelings ($F(1,143) = 34.595$, $p < .001$ ***), thoughts ($F(1,143) = 34.595$, $p < .001$ ***), action tendencies ($F(1,143) = 44.933$, $p < .001$ ***), actions ($F(1,143) = 34.595$, $p < .001$ ***), and emotivational goals ($F(1,143) = 34.595$, $p < .001$ ***), where graduate students demonstrated higher levels of disappointment feelings than post-graduate students. The effect size in all the dimensions ranges from medium to large effect. Hence, in both regret and disappointment scenarios, graduate students exhibit more pronounced experiences compared to post-graduate students. Therefore, the hypothesis H_1 is supported.

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One- Way Analysis of Variance in the Experiences of Disappointment and Regret Among the Male and Female Academic Students (N=144)

Measures	Female		Male		F(1,143)	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD		
Regret Feelings	13.22	.970	8.02	1.75	525.24***	.79
Disappointment Feelings	6.45	1.45	9.39	2.01	103.18***	.42
Regret Thought	13.67	.996	8.28	2.06	442.14***	.76
Disappointment Thought	6.45	1.45	9.39	2.02	103.18***	.43
Regret Action Tendencies	13.24	.927	7.77	1.96	950.19***	.87
Disappointment Action Tendencies	6.20	1.38	9.32	2.23	110.23***	.44
Regret Actions	13.07	.950	8.02	1.75	501.99***	.77
Disappointment Actions	6.45	1.47	9.39	2.01	103.188**	.43
Regret Emotivational Goals	13.22	.970	8.02	1.75	252.24***	.78
Disappointment Emotivational Goals	6.45	1.47	9.39	2.01	103.18***	.42

*** $p < .001$

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and F-values concerning the dimensions of regret and disappointment experienced by male and female academic students. The results indicate significant differences in the means across various dimensions of regret: feelings ($F(1,143) = 525.24, p < .001^{***}$), thoughts ($F(1,143) = 442.14, p < .001^{***}$), action tendencies ($F(1,143) = 950.19, p < .001^{***}$), actions ($F(1,143) = 501.99, p < .001^{***}$), and emotivational goals ($F(1,143) = 252.24, p < .001^{***}$), with female students reporting higher levels of regret feelings compared to male students. Furthermore, significant mean differences were observed in the dimensions of disappointment, including feelings ($F(1,143) = 103.18, p < .001^{***}$), thoughts ($F(1,143) = 103.18, p < .001^{***}$), action tendencies ($F(1,143) = 110.23, p < .001^{***}$), actions ($F(1,143) = 103.18, p < .001^{***}$), and emotivational goals ($F(1,143) = 103.18, p < .001^{***}$), with female students also indicating higher levels of disappointment feelings than male students. . The effect size in all the dimensions ranges from medium to large effect. Therefore, in both the context of regret and disappointment, female students demonstrate more pronounced experiences compared to their male counterparts. Hence, our alternative hypothesis H_2 is supported.

Discussion

The findings reveal notable distinctions among the students of graduate and post graduate students in terms of regret and disappointment of their experiential aspects. Drawing inspiration from the methodology used by Roseman et al. (1994), our study demonstrates that these two emotions can be differentiated based on the various elements they encompass, such as feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals. Notably, the most significant differences are observed in action tendencies and emotivational goals, indicating that these emotions differ notably in their implications for future behavior. Further, the findings highlight that there is a difference among the male and female students with respect to regret and disappointment situations. In the context of regret, female individuals experiencing regret feel a stronger sense of knowing better, dwell on their mistakes, have a tendency to self-criticize and correct errors, and desire to undo the event and obtain a second chance. Whereas males feels more disappointment because males establish high expectations will experience the greatest disappointment when choice outcomes fall below expectations (Grable & Kwak, 2021).

Therefore, the findings indicate that this emotion is associated with feelings of powerlessness, a tendency to be inactive and avoid the situation, turning away from the event, and a desire to do nothing. This suggests that both the regret and disappointment can be more immobilizing emotions. However, our results also suggest that one can move on from an experience of disappointment more easily than from an experience of regret. While regrets tend to ruminate and focus on past events, individuals feeling disappointment may be more adept at dismissing these feelings and continuing with their lives, potentially avoiding paralysis. This is especially relevant when considering a sequence of disappointing experiences, which might lead to learned helplessness.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that despite the differences, regret and disappointment share common elements. Both emotions relate to decision-making and uncertain outcomes, originating from a comparison process between the obtained outcome and an alternative that could have occurred. This leads to the question of how these two emotions are related to each other. We argue that disappointment is a broader reaction to unexpected unfavorable outcomes than regret. Research supports this notion, suggesting that regret is more specific as an emotion. Moreover, this study contributes to the understanding that regret and disappointment are distinct emotions with characteristic features. This also generates hypotheses about how experienced regret and disappointment can impact future behavioral decisions. We anticipate that regret will lead to active attempts to rectify unfavorable outcomes and more extensive information seeking to prevent future regret, without necessarily resulting in risk aversion. On the other hand, disappointment is expected to redirect attention to alternative goals and foster a tendency to avoid future risk-taking. It's essential to recognize that the emotions we bring into a situation can significantly influence our behavior, offering a more comprehensive perspective on the effects of emotions on decision-making.

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