

Mediating role of optimism in difficulties in emotion regulation scale and psychological well-being among female students living in the dormitory of University of Isfahan (UI)

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Abstract: This study was done with the purpose of determining the mediating role of optimism in difficulties in emotion regulation scale and psychological well-being. The survey used was correlational method, and all fresh-women living in a set of dormitories of UI in 2013 were the statistical population among which 200 were selected randomly. Scales used included *Ryff's* scale of psychological well-being, difficulties in emotion regulation scale (DERS) and *Scheier* and Carver's optimism questionnaire of Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) (1989). Besides mediation was tested by using Bootstrap method in Preacher and Hayes' SPSS Macro program (2004); the results showed that the difficulty in emotion regulation has a procedural and interactive relationship with psychological well-being and optimism ($P < 0.01$). At that the optimism is a mediator of the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and psychological well-being.

Key words: Optimism; The difficulty in emotion regulation scale; Psychological well-being

1. Introduction

Unlike the traditional focus and attention of psychology on pathology and diseases, the new changes made in psychology are concentrating and paying more attention on health and positivism in life; optimism and psychological well-being are among the topics of changes considered as the new approaches. Optimist is a desire to take the most hopeful view, and it refers to an affective and cognitive pre-preparation about whether good things in life are more important than bad ones. Optimism will entail how a person assesses and predicts the consequences and events of life events. Furthermore Psychological well-being is defined as a positive sense and general satisfaction feeling of life including him and others in different scopes of family, job and so on and so forth (*Sālārī*, 2009).

On the other hand, one of the most important fields of research in various sciences has been Posttraumatic stress in the present century, and its effects on human life are one of the largest researching areas in the present time. Stress, anxiety and coping are one of the permanent parts of everyday life. All of us at every moment face with situations that may be stressful; these include from the routines disorders to the major events of life and how much each of them is stressful is different from an individual to the other one (*Barbarin*, translated by *Zamān*, 1995). One's assessment of stress and how to deal and cope with it is way important, at that it may be a stressful event for some while for others is desirable. Studies have shown that different people have different coping styles when dealing

with stressful events, and how to manage and control emotions is one of important factors of dealing effectively with routines events. Emotion regulation refers to processes by which we influence which emotions we have, when we have them and how we experience and express them (*Sezigil, Buzny and Luszczynska*, 2012), managing and regulating of emotions is as internal and external processes that are responsible for monitoring, evaluation and change of one's emotional reactions in the course of realizing his goals, and any problems and defects in the regulation of emotions can make an individual vulnerable to mental disorders such as depression and anxiety (*Garnefski & Kraaij*, 2008), recent achievements show that there is a positive relationship between effective and efficient emotion regulation and mental well-being (*Šādiqī*, 2011; *Mackey*, 2010; *Choi Stewart*, 2009; *Carlson*, 2006), and definitely optimism is also one of the main components of psychological well-being (*Brissette et al.*, 2002; *Carver et al.*, 2005; *Seligman*, 1991; *Scheier & Carver*, 2000; *Peterson et al.*, 2000; *Day & Maltby*, 2003; *Carver and Schiller*, 2004, *Riyīsī Dihkurdī*, 2006) that has a way key role in the management and right regulation of emotions that has confirmed the researches (*Āqāyī, Ātashpūr and Dihkurdī*, 2007; *Jamālī Zavvārih*, 2008; *Barbarin*, 2009; *Carver and Scheier*, 2000; *Hīydari and Ihtishām-Zādih*, 2011), of this hypothesis, therefore it would be expected that optimism leads to the correct regulation of emotions and will increase the psychological well-being. Then, inasmuch as since students separate from the environment in which they have lived by entering the hostel and face with a new and different space where they experience living in a city unknown to them in addition to academic pressures and being far

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off their families. Most students living in the dorm cannot adapt to the environment of hostel life to the end of the academic period, because the hostel is an environment wherein people live with various culture, language, personality and a variety of academic disciplines that each of them has their own ideology and interests and styles of life appropriate to them and are under pressure; are they not able to manage and regulate their own emotions, they will face with many problems. The aim of research is to extend previous studies conducted on difficulties in regulation of emotions by reviewing the relationship between difficulties in regulation of emotions and psychological well-being through the mediating role of optimism in students.

2. Method

The current study was carried out in the correlation form. Difficulty in emotion regulating is the endogenous variable, optimism is the mediator variable, and psychological well-being is the final exogenous variable.

All participants first year students living in the set of dorms at UI in 2013 were the statistical population of the study, of whom 220 were chosen via using simple random sampling. Cochran's formula was used to determine the sample size, and 220 come from the sample size according to the size of community and one of the variance of the variables. 200 questionnaires were analyzed after distributing and collecting the researching ones (response rate of 89%). It is worth noted that the mean age was in the age group 18-22 years.

3. Instruments

To gather information about the different variables of the study three questionnaires of Ryff's scale of psychological well-being, the questionnaire of difficulty in emotion regulation scale (DERS) and optimism questionnaire of Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) (Carver & Scheier, 1989) were used. The introduction of each of aforementioned scales is as the following:

3.1. Difficulties in emotion regulation scale questionnaire (DERSQ)

DERSQ is a self-report index which has been formed comprehensively in comparison with existing instruments in this field to evaluate the difficulties in emotion regulation and of a series of statements of 36 and 6 subscales. Subscales consist of: 1) Rejecting responses emotional 2) Difficulties in handling purposeful behavior 3) Difficulties in impulse control 4) Lack of emotional awareness 5) Limited access to emotion regulation strategies 6) Lack of emotional transparency. The response of each item ranging from one to five: 1) almost never 2) Sometimes 3) Almost often 4) Most of the time 5) Almost always. Higher scores indicate greater

difficulties in emotion regulation. The scores of mean, standard deviation and reliability of the questionnaire in this study were respectively 84.0702, 21.53563 and 0.93.

3.2. Ryff's psychological well-being questionnaire (PWQ)

It was developed by Ryff in 1989 and updated in 2002, and it contains of 84-item (Hauser et al., quoted by Ahmadī, 2005). PWQ measures 6 factors of: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, meanwhile responses are calculated totally for each of the six factors of psychological well-being. The test is a kind of self-measurement one by which rate on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement. In Kahki's study internal consistency was obtained 0.92 by Cronbach's alpha and validity of the test has been reported high reliability (Ahmadī, 2012), the mean, standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha of the present study were obtained 304.8869, 47.99228 and 0.95.

3.3. Optimism questionnaire of Life Orientation Test (LOT-R)

LOT-R is defined by the authors Carver and Scheier (1989), and it includes 10 items that 6 items were used to obtain the score of optimism that 3 items measure optimism and 3 items measure pessimism, and it is measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0= I strongly disagree to 4= I strongly agree. Positively worded items (3,7,9) are reverse encoded, and the sum of respondents' replies will be the total score of optimism. The scores are ranged from zero to 24. Cronbach's alpha for the whole six items was 0.78 which indicates that the LOT-R is considered an acceptable level of internal consistency and solidarity.

The mean and standard deviation, validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the questionnaire in this study are reported 13.3041, 3.72605, -0.443, 0.66.

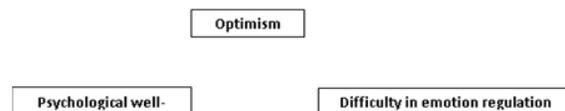


Fig. 1: Proposed model of the study about the indirect impact of difficulty in emotion regulation on psychological well-being via optimism

The method of analysis: Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. To investigate the hypotheses related to the mediator relations of the study, assumptions of Baron and Kenny (1986) were examined. Baron and Kenny stated that when the variable M is considered as a mediator that: 1) the variance of X (independent variable) would significantly predict the variance of M (in Figure 1, a

≠ 0), 2) the variance of M would significantly predict the variance of Y (dependent variable) (Fig. 1, b ≠ 0), and 3) when the direction of a and b is controlled, the relationship of X and Y is reduced or insignificant. To assess significantly the indirect methods of independent variable on the dependent one through mediation variable Bootstrap method in Preacher and Hayes' SPSS Macro program (2004) was used.

4. Results

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation and inter-correlation between variables in the study presented. As it is observed in Table 1 the difficulty in emotion regulation has a negative relationship with optimism and psychological well-being, and optimism has a positive and significant relationship with the psychological well-being (0.01 > p). Therefore the hypotheses of research on the relationship between the difficulty in emotion regulation, optimism and psychological well-being are confirmed.

Table 1: internal correlation of the variables of research and their levels of significance

		Mean	SD	1	2	3
1	Difficulty in emotion regulation	79.00	21.95	1.00	-	-
2	Optimism	22.67	11.26	0.44**	1.00	-
3	Psychological well-being	92.63	13.66	0.41**	0.59	1.00

Table 2: The overall and direct effects of the variables of research

	B coefficient	SE	t	Significance
The c path (Direct effect of the difficulty in in emotion regulation on the psychological well-being)	-0.43	0.059	-4.61	0.0001
The a path (Direct effect of the difficulty in emotion regulation on optimism)	-0.03	0.014	-3.62	0.0004
The b path (Direct effect of optimism on the psychological well-being)	0.92	0.343	-4.73	0.0001
The c' path (Direct effect of the difficulty in emotion regulation on the psychological well-being along controlling optimism)	-0.183	0.054	-3.20	0.0021

Table 3: the results of Bootstrap for the path of the difficulty in emotion regulation

Data	Boot	Bias	SE	Upper bound	Lower bound
-0.085	-0.085	0.0001	0.029	-0.029	-0.176

As Table 3 shows, the lower bound is -0.176 and the upper one is -0.029. Confidence Interval is 99 and the number of bootstrap re-sampling is 1000. Excluding of zero in the confidence interval indicates the significance of the indirect path. Consequently, based on the significance of the indirect path, the main hypothesis is confirmed. Given that a × b × c' is positive, this type of mediation is called Complementary mediation (Zhao, Lynch and Chen,

In Table 2, the overall and direct effects of the variables of research that are needed to analyze the mediation are presented by the method of Preacher and Hayes (2004). In the table, three regressions needed that are necessary to be determined from Baron and Kenny point of view can be examined. As Table 2 shows, the difficulty in emotion regulation with non-standard coefficient of - 0.43 significantly predicts the psychological well-being (0.01 > p). Hence, the path c has the significant condition. The difficulty in emotion regulation predicts optimism significantly by the non-standard coefficient of -0.03. So the path (a) has the significant condition. At that optimism predicts the psychological well-being by the non-standard coefficient of 0.92 and the significant level of 0.0001. As such, the path b has the significant condition. As it is presented in Table 2, when the effect of optimism on the difficulty in emotion regulation and psychological well-being is controlled, the non-standard coefficient of -0.183 becomes (the path c'). This has decreased towards the path c but still has not lost its significance.

To investigate the role of mediation in optimism in the difficulty of emotion regulation and psychological well-being, and the indirect effect significance, Bootstrap method in Preacher and Hayes' SPSS Macro program (2004) was used. The results of the Bootstrap method are shown in Table 3.

2010). Fig. 2 shows the model of the indirect effect and non-standard coefficients of the paths.

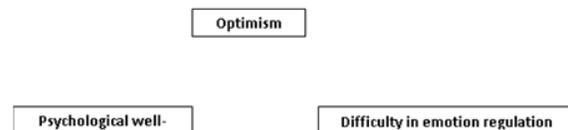


Fig. 2: the final model of research: the indirect effect of the difficulty in emotion regulation on the psychological well-being through optimism

5. Conclusion

The results showed that the optimism has a significant positive relationship with psychological

well-being and a significant negative relationship with difficulties in emotion regulation; as such, it can be possible to consider the optimism as a variable mediator between difficulties in emotion regulation scale and psychological well-being. These findings correspond with the results of studies of Scheier & Carver, 2000; Fontaine et al, 2009; Strutton & Lumpkin, 2010; Scheier & et al, 2008; Otrar et al, 2000; Frye, 2005 and the internal researches of Hassan Shāhī (2012).

The ability to regulate emotions successfully is related to a number of physical, psychological and social health consequences (Gross, 2007). Conversely, it is assumed that the inadequacy in emotion regulation is an infrastructural mechanism of a lot of mental disorders (Campbell, 2007). On the other hand, many studies have shown that optimism affects the immune system and improves its performance (quoted by Bady and Brown 205) these findings suggest more general results that there is greater physical and mental health in optimism. In addition, the side result obtained from the analysis of this hypothesis is that components predictive of optimism on psychological well-being were determined; that according to analysis done, the components of happiness and connection of love with others have a decisive role in predicting optimism. Inasmuch as optimism means that people have strong expectations that despite the obstacles and discouragements everything will be alright in life all in all (Seligman 1995 translated by *Dāwar-panāh* 2004) optimistic people experience more happiness. Meanwhile optimistic people have strong social support networks; so, that the joy and the connection of love with others has a decisive role in predicting optimism is justifiable. Based on the results of the study the more optimistic students are the more accurate methods they use to regulate emotions and also the more prudent approaches of solving problems tactfully and positive re-evaluation they apply; at that the results suggested a significant negative correlation between optimism and difficulties in emotion regulation. People optimistic indeed are those who cope actively and designers that start planning, act proactively, strive to change the stressful situation in the best possible way and be able to regulate emotions successfully in that. Accordingly optimistic individuals use the emotional-caused approaches particularly escape-avoidance strategy necessary to avoid the problem and passivity and one becomes afflicted with more stress and pressure caused by it and eventually succumbs to stress and negative emotions less. Whereas due to Peterson et al. (2008, quoted by *Yiylāq*, 2008) who point out that being positively optimistic is not something shallow, but optimists are problem-solvers and design some plans and then to act accordingly, moreover it can be said that optimistic people in coping with problems and stress-making and life-threatening incidents consider more to solve and evaluate them in a healthier way and manage and regulate their negative emotions more.

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