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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF RESILIENCY IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COGNITIVE EMOTION REGULATION AND IMPULSIVITY (RISK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR) AMONG ABANDONED FEMALE CLIENTS IN SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION IN SHIRAZ

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ABSTRACT

In order to identify factors affecting aggressive behaviors among abandoned women, the present study addresses the mediatory role of resiliency in the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation and impulsivity. The research sample included 210 abandoned women. Cognitive emotion regulation inventory, resiliency scale, and impulsivity scales were used to collect the data. The collected data were analyzed by SPSS using correlation matrix. To determine the correspondence between the proposed model and the observed data, synchronous sequential multiple regressions was used based on stages developed by Baron and Kenny. The results of data analysis indicated that 1) Positive refocusing and planning as components of cognitive emotion regulation were negative predictors of impulsivity while blaming others was found to be a positive predictor of impulsivity. 2) Positive refocusing, planning, positive evaluation, and a broader view were found to be positive predictors of resiliency. 3) The mediating role of resiliency in the relationship between positive refocusing, planning, and impulsivity was confirmed. It was also noted that blaming others is directly associated with impulsivity; without being mediated by resiliency. These findings suggest that the use of positive cognitive emotion regulation strategies by one's increased resiliency in difficult life situations would reduce impulsive behaviors.

Keywords: *Impulsivity, Resiliency, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, Mediating Role*

INTRODUCTION

Risky/impulsive behavior as a tendency to show quick and unplanned reactions to internal or external stimuli without considering its negative consequences for the person himself or others in different stages of human life including personal and social behaviors and even when making major political decisions will impose heavy costs on societies. Impulsive behavior has been defined in various ways such as behaving without sufficient thinking, taking actions based on instinct without controlling ego, and taking quick actions without foresight or informative judgment (Evenden, 1999). Nevertheless, it can be said that these definitions have three features in common: hurriedness, lack of planning, and a high likelihood of making mistakes (Swann and Hollander, 2002).

Sometimes impulsivity is considered as an equivalent to delay discounting which means to choose smaller but quicker rewards compared with greater but delayed rewards (Richards, Zhang *et al.*, 1999). Accordingly, a person who is willing to receive smaller rewards when there is a possibility of delayed satisfaction; he/she is an impulsive person (Logue, 1998; Heyman, 1996).

Research shows that aggression, morbid gambling, drug abuse, borderline and antisocial personality disorders, and impulsive behaviors are among possible causes of many social disorders and harms (Ekhtiari *et al.*, 2008).

Controlling or regulating emotions by a person by increasing or reducing their intensity impact the intensity of a given behavior and makes it possible for the person to abandon unfavorable behaviors associated with negative outcomes and making commitment to more favorable behaviors. Cognitive emotion self-regulation plays a special role in regulating one's behaviors.

Cognitive emotion regulation refers to strategies used to reduce or increase the intensity of emotions (Gaross, 2002). In other words, cognitive emotion regulation refers to internal and external process involved in setting up, continuing, and regulating events, tensions, and expression of emotions (Morris *et*

Research Article

al., 2007). Dominant cognitive emotion regulation strategies include acceptance, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive evaluation, looking from another perspective, self-blaming, rumination, catastrophising, and blaming others.

When experience threatening or stressful life events, people use these strategies before doing anything else to cognitively regulate their emotions (Granefski *et al.*, 2001).

Studies done with regard to the relationship between resiliency and impulsive and risky behavior show that higher resiliency is associated with lower impulsivity (Roues, 1998).

To prevent and treat psychological problems such as cognitive or emotional disorders leading to risky behaviors such as committing suicide, drug abuse, committing crimes or other felonious behaviors, therapist and psychologists try to identify and promote protecting factors such as resiliency and its features.

Concerning the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation and resiliency, findings point to a direct association between resiliency and positive emotions (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004; Cohn *et al.*, 2009).

Generally, given the associations between cognitive emotion regulation variables, resiliency, and impulsivity it is expected that the more frequent use of cognitive emotion regulation strategies with increased resiliency in difficult and risky situations would result in lower impulsivity and risky behaviors. In contrast, the frequent use of negative cognitive emotion regulation is associated with higher possibility of committing more impulsive behaviors.

Given the role played by parents in improving the quality of their children's life, paying attention to risky behaviors in families especially among mothers is of special significance.

On the other hand, since risky and impulsive behaviors as well as negative emotions are developed by definition in difficult situations making a person exposed to hard conditions, the present study was performed on a sample of abandoned women who act both as the head of their family and serve their motherly tasks.

Such women go through difficult situations due to high economic, family, and social pressures. Such women also are more regularly affected by negative emotions than other people so they represent a good sample for the purpose of this study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method

The sample under study consisted of 250 abandoned female clients who referred to Social Welfare Organization in Shiraz.

However, since 40 questionnaires were excluded from analysis as they were filled out inaccurately, the number of respondents in the research sample reduced to 210 respondents.

Measures

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by Granefski *et al.*, (2001). It includes two groups of cognitive emotion regulation strategies: positive cognitive emotion regulation strategies (i.e. acceptance, positive refocusing and planning, positive evaluation, and having a broader perspective) and negative cognitive emotion regulation strategies (blaming others, self-blaming, rumination, and catastrophising).

Psychometric features of this instrument were calculated and reported to be acceptable for being used in Iranian contexts (Samani and Sadeghi, 2010).

Resilience scale

To measure resiliency, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003) was used in this study.

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Tale 1: Correlation matrix for research variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	\bar{x}	SD
1	1									37/88	7/71
2	0/73**	1								20/67	4/90
3	-0/03	-0/09	1							11/07	4/11
4	-0/09	0/03	0/08	1						8/28	2/90
5	0/12	0/06	0/56**	0/15*	1					13/31	3/13
6	0/03	-0/11	0/42**	0/27**	0/58**	1				12/48	3/51
7	0/12	0/05	0/28**	0/28**	0/43**	0/50**	1			13/69	3/26
8	0/60**	0/56**	-0/05	-0/13	-0/03	-0/09	-0/009	1		85/15	16/61
9	-0/32**	-0/28**	0/17*	0/28**	0/19**	0/21**	0/12	-0/36**	1	62/73	11/70

1. Positive refocusing and planning, 2. Positive evaluation and having a broader perspective, 3. Blaming others, 4. Self-blaming, 5. Rumination, 6. Catastrophising, 7. Accepting conditions, 8. Resiliency, 9. Impulsivity (Total score) (** Significant at $P < 0.001$, * Significance at $P < 0.05$)

Table 2: Impulsivity linear regression on cognitive emotion regulation components

Variable	Beta	B	Sig.	R	R^2	Confidence level
Positive refocusing and planning	-0/24	-0/36	0/01	0/46	0/46	(0/001) 9/30
	0/22	0/89	0/001			

Table 3: Impulsivity multivariate regression on cognitive emotion regulation components

Variable	Beta	B	Sig.	R	R^2	Confidence level
Positive refocusing and planning	0/39	0/85	0/001	0/64	0/41	(0/001) 9/02
	0/29	0/98	0/001			

Table 4: Impulsivity multivariate regression on cognitive emotion regulation components and resiliency

Variable	Beta	B	Sig.	R	R^2	Confidence level
	-0/16	0/24	0/11	0/49	0/24	(0/001) 9/02
Positive refocusing and planning	0/20	0/82	0/003			
	-0/20	-0/14	0/01			

In the third stage, path coefficient analyses for positive refocusing and planning and blaming others were compared from the first to third stages. Since, the value of path coefficient of impulsivity on positive refocusing and planning in the third stage was not significant, the mediating role of resiliency between positive refocusing and planning as a cognitive emotion regulation strategy and impulsivity was

Research Article

confirmed. In addition, as the regression coefficient for resiliency on blaming others was not significant in the second stage and a reduction in the coefficients gained in the first and third stages by a score of 2, it seems that blaming others is directly associated with increased impulsivity and thus resiliency does not play a mediating role in this regard. The final model is shown in figure 4.

Concerning the indirect impact of positive refocusing and planning path to impulsivity through resiliency, the path coefficients were multiplied by each other and the resulting value was equal to 0.078.

Various factors make a person susceptible to committing impulsive behaviors. A major factor in this regard is emotional instability and inability to control emotions effectively which can expose a person to the possibility of committing risky behaviors. The findings of this study indicate that the use of positive cognitive emotion regulation strategies by a person as the head of a family even in unfavorable economic conditions to control her emotions through increased resiliency can reduce the possibility of committing impulsive behaviors.

The main finding of the study in the first stage stated that “Cognitive emotion regulation is able to predict impulsivity and 22% of the respondents’ impulsivity variances can be explained by cognitive emotion self-regulation”. It was noted that positive refocusing and planning is as negative predictor and blaming others is a positive predictor of impulsive behaviors. In line with the findings of the present study, Dillon *et al.*, (2007), Lazarus *et al.*, (1993), Manin *et al.*, (2007); Beck (1999) found that delinquency, aggression, and aggressive behavior are among outcomes of interfering with controlling and regulating emotions. Similarly, Chatripour and khavani (2011) observed that depression (as an emotional problem) is significantly different between people committing suicide (as a risky behavior) and normal people.

It seems that positive strategies such as positive refocusing and planning which are associated with informative, joyful, and positive thinking rather than thinking about stressful and threatening events will reduce risky and impulsive behaviors in unfavorable and stressful conditions especially with regard to special conditions tolerated by abandoned women. The reason is that such strategies raise people’s emotion at a level higher than the normal level. On the other hand, when people blame others for what they suffer from tend to commit hedonic and unplanned behaviors.

The main finding of the study in the second stage stated that “Cognitive emotion regulation strategies are able to predict resiliency and 41% of the respondents’ resiliency variances can be explained by cognitive emotion self-regulation”. As the findings of the present study indicated, positive refocusing and planning and positive evaluation and having a broader perspective can positively predict resiliency variations. In fact, cognitive emotion regulation acts as a protection for individuals in difficult and stressful situations and increases their resiliency resulting in resilient reintegration under such circumstances. Similarly, Arc, Simon’s *et al.*, (2008) found that people with high resiliency when faced with emotional events with neutral and unclear nature are more likely to show positive emotions.

The main finding of the study in the third stage indicated that “Resiliency and cognitive emotion regulation are able to predict impulsivity. The findings also confirm the mediating role of resiliency in the relationship between positive refocusing and planning as cognitive emotion regulation strategies and impulsivity. Concerning blaming others, it was noted that there is a positive relationship between blaming others and impulsive behaviors. Besides, the mediating role of resiliency was not confirmed in this regard. Generally, our findings suggested that cognitive emotion self-regulation mediated by resiliency is able to directly or indirectly predict impulsivity and that the relationship between cognitive emotion self-regulation and impulsivity is not a simple linear relationship as other variables such as resiliency play an important mediating role (at least for positive strategies) in this regard.

It seems that the use of positive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in an informative way will help abandoned women to overcome negative emotions resulting from difficult and unfavorable conditions of having no head of family (e.g. depression, helplessness, and the possibility of committing abnormal behaviors). In fact, according to most theorists, cognitive emotion regulation is a good way to confront many unpredictable problems such as different types of harms, diseases, and difficult conditions of life (Aldao *et al.*, 2010); a view which has been also confirmed by empirical studies. For instance, many researchers have considered that successful emotion regulation is associated with mental health outcomes,

Research Article

interpersonal relations, and optimal professional and academic performance (Bracket and Salowi, 2004; John and Grass, 2004).

The findings of this study also indicated that when women are facing stressful situations such as bad economic conditions and their loss of their husband, their ability to control and regulate their emotions will help them to deal with problems more resiliently and be less likely to commit impulsive and risky behaviors. Therefore, such women are able to confront difficult situation more composedly and dynamically, move forward to pave the way for personal development and growth, and have a feeling of having control over tough situations.

Cognitive emotion self-regulation provide an important source to prevent behaviors and thoughts developed without a consideration of their outcomes by creating the ability for informative selection of positive emotions and replacing them for negative emotions. Accordingly, the results of a study by Black (2004) shows that there is a positive significant relationship between stress as a negative emotion and risky behaviors and there is a negative significant relationship between stress and resiliency and between risky behaviors and resiliency.

Based on the findings of the study, organizations responsible for abandoned women such as welfare organizations are recommended to provide some training programs on how to control their negative emotions and increase positive emotions so that they can prevent possible harms against themselves and their children. Since the theoretical model of the study was designed based on empirical studies and previous theories, care should be taken when making final conclusions or generalizations about causal relationship among variables under study. Besides, since few studies have addressed factors affecting the reduction of impulsive behaviors separately, an awareness of such factors is of high importance. Therefore, this study can be seen a starting point to gain such awareness.

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Research Article

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