



**RELATION BETWEEN AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS AND EMOTION REGULATION
AMONG ADULTS**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of individuals' thoughts and emotions on their resilience and well-being, particularly focusing on how these factors impact their daily life outcomes. Utilizing a sample of 160 adults aged 20 and above, the research utilized the Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire and the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire developed by Nadia Garnefski to test its hypotheses. The study highlighted the interconnectedness between automatic thoughts and emotion regulation, suggesting a reciprocal influence between these processes. It examined how different patterns of automatic thinking, such as cognitive distortions and schemas, affect strategies for regulating emotions like cognitive reappraisal, suppression, and acceptance. Additionally, the research delved into individual characteristics, such as personality factors and

cultural influences, as potential modifiers of this relationship. Drawing from its findings, the study offers insights for clinical practice, including assessment and intervention strategies. It also proposed avenues for future research, such as cross-cultural and longitudinal studies, to deepen our understanding of the relationship between automatic thoughts and adult emotion regulation. The study emphasizes the importance of considering automatic thinking patterns in evaluating emotion regulation mechanisms and their potential impact on enhancing adult mental health and well-being.

Keywords: *Automatic Thoughts, Emotional Regulation*

INTRODUCTION

Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation is the process by which people monitor, assess, and adjust their feelings and behaviors to attain certain goals. To govern the strength, duration, and expression of emotions in a healthy manner, this method includes a variety of instruments, including behavioral strategies, cognitive approaches, and physiological processes. Emotion management is critical for maintaining psychological health and achieving optimal daily functioning. It might happen deliberately or unintentionally.

Importance for Psychological Well-being

Emotional regulation skills are essential for psychological health because they help people deal with the pressures and obligations of daily life. Individuals may increase their emotional

resilience and make it easier for them to recover from stress and hardship by learning good emotion management techniques. Additionally, it enhances interpersonal interactions since people who are better at controlling their emotions are better able to communicate and empathies with others. Additionally, it facilitates the best possible decision-making, allowing people to remain sensible and think rationally even in the face of strong emotions. Emotional control that is effective lowers psychological discomfort and lessens the symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions. It also helps with physical health, as less stress and improved general physical health are linked to emotions that are under control.

Automatic Thoughts

Automatic thoughts refer to rapid, involuntary, and often unconscious mental processes that arise spontaneously in response to external or internal stimuli. Their automatic nature distinguishes them, as they occur without deliberate cognitive effort. Despite their fleeting nature, automatic thoughts exert significant influence on emotions, behaviors, and perceptions of reality.

Role of Automatic Thoughts in Cognitive-Behavioral Models of Psychopathology

In cognitive-behavioural models of psychopathology, automatic thoughts play an important role in understanding the onset and persistence of emotional distress and maladaptive actions. According to these models, cognitive distortions and automatic thinking stem from basic notions and schemas about oneself, other people, and the outside world. These twisted thoughts perpetuate a cycle of sorrow by instilling harmful coping techniques and dismal mental states.

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) mainly depends on automatic thoughts to identify and resolve cognitive distortions while also promoting adaptive thinking patterns and coping skills. People can use tactics like cognitive restructuring to replace their spontaneous thoughts with more realistic and balanced ones by learning to identify and assess the validity of their instinctive thinking.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a cross-cultural study, Calvete et al. (2005) examined the structure of automatic thoughts and their relationship with psychiatric symptoms. They surveyed students from Spanish and American universities, using the Young Adult Self-Report and the Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire-Revised (ATQ-R). The findings supported a hierarchical structure of cognitions, including Positive and Negative Self-Talk, with underlying categories such as Dissatisfaction, Negative Self-Concept, Inability to Cope, and Positive Thoughts. The study also backed the cognitive content-specificity hypothesis and the tripartite model of anxiety and depression by revealing connections between automatic thoughts and symptoms of anxiety, depression, and externalizing difficulties.

Buschmann et al. (2018) explored the relationship between irrational beliefs, components of automatic thoughts, and their roles in depression and anxiety. Using advanced questionnaires, they assessed irrational beliefs and components of automatic thoughts based on a three-factor structure proposed by previous research. Factor analysis confirmed the structure, and path modeling was employed to understand their relationship with anxiety and depression. Their study, conducted among 542 undergraduate psychology students during exam periods, found that

demandingness represented a primary factor of irrational beliefs, followed by secondary irrational beliefs. Additionally, low frustration tolerance contributed unique variance to anxious and depressive affect, not fully mediated by automatic thoughts. These findings supported the role of irrational beliefs as core beliefs leading to specific automatic thoughts, consistent with Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy.

Ford et al. (2019) highlights the importance of beliefs about emotion, focusing on whether emotions are perceived as good or bad and whether they are seen as controllable or uncontrollable. They review literature exploring the links between emotion beliefs and various outcomes, including emotional, interpersonal, and clinical aspects. Emotion regulation is identified as a key mechanism through which these beliefs may influence outcomes. The authors underscore the interdisciplinary nature of beliefs about emotion and suggest several directions for future research in this area.

Gross et al. (1998) provides an evolutionary perspective on emotion regulation, characterizing it as the process through which individuals influence the emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them. They distinguish emotion regulation from coping, mood regulation, defense, and affect regulation, highlighting its importance across various psychological domains. The review outlines a process model of emotion regulation, identifying five points at which regulation may occur during the emotion generative process.

Hopp et al. (2011) focus on the role of implicit emotion-regulatory processes in psychological health. They hypothesize that implicitly valuing emotion regulation contributes to better psychological health, particularly in individuals who use adaptive emotion-regulation strategies. Their findings from a community sample support this hypothesis, showing that

individuals who implicitly valued emotion regulation exhibited greater psychological health, especially when they reported high levels of cognitive reappraisal use.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The aim of the study is to understand the relationship between automatic thoughts and emotion regulation among adults and how it affects their daily life outcomes and how individuals react in different situations.

Hypothesis

H₀ - There is no relation between any of the two variables.

H₁ - There is significant relation between both the variables.

Variables

There are two variables used in this research automatic thoughts and emotion regulation.

Sample

For this research, adults from Delhi NCR region were selected. All respondents were 20 and above in age. And the final sample was of 168 responses.

Method

The test was conducted in the quantitative manner with the help of T-test method.

Measures

The tool used for the purpose of the study was automatic thoughts, emotion regulation. Automatic thoughts questionnaire is 30 item questions test responses ranging from 1-5 where 1(not at all), 2(sometimes), 3(moderately often), 4(often), 5(all the time) the respondent needs to choose the most suitable option according to their situations. The emotion regulation questionnaire used is the 18-item version where the responses are same 1-5.

Procedure

After the selection of tool and objectives to be pursued, the automatic thoughts and emotion regulation questionnaires were circulated to the participants in the form of google forms to assess the relation between automatic thoughts and emotion regulation among adults of delhi-ncr region. The questionnaire was administered with the consent of the participants. After the responses were collected the responses were then compiled in the excel sheet. Lastly, the score was calculated, and the result was found.

Data Analysis

Once all the data was gathered, it was analyzed using correlation method. And the analyzing was done on Microsoft excel using Pearson correlation. If not, it shows how different

the two variables are from one another. The Pearson's correlation coefficient is obtained by dividing the covariance of two variables by the product of their standard deviations.

RESULTS

Table 1

Correlation between the variables

	AUT OMA TIC NEG ATIV E THO UGH TS	SE LF B L A M E	ACCE PTAM CE	RUMI NATI ON	POSI TIVE REFO CUSI NG	RE FO CU S ON PL AN	POSIT IVE REAPP RAISA L	PUTTI NG INTO PERS PECTI VE	CATAST ROPHIZI NG	OTHE RBLA ME
ANT	1									
SELF BLAME	.658* *	1								

ACCEPTANCE	.499* *	.64 3* *	1						
RUMINATION	.575* *	.57 6* *	.656** 1						
POSITIVE REFOCUSING	.395* *	.35 1* *	.466** .342**	1					
REFOCUSING ON PLANNING	.154* *	.22 1* *	.421** .414**	.545** 1					
POSITIVE REAPPRAISAL	-.006 0	.13 0	.319** .308**	.310** .310**	.678 **	1			
PUTTING INTO PERSPECTIVE	.106* *	.20 3* *	.292** .317**	.366** .366**	.599 **	.577** 1			

CATAST	.576*	.37	.346**	.450**	.246**	.291	.254**	.254**	1	
ROPHIZI	*	8*				**				
NG		*								
OTHER	-.176	.06	.030	-.015	-.344	-.41	-.248	-.121	-.334	1
BLAME		5				9				

DISCUSSION

The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) was divided into nine subdivisions: self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing, and other blame. Using data collected from sample responses, we applied the Pearson correlation technique to determine the relationship between these cognitive emotion regulation strategies and automatic negative thoughts (ANT). The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between ANT and self-blame ($r = 0.658^{**}$), indicating that an increase in ANT is associated with an increase in self-blame. Similarly, there was a significant positive correlation with rumination ($r = 0.575^{**}$) and catastrophizing ($r = 0.576^{**}$), suggesting that higher ANT corresponds with more rumination and a greater tendency to catastrophize. Acceptance showed a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.499^{*}$), indicating that higher ANT might lead to greater acceptance of situations. Positive refocusing also had a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.395^{**}$), implying that individuals with more ANT might still attempt to focus on positive aspects during stress. Refocus on planning ($r = 0.154^{*}$) and putting situations into perspective ($r = 0.160^{*}$) had weak positive correlations with ANT, suggesting a slight increase in these strategies as ANT increases. Interestingly, positive

reappraisal showed an almost negligible correlation ($r = -0.006$), indicating no significant relationship. There was a weak negative correlation between ANT and other blame ($r = -0.176$), suggesting that as ANT increases, individuals are less likely to blame others for their stress. These findings highlight the complex interplay between negative thoughts and emotion regulation strategies, with some strategies being more influenced by ANT than others.

CONCLUSION

The result concludes that with the increase in automatic negative thoughts the cognitive emotion regulation also increases which shows that if automatic negative thoughts decrease the cognitive emotion regulation decreases.

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