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Frustration Intolerance In College Students: Relation With Emotional Regulation And Well-Being

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Abstract : The period of adolescence marks a shift, both socially and emotionally, from childhood to adulthood which also means that adolescents have to struggle with anxieties and conflicts causing them to become frustrated with this changeover (Biruntha, 2015). Adolescents are disposed to experiencing a wide range of emotions and often in a black-and-white manner. These are emotional situations which change frequently in response to environmental, social, psychological and domestic influences (Bariola et al., 2011). With increased independence and newer challenges in college as compared to school life, adolescents have a greater need to regulate their emotions in response to the stressors they face. Most of the personality disorders seen in adulthood have roots in personality characteristics of adolescence (Biruntha, 2015). Highly frustrated adolescents are more likely to suffer from general distress and anger, and have a heightened risk of developing depression, anxiety disorder and substance abuse disorders as adults (Jeronimus et al. 2016, 2017).

Index Terms – Frustration Intolerance, Adolescence, Emotions

I.INTRODUCTION

Frustration Intolerance

Frustration is a negative emotion which originates when a goal-directed pursuit is met with an obstacle. It can be termed as a distress rooted in disappointment because reality is different from how one wants things to be (Jeronimus and Laceulle, 2017)

Frustration tolerance is an individual's ability to positively respond to unmet goals or needs. It is also an indicator of how far one can take up challenges or withstand difficult or unpleasant situations in life. (Shi et al., 2021). Some people can tolerate annoying or unlikeable circumstances without getting angry, anxious, stressed etc. They have high frustration tolerance. In contrast, people with frustration intolerance (FI) or low frustration tolerance (LFT) have a poor ability of tolerating discomfort (Shonda Lackey, 2013).

Frustration, by itself, is not enough to create psychological disturbance. It is an additional dysfunctional belief which makes one disturbed by frustrating events – reality must be according to our wishes or it cannot be endured. (Harrington, 2007).

According to Dryden (1999), frustration intolerance was typically thought of as a single belief component. Tolerance of emotions, problems, everyday discomfort, deferred gratification, unmet goals, unfairness, etc. are only a few examples of the wide range of belief content that it contains (Dryden & Gordon, 1993). Four thought processes are the main emphasis of modern REBT theory: demandingness, self- and world-devaluing, frustration intolerance, and catastrophizing / awfulizing. Neil Harrington (2005) has proposed a multidimensional model of Frustration Intolerance with four dimensions –

Discomfort intolerance – It pertains to the belief that life It relates to the idea that life must be should be trouble-free, comfortable, and relaxed.

Entitlement – It pertains to the belief that one's wants must be easily satisfied and others shouldn't stand in the way of achieving them.

Emotional intolerance – It pertains to the belief that emotional suffering is unbearable and must be taken care of right away.

Achievement frustration – It pertains to the belief that one must accomplish their aims without any obstacle in the way (Filippello, Sorrenti et al., 2014; Harrington, 2005)

Emotional regulation

Emotion regulation, according to Gross (2015), is the process of managing emotional expression while feeling and experiencing emotions. Gratz and Roemer (2004) presented a multifaceted concept of emotional regulation that included the following characteristics: (1) emotional awareness and comprehension; (2) emotional acceptance; (3) the ability to regulate impulses and engage in target-focused behaviors; and (4) the adaptable usage of suitable methods to regulate emotions. Emotional dysregulation means facing difficulties in effectively managing one's emotions which can lead adolescents to engage in risky behaviour or suffer from mental health conditions. (Borthakur & NT, 2019). Deficits in these areas might be an indicator of psychopathology because they reveal issues with management of emotions (John et al., 2004; Aldado et al., 2010).

Psychological well-being

One of the most important constituents of good mental health is Psychological well-being. It is not only about being free from stress, and not having mental illnesses. It includes - hedonic happiness (related to having pleasurable and enjoyable experiences in life), resilience (related to the ability to cope, emotion regulation and healthy problem solving), and eudaimonic happiness (related to finding meaning and purpose in life) (Tang, 2019). According to Martin Seligman (2011), there are five pillars of well-being known as PERMA which stands for **Positive emotion** (is about feeling happy, positive and satisfied), **Engagement** (pertains to complete immersion in the task at hand), **Relationships** (is related to the need for belongingness, the desire to feel connected to other people), **Meaning** (finding purpose in life, doing things that serve a purpose higher than the self) and **Accomplishment** (these are achievements which boost one's self-esteem and confidence). All these components enhance the well-being of people and may be defined or measured individually (Seligman, 2012). Based on this, the PERMA model was created by Seligman. Psychological well-being is fairly stable and is influenced by past experiences and underlying personality disposition.

People with frustration intolerance beliefs are more likely to find it challenging to keep their emotions regulated. In fact better emotional regulation is related to good health, improvement in academic grades and healthy relationship. However, those who have a difficult time managing their emotions are likely to encounter higher stress levels, emotional illnesses and other health conditions (Szasz et al., 2011). In recent years, acceptance-based emotional regulation has also been linked to high levels of frustration tolerance (Hayes et al., 2006), while frustration experiences and the lowest level of frustration tolerance are linked to emotional suppression and cognitive reappraisal, respectively (Szasz et al., 2011). Frustration tolerance is one of the important elements of well-being (Wang, 2012). Resilient people are more likely to stick with their goals in the face of failures, which can boost their self-esteem and increase their output. Irrational beliefs such as low frustration tolerance are associated with stress (Tan, 2004). Though stressful experiences may predispose people to mood and anxiety disorders, resilience is also likely to build as a result of being exposed to traumatic events. This can protect wellbeing (Robertson, 2022). For example, Khobasa & Maddi (1999) proposed that children who experience moderately stressful events develop competencies to cope with stressors of adult life. However, long-term stress and ongoing frustrations can reduce psychological well-being and lead to poor health outcomes. A research on 200 university students by Sorrenti et al (2015) showed that emotional intolerance and discomfort intolerance were associated with poorer psychological well-being. Individuals who regularly make use of emotional reappraisal strategies have seen favourable outcomes like improved physical and emotional well-being and better interpersonal relationships (Butler and Randall, 2013). This is because the main role of emotional reappraisal is to reduce undesirable feelings. In contrast, regular usage of emotional suppression strategies has been related to symptoms of depression, poor mental well-being and poorer relations with significant others (Katana et al., 2019). Emotional regulation strategies like mindfulness are associated with better well-being and lower perceived stress (Peixoto et al., 2021)

II. OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study was to examine the:
Relationship of Frustration Intolerance with Difficulties in Emotional Regulation and Wellbeing
Relationship of Difficulties in Emotional Regulation and Wellbeing

III. HYPOTHESES

H1 There will be a positive relationship between Frustration Intolerance and Difficulties in Emotional Regulation.
H2 There will be a negative relationship between Frustration Intolerance and Well-Being.
H3 There will be a negative relationship between Difficulties in Emotional Regulation and Well-Being.

IV. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Sample

A random sample of 105 college students (F=75, M=30) in the age group of 17-19 years belonging to urban areas in Punjab was taken for the purpose of this study. The tests were administered to them in the online format before which informed consent was obtained.

4.2 Statistical Analysis

The collected data was tabulated and analyzed with statistical tools like - mean, standard deviation, co-efficient of correlation and t-test.

4.3 Tools

1) Frustration Discomfort Scale (FDS) by Harrington (2005) – The Frustration Discomfort Scale (FDS) consists of 28 items, with four 7-item subscales. Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1) absent, 2) mild, 3) moderate, 4) strong, 5) very strong. (r=0.95). The scale has four subscales which are: Discomfort intolerance (It pertains to the belief that life must be should be trouble-free, comfortable, and relaxed), Entitlement – It pertains to the belief that one's wants must be easily satisfied and other's shouldn't stand in the way of achieving them), Emotional intolerance (It pertains to the belief that emotional suffering is unbearable and must be taken care of right away), and Achievement frustration (It pertains to the belief that one must accomplish their aims without any obstacles in the way) (Filippello, Sorrenti et al., 2014; Harrington, 2005)

2) Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS) by Kaufman, Xia, Fosco, Yaptangco, Skidmore, & Crowell (2015) – The DERS is a self-report inventory comprising of 18 items. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) (r=0.93). It measures six difficulties in emotion regulation: Non-acceptance of emotional responses: (Inclination to respond to one's own distress in a secondary, negative or non-accepting way), Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour (Having trouble focusing and/or completing things when feeling down), Impulse control difficulties (Challenges in maintaining self-control during unfavourable emotional states), Lack of emotional awareness (Shows a disregard for or lack of awareness of emotional reactions), Limited access to emotion regulation strategies (Reflects the idea that once someone is upset,

there is not much they can do to control themselves) and Lack of emotional clarity (Shows the degree to which a person is aware of and transparent about their feelings).

3) The EPOCH measure of adolescent well-being by Kern, M. L., Benson, L., Steinberg, E. A., & Steinberg, L. (2016) – The scale has 20 items which are answered on a five-point Likert-type scale. It assesses five characteristics that can improve well-being, physical health, and other positive outcomes in adulthood. The five domains measured by the scale are: Perseverance (the ability to carry-on and pursue a goal directed activity in the face of impediments), Optimism (the feeling of hope and confidence about the future), Engagement (the state of being thoroughly absorbed and occupied in an activity or the world itself), Connectedness (the feeling of being appreciated, supported and loved by others), and Happiness (the overall sense of joy, elation, and satisfaction with life).

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 5.1: Correlation of Frustration Intolerance with Difficulties in emotional regulation and Well-being (N=105)

	Strategies	Non-Accept	Impulse	Goal	Awareness	Clarity	Total DERS	E	P	O	C	H
DI	.38**	.25**	.35**	.22*	0.012	.22*	.38**	-0.02	-0.09	0.03	0.1	0.1
EN	.32**	.29**	.35**	.22*	0.012	0.17	.37**	0.07	0.01	0.04	0.04	0.01
EI	.44**	.36**	.46**	.32**	-0.15	.28**	.47**	0.09	-0.1	-0.08	0.154	-0.02
AF	0.18	0.15	.24*	0.16	-0.11	.19*	.23*	0.06	0.06	0.15	0.06	0.02
Total FI	.42**	.34**	.44**	.30**	-0.08	.27**	.46**	0.06	-0.04	0.07	0.11	0.05

Table 5.1 shows the correlation among Frustration intolerance, Difficulties in emotional regulation and Well-being.

Discomfort Intolerance was positively and significantly correlated with Limited access to emotional regulation strategies (r = 0.38**), Non-acceptance of emotional responses (r =0.25**), Impulse control difficulties (r = 0.35**), Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour (r = 0.22*), Lack of emotional clarity (r = 0.22*) and Overall difficulties in emotional regulation (r = 0.38**)

Entitlement Frustration was positively and significantly correlated with Limited access to emotional regulation strategies (r = 0.32**), Non-acceptance of emotional responses (r = 0.29**), Impulse control difficulties (r = 0.35**), Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour (r = 0.22*), and Overall difficulties in emotional regulation (r = 0.37**)

Emotional Intolerance was positively and significantly correlated with Limited access to emotional regulation strategies (r = 0.44**), Non-acceptance of emotional responses (r = 0.36**), Impulse control difficulties (r = 0.46**), Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour (r = 0.32**), Lack of emotional clarity (r = 0.28**) and Overall difficulties in emotional regulation (r = 0.47**)

Achievement Frustration was positively and significantly correlated with Impulse control difficulties (r = 0.24*), Lack of emotional clarity (r = 0.19*) and Overall difficulties in emotional regulation (r = 0.23*)

Overall Frustration Intolerance was positively and significantly correlated with Limited access to emotional regulation strategies (r = 0.42**), Non-acceptance of emotional responses (r = 0.34**), Impulse control difficulties (r = 0.44**), Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour (r = 0.30*), and Overall difficulties in emotional regulation (r = 0.46**).

No correlation was found between Frustration Intolerance and any of the five measures of wellbeing.

The above results indicate that frustration intolerance has a positive and significant correlation with emotional dysregulation. Similar results were seen in an Italian study of 141 substance-abusing individuals, where it was found that impaired emotional awareness and clarity were associated with the inability to control behaviors when experiencing emotional distress (Bottesi et al., 2021). In a study on 202 caregiver nurses in France (Potard, 2021) it was found that those scoring high on frustration intolerance beliefs reported greater emotional exhaustion and low personal accomplishment. Frustration tolerance of adolescents having high self-awareness and self-motivation was found to be high in a study on 120 Indian adolescents in the age group of 12-19 by Kumari & Gupta (2015).

Table 5.2: Correlation of Difficulties in emotional regulation and Well-being (N=105)

	Engagement	Perseverance	Optimism	Connectedness	Happiness
Strategies	0.08	0.12	-0.01	-0.04	-.21*
Non-Acceptance	0.07	-0.03	-0.19	-0.11	-.25*
Impulse	0.14	0.04	0.06	0.09	0
Goal	0.12	-0.02	0	0.06	0
Awareness	-.20*	-0.13	-0.15	-0.12	-0.16
Clarity	-0.09	-.24*	-.27**	-0.19	-.30**
DERS	0.045	-0.06	-0.13	-0.07	-.23*

Table 5.2 shows the correlation between Difficulties in emotional regulation and Well-Being.

Happiness subscale of EPOCH was negatively and significantly correlated with Limited access to emotional regulation strategies (r = -0.21*), Non-acceptance of emotional responses (r = 0.25*), Lack of emotional clarity (r = -0.30**) and Overall difficulties in emotional regulation (r = -0.23*).

Optimism subscale of EPOCH was negatively and significantly correlated with Lack of emotional clarity (r = -0.27*). Perseverance subscale was negatively and significantly correlated with Lack of emotional clarity (r = -0.24*). Engagement subscale was negatively and significantly correlated with Lack of emotional awareness (r = -0.20*). These results are proven by multiple studies which show that efficient use of emotional regulation strategies can improve psychological well-being, physical health and quality of relationships (Nelis et al., 2011, Rahmania et al., 2020, Kraiss et al., 2020). Similar results were seen in a study by Saxena et al. (2011) on 288 participants from 16-38 years of age where alexithymia and difficulties in emotion regulation were found to be related to mental health and subjective well-being.

Table 5.3: Gender Differences in Frustration Intolerance, Difficulties in Emotional Regulation and Well-Being

Variables	Female (N=75)		Male (N=30)		t-ratio
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
DI	21.29	3.91	20.53	4.26	0.38
EN	22.91	3.56	23.5	4.4	0.47
EI	23.84	3.85	23.07	3.35	0.33
AF	23.63	3.6	23.9	3.7	0.72
Total FI	91.67	12.05	91	11.85	0.79
Strategies	7.71	3.03	7.33	2.85	0.56
Non-accept	7.39	2.81	6.57	2.5	0.16
Impulse	7.68	3.28	6.43	2.93	0.07
Goals	10.41	3.26	8.93	3.36	.04*
Awareness	7.47	2.7	7.6	2.64	0.81
Clarity	7.56	2.67	7.33	2.74	0.69
Total DERS	48.21	11.09	44.2	10.96	0.09
Engagement	13.91	3.78	14	3.79	0.9
Perseverance	14.83	3.24	15.33	3.28	0.47
Optimism	16.29	2.75	15.83	2.57	0.43
Connectedness	16.2	3.45	15.07	3.93	0.14
Happiness	15.79	3.31	14.97	3.92	0.28

Table 3 shows that no significant gender difference was found in any of the three variables of Frustration intolerance, Difficulties in emotional regulation and Well-being. Such results have also been commonly seen in other studies. No significant difference was found in the frustration tolerance of boys and girls in a study by Kumari & Gupta (2015) examining frustration tolerance and emotional intelligence levels of adolescents in Jaipur. In a study by Weinberg & Klonsky (2009) on 700 adolescent students in Queens County New York, there were no differences found between male and female participants on the overall difficulty in emotional regulation using the DERS scale.

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship among Frustration intolerance, Emotional Dysregulation and Well-being in adolescents between the ages of 17-19 years. The results reveal that Frustration intolerance is positively and significantly correlated with Emotional dysregulation while no correlation is seen with Well-being. On the other hand, dimensions of Emotional dysregulation show negative and significant correlation with Well-being. No gender differences are seen in the examined variables.

The current study has limitations regarding the sample that was analysed. A larger and more diverse sample can lead to more generalizable results, applicable to the larger population. Moreover, adolescence is a wide age group. So, to get a broader view of the relationship between Frustration intolerance, Emotional regulation and Well-being, students of more age groups can be included. Further, correlational studies are seen as a preliminary step and a deeper knowledge about the relationships among these variables can be obtained by employing other statistical tools. The research can further be used as a foundation to undertake preventive work in adolescent population so that they turn into individuals who can effectively handle crisis situations, whether chronic or day-to-day stressors, and are able to live up to their full potential. Frustration tolerance and emotional regulation can be boosted by training young people to read frustrating events such that it gives them a sense of inner control.

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