



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTIFICATION AND COGNITIVE EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES IN YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract: Individuals are formed because of their emotional and psychological experiences. We are all products of our childhood experiences and parenting plays a crucial role in it. Effectively dealing with negative outcomes of past childhood incidents and learning to not let it hamper our cognitive emotion regulation strategies as an adult is important. An insight on another parenting phenomena called parentification and its relation to maladaptive and adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies are studied in this research. Parentification is referred as the role reversal in the parent child subsystem where the child takes up parental roles and experience pseudo maturity. Data was collected for 240 (N=240) young adults with equal number of males and females (males=120, female=120) to study the cognitive emotion regulation strategies. Findings concluded that maladaptive cognitive emotional regulation strategy has a relationship with parentification.

Keywords - Cognitive emotion regulation strategies, adaptive strategies, maladaptive strategies, Parentification, young adults

I. INTRODUCTION

Cognition

Cognition refers to the broad spectrum which involves the mental processes of knowing. An individual's cognitive processes include all forms of perceiving, thinking, remembering and other higher-level functioning of mind including problem solving. It is formed by one's thoughts and experiences (American Psychological Association, 2023). Emotion regulation as elucidated by the American Psychological Association is the potential of an individual to manage and moderate one's emotions, consciously or unconsciously, to handle and act in any situation. (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Cognitive Emotion Regulation

In this study, we will focus on the cognitive side of emotion regulation. Cognitive emotion regulation is a collection of all the mental strategies a person employs consciously to cope with emotional energy taking situations. Cognitive coping employs different strategies to deal with a stressful event or to overcome a problem situation. It includes diverse forms such as developing an understanding of the problem situation, drawing steps to resolve the situation, putting on a perspective of the situation, positive refocusing, catastrophizing, self-blaming for the problem situation and others.

Nine cognitive emotion regulation strategies were given which included four maladaptive and five adaptive strategies. These are i.e., self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing, other-blame, acceptance, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, putting into perspective, and positive reappraisal. (Garnefski and Kraaij, 2002)

Maladaptive Strategies includes self-blame referring to putting blame on oneself for the negative situation, rumination meaning constantly dwelling about the thoughts and feelings of the situation, catastrophizing meaning viewing a situation as considerable worst that it actually is and blaming others which involves putting the blame on others for the situation. Adaptive Strategies which include acceptance that is being okay with whatever happened in the situation, positive refocusing meaning shifting focus and thoughts to pleasant events, positive reappraisal i.e., adapting to brighter side of the situation, refocus on planning meaning pondering upon the plan of action to deal with the situation and putting into perspective involving reducing the meaning of the situation.

Effective use of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies is to help an individual do better in life and achieve improved mental health. Positive reappraisal is researched to be beneficial to an individual's well-being, whereas suppression is seen to impact negatively. (Gross & John, 2003).

Parenting and Emotion regulation

Parenting as defined by the American Psychological Association is the course of action in which the parents rear their child. Thus, parenting styles largely include the parent child interaction along with the extent of emotional warmth and control provided (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Parentification

One such phenomenon emerging out of parenting is Parentification. To gain an insight on the dissolved boundaries and reversal of family role and responsibilities this concept came into being (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973). Jurkovic (1997) took this phenomenon further and delved into understanding the problems a parentified child undergoes or faces later in life (Bowen, 1978; Briere, 1992; Cicchetti, 2004). To completely understand the aftereffects of parentification, its types- emotional and instrumental parentification experiences, were assessed (Jurkovic, 1997). Over the years the array of terms under the umbrella of this phenomenon discussed include burdened child (Chase, 1999), dissolved boundaries (Kerig, 2005), filial responsibility (Jurkovic, Thirkield & Morrell, 2001), and adultification (Burton, 2007).

Parentification has negative long lasting impacts on a child's growth and emotional health also evident in their adulthood. Emotional regulation capacity of an individual is greatly impacted by the kind of parenting experienced by them in childhood. Excessively unkind and unjust behaviour of parents negatively impacts a child's capacity to effectively manage their emotions, leading to employment of unhealthy maladaptive emotional regulation. (Eisenberg et al., 1999). Parentification is viewed in a multi layered outlook and understands the impact of this phenomenon as the parent child role reversal wherein the parent/s depends on their child for physical or psychological support and help (Hooper, 2011)

This study will help by bridging the gap between the association of Cognitive emotion regulation strategies and parentification.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The goal of a study focused on understanding the use of cognitive emotion regulation strategies in males and females as a reaction to stressful life events. It also targeted to study the use of the various strategies and its relation to depressive symptoms being reported. For participants, 251 males along with 379 females were selected from the general population. The findings were interesting and reflected that higher extents of maladaptive strategies were directly proportional to higher the reported depressive symptom score. At the same time higher use of positive strategy like positive reappraisal was inversely proportional to lower depressive scores. (Garnefski et al., 2004)

The goal of a study exploring cognitive emotion regulation strategies in relation to anxiety and depression along with the type of personality. There was an association found between the type of depression and the maladaptive cognitive strategy of self-blame. Characteristics of anxiety and depression were traced as an intervened connection with specific strategies which can be targeted for clinical studies and treatment. (Domaradzka & Fajkowska, 2018)

The review study done by Hooper (2011) talks out an overview along with the possible positive and negative outcomes of parentification. It also reflects on the physical health impacts parentification has as a long termed experienced phenomenon along with the effects of culture and ethnicity.

Jurkovic et al. (2001) conducted a multidimensional analysis to compare parentification in children and young adults experiencing parental divorce and with non-divorce ones. 382 participants were used as sample and the scores, the participants who have experienced divorce gave evidence for higher parentification- emotional and instrumental and reported experiencing more unfairness in their families.

The purpose of a study was to understand the role of parenting styles as a forerunner of adolescents' emotion regulation ability. 194 participants' data was collected through multiple questionnaires. Findings

indicate that authoritative parenting styles opted by mothers react positively to emotion regulation whereas easy going parenting had a positive outcome on emotion regulation. (Jabeen et al., 2013)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to understand cognitive emotion regulation strategies and its relationship with parentification in young adults.

3.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows -

- To examine the relationship between adaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults
- To examine the relationship between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults.

3.3 Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant relationship between adaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults
- H2: There is a significant relationship between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults.

3.4 Sample

The sample comprised of 120 male and 120 female young adults i.e., total 240 college students.

3.5 Measures

3.5.1 Cognitive Emotion regulation Questionnaire

The Cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire (Garnefski, N., & Kraaij, V., 2007) is a 36- item self-report instrument that measures the cognitive emotion regulation strategies an individual employs in case of a negatively experienced situation (see Appendix C). The Cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire assesses the cognitive coping strategies in form of the four maladaptive strategies including self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing, other-blame and five adaptive strategies including acceptance, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, putting into perspective, and positive reappraisal. The participant marks each item on a Likert scale ranging from 1 being almost never to 5 being almost always. Subscale item numbers for all the nine strategies are used to calculate total scores of each strategy. The questionnaire has a Cronbach alpha reliability range of 0.77 to 0.93.

3.5.2 Parentification Questionnaire

The Parentification Questionnaire (Jurkovic, 1997) is a self-report tool consisting of 42 items presented in a "true" or "false" format. It evaluates the experiences of adults who, during their childhood, assumed parental responsibilities. The questionnaire's scoring system ranges from 0 to 42, with scores derived from the total number of "true" and "false" responses. A higher score indicates a greater degree of parentification. The questionnaire demonstrates good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging from 0.82 to 0.92 and a Spearman split-half reliability of 0.85 (Hooper & Doehler, 2012).

3.6 Procedure

After thorough reading of the pre-existing literature on the internet along with books available, the topic of research was finalized on the basis of the research gap concerning the population and relevance of the topic. The study's aim is to understand parentification and its relationship with cognitive emotion regulation strategies: maladaptive and adaptive strategies in young adults.

With the consent of participants, they were asked to fill the standardized questionnaires including Cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire and Parentification questionnaire. The data was then analysed using SPSS software to determine if the relationship. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation were run and the result was statistically analysed.

IV. RESULTS

The data was obtained and computed for 240 participants. The mean age of the participants was 21.24 with a range of lowest age of participant being 19 and highest age of participant being 25 years old.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	M	SD	Range	Maximum	Minimum
Cognitive emotion regulation strategies						
Maladaptive strategies	240	58.09	15.69	78.00	98	20
Adaptive strategies	240	69.87	12.36	73.00	102	29

Note. Where M is the mean, Sd is the Standard Deviation and N is the number of variables

The descriptive statistics for the “cognitive emotional regulation questionnaire” from Table 1 shows, the total number of participants were N = 240, wherein 120 were males and 120 were females. The mean score of maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in this study was 58 (M=58, SD=15.6), which indicates average maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in the young adult population of India (Table 1.2). The maximum possible score for this category is 100 and the minimum possible score for this category is 16. (Max = 100, Min = 16). Participants in this study have a range of maximum score being 98 and minimum being 20.

The mean score of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in this study was 70 (M=69.8, SD=12.36), which indicates average adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in the young adult population of India. The maximum possible score for this category is 125 and the minimum possible score for this category is 20. (Max = 125, Min = 20). Participants in this study have a range of maximum score being 102 and minimum being 29.

Table 2 Correlation between Parentification and Adaptive strategies

		Parentification	Adaptive strategies
Parentification	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.154
	N	240	240
Adaptive strategies	Pearson Correlation	-0.094	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.154	
	N	240	240

Note. ** correlation significant at 0.01 level

Table 2 represents the level of correlation between Parentification and Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies of young adults in India. This was calculated through the Pearson correlation which is used to quantify a linear relationship between two variables.

The results indicate that there is no significant correlation between Parentification and Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies, indicated by the value of $r = -0.094$. Since, the correlation does not lie between the range of +1 to +1 there exists no correlation between the variables. This result rejects the H1: There is a significant relationship between adaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults in India.

Table 3 Correlation between Parentification and Maladaptive strategies

		Parentification	Maladaptive strategies
Parentification	Pearson Correlation	1	0.614**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	240	240
Maladaptive strategies	Pearson Correlation	0.614**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	240	240

Note. ** correlation significant at 0.01 level

Table 3 represents the level of correlation between Parentification and Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies of young adults in India. This was calculated through the Pearson correlation which is used to quantify a linear relationship between two variables.

The results indicate that there is a significant level of correlation between Parentification and Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies, indicated by the value of $r = 0.614$. The result is significant at the 0.01 level. The significance level of the correlation coefficient is at 0.00 level which indicates that the probability of the correlation happening by chance is zero.

Since, the correlation ($r=0.614$) lies between the range of +1 to +1 there exists moderate correlation between the variables. This result accepts H2: There is a significant relationship between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults in India.

V. DISCUSSION

The parent child role reversal and the impact of childhood delineated responsibilities leaves imprinted negative outcomes on the individual even when they grow up. Its interpersonal and intrapersonal detrimental effects on the individual's healthy functioning have been studied for a long time. (Chase, 1999; Hooper, 2007). The aim of this study was to understand cognitive emotion regulation strategies and its relationship with parentification in young adults. The sample consisted of 240 college students including 50% males and 50% female young adults. The findings directed towards the following interpretations.

H3: There is a significant relationship between adaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults.

According to the findings of the present study, there is no significant relationship between parentification and adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in young adults.

H4: There is a significant relationship between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation and parentification in young adults.

According to the results obtained in this study, parentification is significantly related to maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in young adults. The phenomenon of Parentification has been researched for its diverse hazardous outcomes on individuals reflected in their later areas of life. Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies have also been found to be well grounded in connection with psychopathology whereas very low connection is found of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies and psychopathology. (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012a; Joormann, Yoon, & Siemer, 2010; Werner & Gross, 2010).

Researchers talk about the neurological basis of cognitive emotion regulation strategies. An individual's childhood experiences shape the brain structures which play a role in determining the cognitive functioning and often employed emotion regulation strategies by an individual. (Dvir et al., 2014) Garnefski et al. (2002) concluded through their study the role of negative life events and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

The children who are parentified due to the multiple precursors of parentification, tend to develop coping strategies that are an outcome of a harsh environment. Taking up adult responsibilities and being present for the parental roles and emotional needs, the children grow up resorting to maladaptive strategies like self-blame, rumination and/or catastrophizing to deal with their own emotional vulnerabilities and may also engage in impulsive behaviours.

The weight of carrying emotional baggage of one's own unfulfilled needs along with familial needs and emotions result in overwhelming the child. Long stretched parentification experience makes it difficult for the individual to ask for support from others and have a healthy sense of self identity. They also end up having disrupted interpersonal relationships due to their stored childhood experiences and end up employing maladaptive strategies like blaming others for the situation.

It is significant to acknowledge that the relationship between maladaptive emotion regulation strategies and parentification has to be viewed in light as only a probable contributor. All individuals experiencing parentification need not develop maladaptive cognitive coping. Multiple other factors including external support systems, individual differences and resilience also adds to the fostered cognitive emotion regulation strategies. (Martins et al., 2016).

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to understand relationship with cognitive emotion regulation strategies. The study reflected significant positive correlation of parentification with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in young adults of India. The study also revealed that there is no significant relationship between adaptive strategies employed for cognitive coping and parentification.

Furthermore, the practical implications of the research are that this study can be used as a future direction to examine more in depth the outcomes of each cognitive emotional regulation strategy along with its degree resulting from parentification. Working on the antecedents and not letting the child lose their childhood to roles and responsibilities of their parents can also save them from employing maladaptive cognitive coping in future.

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