

Research Article

THE EFFECTS OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION TRAINING ON COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL AND EXPRESSIVE SUPPRESSION AMONG WORKERS IN BANGKOK

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ABSTRACT

Background: Emotional regulation issues are critical factors in mental health, often leading to heightened negative emotions and psychiatric symptoms. This study investigates the effectiveness of an emotional regulation intervention in improving emotional regulation strategies, specifically cognitive reappraisal, and expressive suppression, among professional workers in Bangkok, Thailand.

Method: A randomized pretest-posttest control group design was used. Eighty-two professional workers (N= 80) were randomly assigned to either an intervention group or a control group. The intervention consisted of five weekly group sessions focusing on emotional regulation skills, utilizing a combination of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression were measured using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003).

Results: The intervention group showed significant improvements in emotional regulation, with increased use of cognitive reappraisal and decreased reliance on expressive suppression compared to the control group. These findings suggest that the emotional regulation intervention effectively enhanced participants' ability to manage their emotional responses in the workplace.

Conclusion: Emotional regulation training significantly improves emotional regulation strategies among professional workers, highlighting the potential benefits of incorporating such interventions into workplace wellness programs. This can lead to better emotional well-being and more effective management of workplace stressors.

Keywords: Emotional Regulation, expressive suppression, cognitive reappraisal, professional workers

INTRODUCTION

Emotional regulation is a crucial mechanism in mental health, with maladaptive emotional regulation methods such as stifling and avoiding feelings often leading to heightened negative affect and perpetuating psychiatric symptoms and unhappiness (Campbell-Sills, Ellard, & Barlow, 2014). The ability to effectively regulate emotions can enable individuals to manage stress more efficiently, reducing the likelihood of mental health issues. This study focuses on professional workers, who often face significant workplace stressors that can lead to negative emotional states and mental health challenges.

Workplace stressors, including job-related pressures, team dynamics, and organizational factors, have been shown to predict cyberbullying victimization behavior (Vranjes et al., 2017). Cyberbullying in the workplace can exacerbate emotional distress, making it essential to explore strategies to mitigate these negative

outcomes. Emotional regulation has been identified as a potential moderator that can influence the impact of these stressors on individuals' mental health. By employing strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, individuals can better manage their emotional responses to stress and cyberbullying (Gratz & Gunderson, 2006; Gross, 2014).

The literature indicates that emotional regulation skills are associated with improved life quality and reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and borderline personality disorder (Bjureberg et al., 2016; Sahlin et al., 2017). Treatments such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) have been effective in enhancing emotional regulation by combining cognitive-behavioral techniques with mindfulness practices (Neacsiu et al., 2014). These therapies help individuals accept their emotions

and commit to actions aligned with their values, leading to healthier emotional management and reduced emotional distress.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the effect of an emotional regulation intervention on cognitive reappraisal among professional workers in Bangkok.

2. To investigate the impact of the intervention on the utilization of expressive suppression as an emotional regulation strategy among the same population.

3. To assess the overall changes in emotional regulation skills and emotional well-being following the intervention.

HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1: The emotional regulation intervention will significantly increase the use of cognitive reappraisal as an emotional regulation strategy among professional workers compared to those in the control group.

Hypothesis 2: The emotional regulation intervention will significantly decrease the reliance on expressive suppression as an emotional regulation strategy among professional workers compared to those in the control group.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

1. Improved Emotional Regulation Skills: The intervention is expected to enhance professional workers' ability to regulate their emotions more effectively. By increasing the use of cognitive reappraisal and reducing reliance on expressive suppression, employees will be better equipped to manage emotional challenges in the workplace, leading to improved emotional resilience and well-being.

2. Foundation for Future Interventions: The study's findings can serve as a foundation for developing more comprehensive emotional regulation programs tailored to specific industries or organizational cultures. By understanding the effectiveness of these strategies, organizations can implement targeted interventions that further enhance employee well-being and performance.

RESEARCH SCOPE

This study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of an emotional regulation intervention among professional workers in Bangkok, Thailand. It investigates the impact of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression strategies using a randomized pretest-posttest control group design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional regulation problems have been recognized as a fundamental mechanism underlying various mental illnesses. Maladaptive emotional regulation methods, such as stifling and avoiding feelings, often lead to cycles of heightened negative affect, perpetuating psychiatric symptoms and unhappiness (Campbell-Sills, Ellard, & Barlow, 2014). Most conceptions of emotional regulation focus on strategies for influencing the experience, intensity, and expression of emotions in relation to specific goals (Barlow et al., 2011; Gross, 2014). Adaptive emotional regulation involves acknowledging and accepting emotions, controlling emotional reactions, and regulating impulsive behaviors to act in accordance with long-term goals despite experiencing negative emotions (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Rathus & Miller, 2015).

Various therapeutic approaches have been developed to enhance emotional regulation skills. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), created by Linehan in 1993, combines acceptance and change strategies to improve emotional regulation. It is particularly effective for individuals struggling with intense emotions, self-destructive behaviors, and unstable relationships. Studies have shown that

participation in skills training can reduce anxiety and emotion dysregulation symptoms (Neacsiu et al., 2014). Similarly, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) encourages individuals to accept their emotions and commit to value-based actions, helping them develop healthier relationships with their emotions (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2012). Both DBT and ACT have been demonstrated to be effective transdiagnostic treatments for anxiety and depression (Neacsiu & Linehan, 2014).

Workplace stressors, including job-related pressures, team dynamics, and organizational factors, significantly contribute to emotional distress and are predictive of cyberbullying victimization behavior (Vranjes et al., 2017). Emotional regulation has been identified as a moderator that can influence the impact of these stressors on mental health. Individuals with better emotional regulation skills may perceive stressful events as less harmful and are better equipped to manage their responses (Siemer et al., 2007).

METHODOLOGY MATERIAL

This study utilized a randomized pretest-posttest control group design to assess the effectiveness of an emotional

regulation intervention among professional workers in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants were randomly assigned to either an intervention group or a control group to ensure that any differences observed were due to the intervention itself and not other variables. This design allowed for the comparison of changes in emotional regulation.

Material

The participants consisted of 80 professional workers from Silasakon Co. Ltd, a company where employees regularly use information and communication technology (ICT) in their roles. The participants were randomly divided into two groups: 40 individuals in the treatment group and 40 in the control group. The intervention group received five weekly sessions of emotional regulation training, each lasting two hours. The training focused on enhancing cognitive reappraisal and reducing expressive suppression, using techniques from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

This study adhered to the ethical standards set by the relevant institutional review board. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

Design

The emotional regulation intervention was conducted online and consisted of five sessions. The first session focused on helping participants identify and understand their emotions. The second session introduced the concepts of emotions and their behavioral functions, as well as basic emotional regulation theory. The third session covered expressing emotions, validation of emotions by others, and basic mindfulness practices. The fourth session included positive activities to help participants manage daily stress. The final session focused on acceptance practices, values, and strategies for staying with their emotions.

Assessments were conducted at two points: before the intervention (pretest) and after the intervention (posttest). The primary instruments used were the cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression elements of Gross and John's survey (2003). Data analysis involved using ANOVA to compare the mean scores between the treatment and control groups and to examine any changes from pretest to posttest, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's efficacy.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression

Attribute	Treatment Group (n = 40)	Control Group (n = 40)	Total (n = 80)
Cognitive Reappraisal			
Pre	33.00 (8.09)	32.68 (6.54)	32.84 (7.31)
Post	35.17 (4.78)	32.95 (6.05)	34.06 (5.53)
Expressive Suppression			
Pre	18.34 (5.86)	17.80 (4.90)	18.07 (5.38)
Post	12.76 (3.72)	18.24 (4.77)	15.50 (5.07)

Note: Values are presented as M (SD).

Table 2 ANOVA Results for Cognitive Reappraisal

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Between Subjects						
Treatment	66.00	1	66.00	0.866	0.355	0.011
Error	6094.70	80	76.18			
Within Subjects						
Time	61.00	1	61.00	7.998	0.006	0.091
Time * Treatment	37.10	1	37.10	4.866	0.030	0.057
Error	609.90	80	7.62			

Table 3 ANOVA Results for Expressive Suppression

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Between Subjects						
Treatment	251.27	1	251.27	6.017	0.016	0.070
Error	3340.76	80	41.76			
Within Subjects						
Time	271.47	1	271.47	47.210	0.000	0.371
Time * Treatment	372.01	1	372.01	64.693	0.000	0.447
Error	460.02	80	5.75			

Note: Significant at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS (QUANTITATIVE)

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of an emotional regulation intervention in enhancing cognitive reappraisal and reducing expressive suppression among professional workers in Bangkok, Thailand. A total of 80 participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group received five weekly sessions of emotional regulation training, while the control group did not receive any intervention.

Cognitive Reappraisal

The results indicated a significant increase in cognitive reappraisal scores for the experimental group compared to the control group. The mean score

for cognitive reappraisal in the experimental group increased from 33.00 (SD = 8.09) at pretest to 35.17 (SD = 4.78) at posttest. In contrast, the control group's mean score remained relatively unchanged, from 32.68 (SD = 6.54) at pretest to 32.95 (SD = 6.05) at posttest (see Table 1). The ANOVA results revealed a significant interaction effect between time and treatment for cognitive reappraisal, $F(1, 80) = 4.866$, $p = 0.030$, $\eta^2 = 0.057$, indicating that the intervention had a significant impact on improving cognitive reappraisal in the experimental group.

Expressive Suppression

Similarly, expressive suppression scores showed a significant decrease in the experimental group compared

to the control group. The mean score for expressive suppression in the experimental group decreased from 18.34 (SD = 5.86) at pretest to 12.76 (SD = 3.72) at posttest. Conversely, the control group's mean score slightly increased from 17.80 (SD = 4.90) at pretest to 18.24 (SD = 4.77) at posttest (see Table 1). The ANOVA results for expressive suppression showed a significant interaction effect between time and treatment, $F(1, 80) = 64.693$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.447$, indicating a substantial reduction in expressive suppression for the experimental group following the intervention.

Overall, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of emotional regulation training in improving emotional well-being among professional workers. The significant improvements in cognitive reappraisal and reductions in expressive suppression in the experimental group highlight the potential benefits of incorporating such interventions into workplace wellness programs. These findings align with previous research suggesting that enhancing emotional regulation can lead to better mental health outcomes and reduced emotional distress (Gross & John, 2003; Neacsiu et al., 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of an emotional regulation intervention in enhancing emotional regulation strategies among professional workers. The intervention led to significant improvements in cognitive reappraisal and reductions in expressive suppression, demonstrating its potential to positively impact emotional well-being and stress management in the workplace. By equipping employees with better tools to manage their emotions, the intervention contributes to creating a more supportive and productive work environment. These findings suggest that incorporating emotional regulation training into workplace wellness programs can be a valuable approach to fostering healthier and more resilient workforces.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant impact of the emotional regulation intervention on cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression among professional workers in Bangkok, supporting the proposed research objectives.

Objective 1: Effect of the Intervention on Cognitive Reappraisal

The first objective aimed to examine the effect of the intervention on cognitive reappraisal among professional workers. The results indicate a significant increase in cognitive reappraisal scores in the experimental group compared to the control group. This suggests that the structured training effectively enhanced participants' ability to reinterpret stressful situations more positively, aligning with previous research that highlights cognitive reappraisal as a key strategy in improving emotional resilience and reducing psychological distress (Gross & John, 2003). This finding underscores the importance of cognitive reappraisal as a proactive emotional regulation strategy that helps individuals manage stressors in a constructive manner, ultimately leading to improved mental well-being.

Objective 2: Impact of the Intervention on Expressive Suppression

The second objective focused on the impact of the intervention on the utilization of expressive suppression. The significant decrease in expressive suppression scores in the experimental

group suggests that participants learned to reduce the habitual inhibition of emotional expressions. While expressive suppression can be useful in certain social contexts, chronic use is associated with negative psychological outcomes (Gross & John, 2003). The intervention successfully equipped participants with alternative strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, to manage emotions more adaptively. This reduction in expressive suppression is particularly important in professional settings, where excessive suppression can contribute to workplace stress and burnout.

Objective 3: Changes in Overall Emotional Regulation Skills and Well-being

The third objective was to assess the overall changes in emotional regulation skills and emotional well-being following the intervention. The comprehensive approach of the intervention, combining elements from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), contributed to significant improvements in both cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. These enhancements in emotional regulation skills were accompanied by a noticeable reduction in negative

emotional states, such as fear and sadness. This aligns with the broader literature suggesting that improved emotional regulation can buffer against the negative effects of workplace stressors and cyberbullying, leading to better psychological outcomes (Neacsiu et al., 2014; Hayes, 2022).

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to professional workers from a single company, Silasakon Co. Ltd, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other organizations or industries. Additionally, the intervention was conducted online, which might have influenced participant engagement and the overall effectiveness of the training. The self-report nature of the emotional regulation measures could also introduce response bias, as participants might have altered their responses to appear more favorable. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample across various settings and consider in-person interventions to examine whether these factors impact the outcomes. Furthermore, long-term follow-up assessments would be beneficial

to determine the sustained effects of the intervention on emotional regulation and mental health.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Future studies should include a more diverse sample from different organizations and industries to enhance the generalizability of the results. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of emotional regulation interventions across various professional settings.

2. In-Person Interventions: While the online intervention proved effective, conducting in-person sessions could enhance participant engagement and outcomes. Future research should explore the differences in effectiveness between online and in-person interventions.

3. To assess the sustainability of the intervention's effects, future studies should incorporate long-term follow-up assessments. This will help determine whether the improvements in emotional regulation over time.

4. Incorporating multiple methods of assessment, such as behavioral observations and physiological measures,

alongside self-report surveys, could provide a more robust evaluation of emotional regulation and its impact on mental health.

By addressing these suggestions and recommendations, future research

can build on the findings of this study, and organizations can better support their employees' emotional well-being, leading to healthier and more productive workplaces.

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