
DOES EMOTION DYSREGULATION ENHANCE REJECTION SENSITIVITY? A PILOT STUDY WITH INMATES

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Introduction: The propensity to react aggressively seems to be underpinned by rejection sensitivity, namely the disposition to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and intensely react to perceived rejection by significant others (Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000). The scientific debate has recently turned the attention to the possible contribution of emotion dysregulation toward violent behavior (Robertson, Daffern, & Bucks, 2012). Taken together, these two elements have been scarcely investigated.

Objectives: On the basis of Gratz and Roemer (2004) conceptualization, we consider emotion regulation as involving: the awareness, understanding and acceptance of emotions; the ability to control impulsive behaviors and pursue desired goals under emotional arousal; the ability to use emotion regulation strategies flexibly.

Aims: This study sought to examine whether difficulties in any specific domains of emotion regulation were linked to increased rejection sensitivity, which in turn can lead to aggression.

Methods: A sample of 50 male inmates (mean age=41.04) was recruited and assessed through the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Giromini et al., 2012), and the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire-Adult Version (A-RSQ; Berenson et al., 2009).

Results: Participants shown low scores on both DERS and A-RSQ, if compared with normative data. However, a significant, positive relation was found between difficulties in emotional acceptance and rejection sensitivity ($r=0.398$; $p<0.05$).

Conclusions: These preliminary results suggest that a reduction in rejection sensitivity could be endorsed by the increased acceptance of emotions, and so the latter may serve as a protective factor toward aggression, and as a potential target for clinical interventions.