



Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction in Emerging Adulthood: The Mediating Role of Emotional Dysregulation

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Abstract

Adverse childhood events can impact emotional development, self-perception, and the capacity to develop and sustain healthy relationships. Emerging adulthood is a critical stage of development where people experience greater independence, new relationships and social demands. The present study explored the link between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction in emerging adulthood and how emotional dysregulation might mediate this link. It looks at the difficulties in identifying, understanding, and managing emotions and how these difficulties can contribute to the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and interpersonal functioning challenges. It suggests that those who are victimized early in their lives might find it more difficult to control their emotional reactions, which can lead to communication issues, interpersonal conflict, lack of trust and trouble in stable relationships. These relationships among emerging adults could be explored using a quantitative research design methodology with standardized measures of childhood trauma, emotional regulatory behaviours, and interpersonal functioning. Mediation analysis would indicate if emotional dysregulation is a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction. This possible pathway could help to inform trauma-informed psychological interventions to build emotional regulation skills and improve healthier interpersonal relationships. The findings could also be helpful for counsellors and mental health professionals as well as teachers of young adults with ongoing emotional and social challenges.

Keywords: Early trauma, emerging adulthood, emotional dysregulation, interpersonal dysfunction, childhood adversity, emotional regulation.

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1. Introduction

Emerging adulthood is an important developmental stage where adolescents and young adults experiment with identity, explore independence, develop emotional growth and establish intimate and social relationships. This phase includes both key transitions in education and in employment, family and personal relationships. Importance of establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, as relationships are sources of emotional support, psychological adjustment and sense of belonging. But, developmental tasks can be more difficult for those who have had negative and/or traumatic childhood experiences. Early trauma can impact an individual's self- and other-perception, emotional reactions, and conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships.

Early trauma refers to many adverse experiences, such as emotional, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, domestic violence exposure and situations that have the potential to compromise a child's sense of safety and security. These experiences can impact on the formation of trust, emotional security, self-esteem and expectations around relationships. People who experience early trauma can become more sensitive to rejection, struggle with expressing their needs, feel like they're always in danger of being rejected, or may always feel like they're in danger around people. While these are not a guaranteed result for all people who experience trauma as a child, these early-life events can make someone



more susceptible to problems in relationships as an adult. As people enter emerging adulthood, they can often become more obvious as they seek to form romantic relationships, seek out new friendships and take on more responsibility for their emotional and social interactions.

Interpersonal Dysfunction means ongoing problems in relationship development, maintenance, and/or interaction with others. These can manifest themselves in ongoing conflict, communication issues, emotional distancing, increased reliance, inability to set boundaries, or ineffective management of conflict. These challenges may have a negative impact on relationships, social functioning, psychological health, and the development of supportive networks. Thus, it is important to understand the factors that are associated with interpersonal dysfunction in order to detect the psychological mechanisms by which early-life trauma can impact adult social functioning.

Emotional dysregulation is one possible mechanism that can explain how early trauma is related to interpersonal problems. Emotional Regulation is identifying, understanding, accepting, and regulating emotional experiences in a manner that allows for appropriate reactions to various circumstances. Emotional dysregulation is when people have ongoing issues with emotional reactions, with being able to tolerate discomfort, with the ability to recognise emotions, or with choosing strategies to deal with difficult emotions. The capacity to develop may be disrupted by early adverse experiences, especially if the child does not have a predictable and supportive emotional environment or opportunities to develop adaptive coping skills. Consequently, some people might have strong emotional responses, longer periods of distress, impulsive reactions or struggles to recover from emotionally demanding situations.

Emotional dysregulation can happen in a number of ways and lead to interpersonal dysfunction. People who have trouble with emotions may take a negative view on unclear social interactions, respond intensely to perceived criticism or have a poor ability to express emotions in positive ways. When there is conflict, emotional upset can cause someone to become withdrawn, hostile, impulsive or unable to think of the other person's point of view. These reactions can have a negative effect on trust and make it more probable that future relationship conflicts will occur. In addition, emotional regulation can be difficult, which can make seeking support at the right time, and to the right person, or responding to others' emotional needs challenging. Consequently, emotional dysregulation may represent an important psychological process through which the effects of early trauma are associated with difficulties in adult relationships.

While the long-term impacts of childhood adversity, emotion regulation problems, and interpersonal functioning have been explored, these factors need to be considered in the context of the developmental period of young adulthood. This time is significant to examine the impact of past experiences on how the child is feeling and relating. Investigating emotional dysregulation as a potential mediator can provide some insight as to whether the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction is mediated in part by emotional dysregulation. This does not only focus on the direct connection between traumatic experiences and subsequent problems, but also on a possible psychological pathway between this relationship.

Therefore, the current study, titled "Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction in Emerging Adulthood: Mediating Role of Emotional Dysregulation," seeks to investigate the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction in emerging adults, specifically focusing on the mediation of emotional dysregulation. The study aims to examine the relationship between increasing exposure to early trauma and increasing emotional dysregulation, and between emotional dysregulation and increasing interpersonal difficulties. The research will help develop a greater understanding of the emotional mechanisms behind the long-term effects of early adversity by exploring these relationships. The results also could have implications for psychological assessment, prevention and counseling for emotional awareness, adaptive coping, and healthier interpersonal relationships in emerging adulthood.

2. Background of the study

Early experiences have a profound impact on emotional development, personality, social behaviours and healthy relationships. Events of emotional or physical abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic conflict and other negative childhood experiences can impact how a child thinks about themselves, how they make sense of social situations or how they react to emotional distress. The effects of early trauma are sometimes evident during childhood, but sometimes the challenges appear or worsen during the emerging adulthood, typically defined as the transition between adolescence and grownup life. In this period, people are responsible for more things in the domains of education, work, intimate relationships, independence and social identity. Emotional security, interpersonal trust and ability to handle stress from relationships can be affected by past traumatic events, making these transitions more



complicated.

It is during this time that adolescents and young adults rely on their own emotional and interpersonal resources, which is an important time to explore the long-term effects of early trauma. Handling feelings, conflict, understanding others' viewpoints, setting boundaries, and responding to rejection and criticism in healthy ways are all necessary skills in healthy relationships. But people who have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences may become ingrained in their emotional and behavioral responses, making these processes harder. Some may get too sensitive to feeling rejected, others may seek emotional closeness but fail to receive it, others may numb out their feelings and others may react to interpersonal stress with anger, anxiety or withdrawal. Reactions are not meant to be taken as a given consequence of trauma, as people have very much individual differences in coping abilities, social support, attachment experiences and resilience.

Interpersonal Dysfunction is ongoing problems in relating to others. This can manifest itself in communication difficulties, lack of trust, emotional detachment, overly dependent relationships, conflict, intimacy issues, and issues with managing behaviour in disagreements. Difficulties can be related to early trauma that can impact a person's expectations of relationships and perceptions of interpersonal safety. People who had an inconsistent caregiver or had been emotionally rejected find it hard to trust others or feel safe in close relationships. Likewise, individuals who are sensitive to negative or unstable situations may be hyper vigilant when engaging in social situations. These responses can become a dysfunctional pattern in adult relationships because they are patterns of coping with challenging situations.

Emotional dysregulation is one of the psychological processes that might account for such a link. Emotion regulation is the processes by which people recognise, understand, regulate and express their emotional experiences in a manner appropriate to a given context. Emotional dysregulation is the ongoing inability to identify emotions, tolerate distress, control emotional impulses and choose effective ways to manage extremely strong emotions. These challenges can have an impact on how an individual feels as well as how an individual acts in situations involving interpersonal relationships. For example, someone with poor fear or anger control might become upset when someone disagrees with them, take sincere and well-meaning remarks as rejection, or not be able to calm down during a disagreement.

The association between childhood maltreatment and subsequent problems with emotional functioning is growing increasingly supported by research. A meta-analysis of 35 studies with 11,344 participants by Gruhn and Compas (2020) concluded that childhood maltreatment was related to decreased emotion regulation and increased emotional dysregulation. They also discovered links with strategies like avoidance and emotional suppression. The findings indicate that early adverse events can impact how people react to emotional distress, but such links may be different in strength and form from person to person and event to event.

The importance of the possible mediating role of emotional dysregulation is especially meaningful when considering the phenomenon of interpersonal dysfunction that is found in association with early trauma later in life. A mediating variable is used to attempt to explain the path by which one variable might be related to another. Here, early trauma is the predictor variable, interpersonal dysfunction the outcome variable, and emotional dysregulation is assumed to be the mediator. It is assumed that traumatic experiences early in life can disrupt the development of healthy emotional regulation, which can lead to problems in interpersonal and romantic relationships.

There is research evidence supporting the consideration of this pathway in the context of childhood adversity and psychopathology. Based on a meta-analysis performed by Weissman and colleagues? The evidence is not coherent enough to assume a single pathway, but rather there are several possible pathways from adverse experiences to later psychological problems that involve emotional regulation difficulties. The authors of Emotion Regulation as Mediator Between Childhood Adversity and Psychopathology conducted their meta-analysis on 215 eligible studies, which yielded evidence for direct associations of childhood adversity with psychopathology, as well as indirect associations via emotion regulation. While psychopathology is a larger construct than interpersonal dysfunction, these findings suggest a relevant conceptual framework to examine emotional dysregulation as an explanatory mechanism.

Evidence also exists that specifically points to the importance of developmental continuity for emerging adults. An examination of the association between childhood maltreatment and emotional functioning in emerging adulthood in a longitudinal study revealed that exposure to chronic multiple types of maltreatment was linked to increased



emotional dysregulation in emerging adulthood. The study also suggested that attachment security could play a role in the emergence of various emotional regulation patterns. The results indicate that it is unlikely that effects of early trauma are in isolation, and that later effects may be dependent on the quality of attachment relationships and emotional resources available during development.

Subsequent studies have explored the linkages among childhood emotional abuse, emotion regulation in adulthood, and other outcomes. A 2026 meta-analysis found links between childhood emotional abuse and avoidant emotional regulation strategies and challenges with experiencing and accepting emotions. This is evidence supporting the importance of studying emotional regulation beyond the childhood and adolescence period. Findings, however, should not be generalised on a uniform basis to all emerging adults because there are differences in type of trauma, measurement tools, and sample characteristics and life experiences.

While there is increasing evidence on trauma and emotional functioning, the link between early trauma, emotional dysregulation and interpersonal dysfunction is an avenue for further exploration in emerging adulthood. The research on psychological distress does not directly account for the relationship between psychological distress and trust, intimacy, communication, conflict management, and relationship stability. In addition, there may be other mechanisms at play when it comes to emotional dysregulation. Other factors such as attachment insecurity, negative self-beliefs, avoidance, social support and learned interpersonal expectations can also play a role in relationship problems. In the case of emotional dysregulation, it can be helpful to consider this a pathway rather than the only

pathway to understand one important pathway, without assuming that this is the only pathway that explains the effects of early trauma.

The current research – Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction in Emerging Adulthood: The Mediating Role of Emotional Dysregulation– aims to explore the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction in Emerging Adults and determine if emotional dysregulation statistically mediates this relationship. The proposed mechanism is the one that the study will be focusing on, which could help advance knowledge of the relationship between early adverse experiences and relationship functioning during a critical developmental period. The results can also be helpful for trauma-informed counselling, psychological evaluations and interventions that enhance emotional awareness, distress tolerance and interpersonal skills.

In general, the examination of emotional dysregulation as a mediator factor can give a more detailed insight into the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal functioning. This approach is more than a mere examination of behavioural issues in the context of a relationship; it explores the interconnections between past experiences and present emotional dynamics. This understanding of these relationships could inform more nuanced and specific interventions to foster positive emotional health and healthy relationships among emerging adults.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate Early Trauma and interpersonal dysfunction in Emerging Adults.
2. To assess the association between early traumatic experiences and emotional dysregulation in emerging adulthood.
3. To explore the relationship between emotional dysregulation and interpersonal problems (such as trusting others, poor communication, lack of emotional closeness, and difficulty managing conflict).
4. To assess if there is a mediation effect between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction through emotional dysregulation.
5. To determine the degree to which emotional dysregulation is a mediator for the relationship between early traumatic experiences and interpersonal relationship problems.

6. Literature Review

1. Early Trauma and Psychological Development:

Childhood trauma can impact psychological functioning long after childhood, such as through childhood abuse, emotional neglect, witnessing violence, and disrupted caregiving. These experiences can have an impact on emotional security, self-perception, trust, and developing stable interpersonal relationships. While people react differently to bad

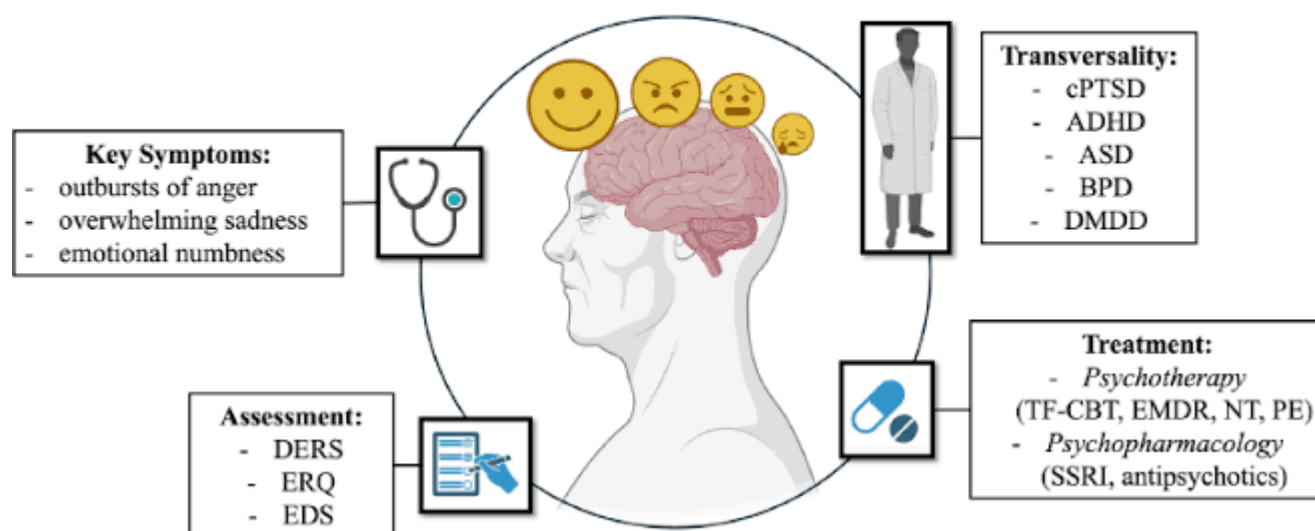


experiences, multiple or repeated types of childhood abuse and neglect can make them more vulnerable to emotional and relational challenges later in development.

Warmingham et al. (2023) explored the links between childhood adversity and emotional processes and regulation in emerging adulthood, by examining the pattern of childhood adversity and its link to emotion processing and regulation in emerging adulthood. The results they found showed that, the more a child experienced multiple types of maltreatment, the more emotion dysregulation occurred. Additionally, there was evidence for some differences in affective processing between the different maltreatment groups, implying that early adverse experiences can impact upon subjective emotional experiences and can also impact upon the processing of emotional information.

Likewise, Briere and Jordan (2009) outlined a number of intermediary processes by which childhood maltreatment can lead to subsequent psychological problems in adulthood. They have highlighted the need to take into account not only the trauma experience itself, but also the psychological processes that mediate trauma effects. They can involve challenges in regulating distress, negative self and others beliefs, and challenges in close relationship interactions.

Emotional Dysregulation (ED) in Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (cPTSD)



Source: <https://www.jpsychopathol.it/article/view/810>

2. Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction:

Interpersonal functioning includes the ability to trust, communicate needs, manage conflict, manage emotional boundaries, and build supportive interpersonal relationships. These processes can be complicated by early adverse experiences, especially if they take place in relationships that are supposed to be safe and supportive. They may be extremely sensitive to rejection, find it hard to trust or react strongly to perceived interpersonal threats. These reactions are not set in stone, but may be adaptations to past experiences.

Berzenski (2019) studied the link between childhood maltreatment and subsequent relational difficulties, looking at emotion-regulation skills and psychopathology and social relationship issues after childhood emotional abuse and neglect. The study highlights the need to consider individual emotional competencies, and not all forms of emotional dysregulation as the same. Some people with a history of maltreatment have ongoing issues with emotional identification, understanding, and regulation which could be part of the explanation for their social relational difficulties.

Recently, Kim and Kim (2026) studied the relationship between childhood interpersonal maltreatment and adult interpersonal difficulties among Korean college students. According to their multiple-mediator model, impairment in subjective sense of self, rejection sensitivity and emotion dysregulation. It was suggested that the sense of self was a key element in the link between maltreatment and interpersonal difficulties, while rejection sensitivity and emotion dysregulation were more complex contributors to indirect pathways. The results suggest that interpersonal dysfunction may emerge as a result of multiple pathways that can be psychological.



In the systematic review of the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and adult interpersonal functioning, Maloney et al. (2025) also emphasized the need for a research focus on relational outcomes. They suggest that there is a need for more targeted studies of the impact of childhood adversity on interpersonal relationships in adulthood and the processes by which this relationship can become more or less vulnerable to interpersonal problems.

3. Emotional Dysregulation as a Consequence of Early Trauma:

Emotional dysregulation is the inability to recognize, understand, tolerate and regulate emotions in a manner that fosters adaptive functioning. It might be accompanied by intense emotional responses, long-lasting distress, impulsivity, restricted ability to learn effective coping mechanisms or inability to return to emotional balance after stressful events. These challenges can arise when a child doesn't receive stable emotional support or when they are repeatedly exposed to anxiety provoking environments.

In a meta-analytic study of emotion-regulation strategies for various psychological disorders, Aldao et al. (2010) found that it was crucial to consider the association between emotion-regulation strategies and psychological problems. Their work offers a wide theoretical foundation for the study of emotional dysregulation as a process that can link stressful experiences to subsequent psychological outcomes. Some strategies may have varying effects depending on the individual and the context in which they are employed, e.g. rumination and suppression.

Chronic and multiple-subtype childhood maltreatment was found to be associated with increased emotion regulation difficulties in emerging adulthood, more directly by Warmingham et al. (2023). Their conclusions indicate that a prolonged exposure to stress may disrupt the emergence of adaptive emotional capacities. This study is particularly timely as it focuses on transition to adulthood and the emergence of new social and relational expectations, as well as the ability to regulate emotions independently from others.

Clinchard et al. (2026) built on this research and explored emotion regulation development from adolescence to young adulthood. The findings of the researchers' longitudinal study showed that the childhood abuse was related to the growing emotion-regulation problems during adolescence, whereas the childhood neglect was related to greater initial problems. Differences between abuse and neglect may indicate that there are different trajectories of early adversity to emotional functioning.

4. Emotional Dysregulation and Interpersonal Relationships:

A person's ability to regulate their emotions is important for interpersonal situations because disagreements, uncertainty, emotional disclosure, and others' intent to deliver messages through many means are common elements of interpersonal situations. In cases where people struggle to handle intense emotions, they may react to relational stress by withdrawing, becoming angry, avoiding, seeking excessive reassurance or not being able to communicate their needs. This can cause persistent relationship issues even when the person wants to have strong and supportive relationships.

To grasp this association, Berzenski (2019) looks at how distinct emotion-regulation skills account for psychopathology and social relationship problems after childhood emotional abuse and neglect. Emotional processing and management may be linked to interpersonal stressors, not just the presence of a traumatic history, since focus is placed on specific skills.

The concept of emotion regulation has also been considered by Warmingham et al. (2023) as a potential pathway between early maltreatment and later abilities. The findings suggest that differences in emotional processing and regulation related to maltreatment are still salient in emerging adulthood. Emotional dysregulation needs to be understood, however, not as the sole cause of interpersonal problems. How people typically react to relational difficulties may also be shaped by attachment insecurity, rejection sensitivity, self-concept, social support, and quality of existing relationship.

In another study, Kim and Kim (2026) demonstrated that the relationship between childhood interpersonal maltreatment and current interpersonal difficulties was better explained by a series of psychological processes than by the direct relationship between these two factors. They conclude that their results demonstrate a more general conceptualization in which emotional dysregulation is seen in conjunction with other processes that affect the functioning of relationships.



5. Emotional Dysregulation as a Mediating Variable:

A mediating variable is a variable that accounts for, at least partially, the relationship between a predictor and an outcome. In this current study, early trauma is used as the predictor, interpersonal dysfunction is used as the outcome, and emotional dysregulation is hypothesized as the mediator. The framework proposed here implies that early traumatic events could be correlated with later interpersonal difficulties, in part because early trauma can affect the development or utilization of effective emotional-regulation skills.

This structure is supported by the developmental results found by Warmingham et al. (2023). Their study linked childhood maltreatment trajectory to emerging adulthood emotion-regulation profiles, suggesting that early childhood may be related to emotion-regulation processes that endure into emerging adulthood. However, emotional processing and emotional regulation were the central areas of their study, and they don't actually claim to have established emotional dysregulation as a mediator of interpersonal dysfunction.

In their study on childhood maltreatment, perceived stress among young adults and emotion regulation strategies, self-efficacy and resilience, Hong et al. (2018) highlighted the role of childhood maltreatment in determining emotion regulation strategies and perceived stress in young adults, and its links with self-efficacy and childhood resilience. Their work highlights the importance of looking at the "intermediate" psychological factors when assessing longer term outcomes of maltreatment. Furthermore, it proposes that vulnerability or resilience to the impact of early adversity can vary by individual, depending on how well they are able to regulate themselves and cope with the situation.

Other data is derived from studies of emotional neglect during childhood and relational well-being of young adults in Italy. The study published in *Journal of Family Trauma, Child Custody & Child Development* (2023) explored emotion-regulation strategies as mediators and revealed that diminished self-awareness and emotional confidence were significant mediators between emotional neglect and the decreased relational well-being. This is important because it connects specific emotional regulation problems to relational outcomes for a sample of young adults.

But it is important to test mediation, not assume it from relationships between variables. A noteworthy indirect effect would lend more credence to the proposed mediating role of emotional dysregulation and longitudinal data would be helpful to establish the temporal order of the relationships between early trauma, later emotional regulation problems, and interpersonal functioning. Other variables, such as the role of attachment security and rejection sensitivity, should also be taken into account as alternative and additional explanations.

6. Emerging Adulthood as a Critical Developmental Period:

The characteristics of emerging adulthood include identity changes, increased autonomy, intimate relationships, changes in education, work, and social roles. People can have new interpersonal needs at this time and still be learning to adapt their emotions and coping skills. These shifts can evoke unexperienced emotional and relational patterns for individuals with childhood trauma experiences.

Warmingham et al. (2023) explored emotion regulation problems in young adults (18–24) and concluded that there were links between chronic multiple-subtype maltreatment and emotion regulation problems. Their research is relevant in the present study, as it is concerned with emotional outcomes in the developmental window of time that interpersonal independence and adult relationships become more salient.

Similar to the current study, Warmingham et al. (2023) found that increased chronicity of maltreatment was associated with decreased attachment security in childhood, in a separate study of attachment security, chronicity of childhood maltreatment, and emotion-regulation patterns in emerging adulthood. Later emotion-regulation profiles were, in turn, related to attachment security. The discovery of a relation between early relational experiences and adult emotional functioning implies that the former may have an impact on the latter partly in terms of the initial development of expectations and capacities associated with attachment.

The results indicate the need to consider emotional dysregulation in the developmental context. Emerging adulthood is not just an extension of childhood problems, but could be a time when positive relationships, psychological support, and building adaptive coping skills can help improve outcomes.

7. Research Gap and Rationale for the Present Study:

There are some links identified in the literature that are known to exist between early trauma, emotion-regulation problems and interpersonal functioning issues. Long-term effects of child maltreatment, emotional dysregulation development and effects of attachment and other psychological processes in adulthood relationships have been studied. These variables are also now being studied among emerging-adults.



The following gaps in the literature exist, however, and warrant additional research directly testing emotional dysregulation as a mediator between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction in emerging adulthood. The fact that early trauma is predictive of emotion-regulation difficulties does not imply that these difficulties account for interpersonal outcomes. Likewise, associations between emotional regulation and relational functioning might not fully capture the importance of trauma severity, trauma type, attachment security, and/or the presence of current social support.

The current study, titled Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction: The Mediatorial Role of Emotional Dysregulation, aims to fill this void, and to determine if emotional dysregulation statistically explains a subset of the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction. Emphasising the emerging adult years of this study could help explain this developmental phase during which emotional-regulatory abilities and relationship experiences are likely to have meaningful implications for social functioning.

The planned study could help to build a more coherent picture of the relationship between early adversity and the functioning of relationships in adulthood. The results would provide implications for psychological assessment and interventions of trauma that focus on emotional awareness, distress tolerance, and adaptive communication if the hypothesized indirect relationship is confirmed. However, any such implications should be made based on the study design and findings, not made a priori.

7. Material and Methodology

The study “Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction in Emerging Adulthood: The Mediating Role of Emotional Dysregulation” can use a quantitative, cross-sectional design to investigate the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction among emerging adults and examine the possible mediating role of emotional dysregulation. The target population can include people between 18 and 29 years old, who are in the developmental stage where they are beginning to form their identity, become emotionally independent, and more intimate with peers. The participants can be selected from colleges, universities and community conveniently. Data may be gathered with a structured questionnaire with demographic data and standardized psychological assessment instruments. The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire –Short Form (CTQ-SF) can be used to evaluate the childhood trauma, emotional dysregulation measured by the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), and interpersonal dysfunction measured by a validated interpersonal problem scale, such as the Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP). These tools can be used to gauge various aspects of early adversity, emotional understanding and regulation, and interpersonal challenges.

This questionnaire can be given in either an online or in-person format, provided informed consent is obtained. Participation must be voluntary with a reminder that any question which causes discomfort to the respondent, or which the respondent chooses to leave blank, may be left unanswered. Guidance on available psychological support and ensuring appropriate confidentiality should be offered when discussing trauma in children as this can be distressing. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis will be used to analyze the collected data to explore relationships between childhood trauma, emotional dysregulation, and interpersonal dysfunction. A mediation analysis with bootstrapping (with 5,000 resamples is ideal) can then be performed to see if emotional dysregulation statistically mediates the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction. The indirect effect should be tested with its bootstrapped confidence interval, with a confidence interval that does not contain zero representing statistical evidence of mediation. Other theoretically relevant demographic variables, such as age, gender, may be used as covariates, if appropriate. Data can be analysed statistically using SPSS with an appropriate mediation macro and/or structural equations modelling software. Findings, they are cross-sectional, so they demonstrate statistical associations, but not necessarily the sequence of events and causal relationship.

8. Results and Discussion

The study “Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction in Emerging Adulthood: The Mediating Role of Emotional Dysregulation” can use a quantitative, cross-sectional design to investigate the relationship between early trauma and interpersonal dysfunction among emerging adults and examine the possible mediating role of emotional dysregulation. The target population can include people between 18 and 29 years old, who are in the developmental stage where they are beginning to form their identity, become emotionally independent, and more intimate with peers. The participants can be selected from colleges, universities and community conveniently. Data may be gathered with a structured questionnaire with demographic data and standardized psychological assessment instruments. The Childhood Trauma



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9. Limitations of the study

The present study, Early Trauma and Interpersonal Dysfunction in Emerging Adulthood: The Mediating Role of Emotional Dysregulation, has some limitations that warrant caution when interpreting the results of the study. When using retrospective self-report methods, early trauma experiences may be recalled inaccurately by the participants or they may be unwilling to report on sensitive experiences or may be feeling states of the moment. Emotional and interpersonal functioning self-reports might also be influenced by social desirability and differences in self-awareness. Also, when a cross-sectional research design is used, the conclusions can only suggest correlations between early trauma, emotional dysregulation and interpersonal problems, but do not provide any causal relationship or confirm the temporal order necessary for mediation. Limitations may also include the sample size, the recruitment process, demographic characteristics and culture of the sample, which could limit the generalisability of the findings to other emerging adult populations. Traumatic experiences of various types, intensities, durations, and timing, family environment, attachment patterns, and a combination of psychological problems may also affect the relationships measured but not be fully addressed in analyses. Last but not least, interpersonal dysfunction is complicated and may be distinct between romantic relationships, friendships, family interactions, and work environments, so a narrow range of measurement instruments might not fully reflect this. Further research with multiple assessment techniques, varying samples, multiple control variables, and longitudinal designs could yield greater understanding of the relationship between emotional dysregulation and interpersonal functioning as a result of early trauma.

10. Conclusion

Early trauma can have long-lasting effects on interpersonal functioning in emerging adulthood, a developmental phase where identity is emerging, emotional development is rampant, and meaningful relationships are being formed. Abuse, neglect, emotional insecurity and loss of trust in others can shape the ways people experience emotions, react to interpersonal stress, and relate to others. Emotional dysregulation might play an important role as a mediator in this relationship because when emotional responses are difficult to identify, understand, and regulate, this can lead to communication issues, interpersonal relationships instability, conflict, and problems relating with others. Understanding the importance of emotional regulation offers a helpful lens through which to view how negative childhood experiences might impact young adults after childhood. The results and implications of this study underscore the need for early identification, psychological support that is trauma-informed, emotional regulation training and easy access to counselling to foster healthier relationships and psychological health. These relationships need to be explored in various populations and should include other factors, such as resilience, social support, attachment and coping. Understanding the pathways from early trauma to interpersonal dysfunction can play a role in shaping effective prevention and intervention efforts for emerging adults to promote emotional competence, foster more positive relationships, and establish more adaptive patterns of interpersonal functioning.



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