
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Emotional Regulation Intervention in Group Psychological Counseling on Individual Emotional Regulation Ability

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ABSTRACT

As a core ability for individual mental health, emotional regulation is crucial for mental health. At the same time, group psychological counseling, as a widely used and economically efficient psychological intervention method in modern psychology, has shown unique advantages in improving individual emotional regulation abilities. This article focuses on the measurement methods of emotional regulation in group psychological counseling, intervention measures for individual emotional regulation ability, and theoretical models of emotional regulation. It systematically sorts out the impact of emotional regulation intervention in group psychological counseling on individual emotional regulation, and combines the limitations of existing research to look forward to future exploration directions, providing theoretical support and practical reference for emotional regulation.

KEYWORDS

Group psychological counseling; Emotional regulation; emotion dysregulation

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1. Introduction

Emotion regulation is an important concept in psychological intervention. Emotion regulation refers to the process by which individuals manage their emotional experiences, expressions, and intensity through cognitive, behavioral, and physiological strategies (Moore & Stuart, 2022). Due to the importance of emotional regulation for individual mental health, emotional regulation has long been a hot topic in psychological research, and many researchers have devoted a lot of energy to exploring it in depth. Their research findings reveal an important fact: there is a decisive link between a healthy emotional regulation ability and an individual's physical and mental health (Sloan et al., 2017). On the contrary, emotional disorders are closely related to many adverse outcomes (Koole, 2009). Given the important role of emotional regulation in mental health and its close association with various psychological disorders, emotional regulation should become an important therapeutic goal in psychological intervention. By helping individuals master effective emotional regulation strategies, they can not only alleviate their current emotional distress, but also fundamentally enhance their psychological resilience, prevent and reduce the occurrence of psychological disorders, and promote their mental health and overall well-being (Aldao et al., 2010).

Group counseling is a psychological intervention process conducted in a group setting, led by professionally trained consultants or counselors. Interaction, communication, and experience among group members, help individuals understand themselves, improve interpersonal relationships, learn new behaviors, and promote mental health and good adaptation. This form of counseling has preventive, developmental, and corrective functions and is suitable for various psychological problems and behavioral disorders (Gültekin & Tüzüntürk, 2011). Group psychological counseling has shown significant effects in multiple fields,

including preventing the occurrence of psychological problems, promoting individual development, helping individuals adapt to new environments, treating psychological disorders, and promoting rehabilitation. Sa'ad et al. (2014) pointed out that group psychological counseling is considered a very suitable method among adolescents, who are in a critical period of psychological development and face many challenges, such as academic pressure, interpersonal relationship issues, and self-identity exploration. Group psychological counseling can provide them with a safe and supportive environment, allowing them to learn coping strategies and enhance their psychological resilience through interaction with peers. In addition, group psychological counseling has unique advantages in the field of emotional regulation, such as enhancing individual communication skills, teamwork abilities, and a sense of belonging through interactions among group members (Erden, 2015). This approach not only efficiently meets the psychological needs of more people, but also provides assistance to more people within a limited time, providing strong support for their mental health and comprehensive development (Sohrabi & Aghdam, 2013).

In the field of mental health, the role of group counseling in emotional regulation is increasingly receiving attention. Emotional regulation, as one of the core elements of mental health, not only affects an individual's psychological well-being, but is also closely related to interpersonal relationships, social adaptability, and overall quality of life (Cloitre et al., 2019). Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to explore specific intervention measures for emotional regulation in group psychological counseling, and systematically sort out the role of these intervention measures in emotional regulation, in order to optimize psychological health intervention strategies and improve intervention effectiveness.

2. Measurement methods for emotional regulation in group psychological counseling

There are two widely used methods for measuring emotional regulation in group counseling: the Difficulties in Emotion Dysregulation Scale (DERS) and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). The Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) is a tool commonly used in group counseling to assess individual emotional regulation. The scale was originally developed by Gratz and Roemer in 2004 and consists of 36 questions. Bjureberg et al. (2016) revised the original DERS scale and ultimately developed a simplified version of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-16). The simplified version of the scale consists of 16 questions, divided into six dimensions, measuring different aspects of emotional regulation, including: nonacceptance of emotional responses, difficulties engaging in goal-directed behaviour, impulse control difficulties, lack of emotional awareness, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and lack of emotional clarity.

DERS uses a 5-point Likert scale to score, ranging from "1=almost never" to "5=almost always", with higher scores indicating lower levels of emotional regulation in individuals. DERS, as an important psychological measurement tool, has been widely used in clinical population research. This scale is mainly used to evaluate the relationship between emotional regulation ability and various psychological disorders, helping researchers and clinical workers to better understand the mechanism of emotional regulation in the occurrence, development, and treatment of psychological disorders. Among college students and other groups, DERS has also shown good reliability and validity, indicating that it can not only be used for clinical diagnosis and research, but also effectively evaluate the emotional regulation ability of the general population, providing strong support for mental health education and intervention (Hallion et al., 2018). However, some studies have found that the six factor structure of DERS may not be applicable in different populations. For example, in patients with chronic pain, the six factor structure of DERS may not accurately reflect the complexity of their emotional regulation (Kököneyi et al., 2014). For patients with severe mental illness, the six factor structure of DERS may also have limitations, as their emotional regulation problems may be influenced by disease-specific factors (Fowler et al., 2014). In addition, among the population receiving Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), the six factor structure of DERS also showed some unsuitability. The core goal of DBT is to improve emotional regulation ability, but the six factor structure of DERS may not fully cover the changes in emotional regulation ability during DBT treatment. DBT emphasizes skills such as mindfulness and emotional acceptance, which may not be fully reflected in the six factor structure of DERS (Osborne et al., 2017). Therefore, although the six factor structure of DERS has good reliability and validity in the general population, it may need further adjustment or optimization in specific clinical populations to better adapt to their emotional regulation characteristics and needs.

In group psychological counseling, the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) is another widely used tool for evaluating an individual's emotion regulation strategies in different contexts. ERQ was developed by Gross and John (2003), and the scale taps into two emotion regulation strategies, including Cognitive reappraisal and Expressive suppression. The cognitive reappraisal strategy includes six items, which refer to whether individuals tend to regulate their emotions by changing their cognitive understanding of the event when facing emotional events, such as: When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm. The Expressive Suppression strategy consists of four items, which refer to whether an individual tends to suppress the expression of emotions when faced with emotional events. For example: When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them. ERQ adopts a 7-point Likert scale for scoring, with higher scores indicating that individuals are more inclined to use corresponding strategies for emotional regulation. ERQ has a wide range of applications

and can be used in various environments, including psychological counseling, psychotherapy, education, and human resources. The characteristic of this scale is that it can help professionals understand an individual's emotional regulation tendency, thereby providing a basis for developing personalized intervention measures (Ehring et al., 2010).

3. Intervention measures for emotional regulation in group psychological counseling

By systematically sorting out specific intervention measures for individual emotional regulation ability in group psychological counseling, and deeply analyzing the role of these intervention measures in emotional regulation, we can better understand the mechanism and effectiveness of emotional regulation intervention. In group psychological counseling, interventions targeting individual emotional regulation abilities typically include Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and Emotion Regulation Group Intervention (ERGT). Although each of the above methods has its own emphasis on specific implementation, they generally consider emotional regulation as an important component of their intervention measures.

DBT and ACT perform well in reducing emotional distress and improving emotional regulation ability. DBT was initially developed for the treatment of borderline personality disorders, but has been widely applied in interventions for various emotional disorders. DBT helps individuals better manage their emotions by teaching skills such as mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal efficacy, and pain management. In group counseling, DBT's skill training module can assist members in learning and practicing these skills, thereby reducing emotional fluctuations and impulsive behavior (Neasciu et al., 2014). ACT is a psychological intervention method based on mindfulness and acceptance strategies, aimed at coping with emotional distress by enhancing individuals' psychological flexibility (Hayes, 2004). In group counseling, ACT helps individuals accept their emotions instead of trying to avoid or change them, reducing the pain caused by confronting internal experiences, thereby enhancing emotional regulation ability, improving psychological flexibility, and reducing anxiety and depression symptoms. This method emphasizes that individuals take action based on their own values to improve emotional regulation and quality of life (Morton et al., 2012).

CBT is a widely used psychological therapy method that improves emotions and behavior by identifying and altering maladaptive cognitive patterns (Papa, 2012). In group counseling, CBT can help individuals better understand and regulate their emotions through cognitive restructuring, exposure therapy, and skill training. This method is particularly suitable for intervening in emotional disorders such as depression and anxiety (Forkmann et al., 2014).

ERGT is a group therapy method based on psychological education, aimed at improving emotional regulation ability by guiding individuals to cope with stressors in an adaptive manner. This method emphasizes helping individuals correctly recognize negative emotions and actively control impulsive behavior. Slee et al. (2008) found that emotion regulation group therapy (ERGT) can effectively reduce individuals' negative emotional experiences such as anxiety and depression, while increasing the frequency and intensity of positive emotions. This intervention method helps individuals better understand and manage their emotions through collective discussion and skill training, thereby enhancing their overall emotional regulation ability. These studies indicate that interventions targeting individual emotional regulation abilities in group counseling can improve emotional regulation abilities at different levels and have a positive impact on mental health.

Although the intervention methods in group psychological counseling have been widely recognized for their effectiveness in emotional regulation, existing research still has some limitations. Firstly, these methods typically incorporate emotion regulation as part of their overall treatment plan, making it difficult to accurately determine which part of the intervention has an impact on improving emotion regulation. Secondly, the diversity of research subjects is insufficient, with many studies mainly focusing on specific populations such as college students or clinical patients, and paying less attention to other populations such as the elderly and professionals (Gratz, 2015). In addition, deficiencies in research design and methodology, such as small sample sizes and lack of long-term follow-up, also limit the generalizability and reliability of research results.

Based on the limitations of existing research, specific intervention measures for individual emotional regulation ability in group psychological counseling can be explored in the following directions in the future: firstly, expanding the scope of research subjects, exploring the reactions and effects of different populations in emotional regulation interventions, in order to improve the universal applicability of research results. Secondly, when conducting research, comprehensive intervention plans for various emotion regulation strategies can be developed and evaluated to meet the needs of different individuals. Thirdly, researchers should enhance the scientific and rigorous nature of their research design, using larger sample sizes and long-term follow-up where possible to improve the reliability and effectiveness of research results. Finally, in future research on emotion regulation, the latest advances in neuroscience and psychology can be combined to explore the brain mechanisms and neural basis of emotion regulation, uncover the intrinsic mechanisms of emotion regulation, and provide deeper theoretical support for emotion regulation interventions.

4. Theoretical Model of Emotional Regulation in Group Psychological Counseling

There are numerous theories and models in the field of emotional regulation. These theories and models explore the mechanisms, processes, and strategies of emotion regulation from different perspectives, providing a rich theoretical foundation for research and practice. Gross (1998) proposed a process model for emotion regulation, which details a series of different goals and strategies involved in emotion regulation during the process of emotion occurrence. This model divides emotion regulation strategies into five main aspects: Situation Selection, Situation Modification, Objective Deployment, Cognitive Change, and Response Module. The strong process model of emotional regulation emphasizes that emotional regulation is a dynamic process, and the occurrence and regulation of emotions are not static events, but based on the continuous changes and development of emotional events experienced by individuals. The selection and application of emotion regulation strategies will continuously adjust as emotional events progress, forming a mutually influential cycle.

Morvaridi et al. (2019) adopted a theoretical framework for emotion regulation that combines social cognition and metacognitive methods. This method emphasizes the significant individual differences in the process of emotional regulation, Individuals vary in their capacity to recognize, name, and distinguish their emotions, evaluate their emotions, and the extent to which they rely on unhelpful coping strategies. Specifically, social cognitive theory focuses on how individuals understand and regulate emotions through social interaction and observational learning, while metacognitive methods emphasize an individual's ability to monitor and regulate their own cognitive processes. This integrated theoretical framework reveals that emotion regulation not only involves direct management of emotions themselves, but is also closely related to individuals' cognitive evaluation and metacognitive monitoring of emotions.

In addition, Holmqvist Larsson et al. (2020) emphasized the important role of emotion regulation (ER) in the development and maintenance of eating disorders in their study. They pointed out that emotional regulation difficulties are one of the core factors in various symptoms of eating disorders, which not only affect the pathogenesis of eating disorders, but may also play a key role in the persistence and worsening of symptoms. For example, insufficient emotional regulation ability may lead individuals to cope with negative emotions through unhealthy ways such as overeating or restricting their diet, thereby exacerbating symptoms of eating disorders.

Although there are considerable similarities in the core skills and tasks involved in different theories and models, there are still some differences in why specific skills are chosen and which theories are used to guide emotional regulation interventions. This difference may be due to the following reasons: Diversity of theoretical perspectives: Different researchers have studied emotion regulation based on different theoretical perspectives. For example, Gross's (1998) emotion regulation process model emphasizes the dynamic process of emotion regulation, including pre attention regulation before emotion generation and response attention regulation after emotion generation; Morvaridi et al. (2019) adopted an emotional regulation theoretical framework that combines social cognition and metacognitive methods. These different theoretical perspectives lead to differences in the selection of emotion regulation skills. Differences in intervention objectives: The design of emotional regulation interventions is often influenced by the intervention objectives. For example, some interventions aim to reduce the impact of negative emotions, while others focus more on enhancing positive emotions. The differences in these goals may lead researchers to choose different theoretical foundations and skill combinations. The impact of individual differences: Emotional regulation is a highly individualized process, and different individuals have significant differences in emotional regulation abilities, preferences, and needs. Therefore, the design of intervention measures needs to consider individual differences, which also leads to a lack of unified standards when selecting emotion regulation skills. Limitations of research methods: Currently, there are various research methods for emotion regulation, including questionnaire methods, experimental methods, and empirical sampling methods. These methods each have their own advantages and disadvantages, which may lead to inconsistencies in research results and thus affect the theoretical guidance of intervention measures. The differences in intervention targets, the impact of individual differences, and the limitations of research methods. In the future, deeper exploration and integration of the theory of emotional regulation in group psychological counseling can be carried out.

5. Conclusion

Emotional regulation, as a core ability for individual mental health, has always received widespread attention from researchers. Group psychological counseling helps individuals understand themselves, improve interpersonal relationships, and learn new behavioral patterns through interaction, communication, and experience among group members. Many researchers are dedicated to exploring emotional regulation interventions through group counseling, in order to improve individuals' emotional regulation abilities. This article systematically reviews past literature on measurement methods for emotional regulation in group psychological counseling, intervention measures for individual emotional regulation ability, and theoretical models for emotional

regulation. It describes the current research status and limitations in order to provide theoretical support and practical reference for emotional regulation.

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