

The Relationship between Fight-Flight-Freeze System, Level of Expressed Emotion in Family, and Emotion Regulation Difficulties of University Students: Comparison Experienced to Inexperienced Non-Suicidal Self-Injury Students (NSSI)

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Abstract : Non-suicide Self Injuri (NSSI) can be defined as the act of an individual who does not intend to die directly and intentionally damaging his or her body tissues. According to a study conducted by the Korean Ministry of Education in 2018, the NSSI is widely spreading among teenagers, with 7.9 percent of all middle school students and 6.4 percent of high school students reporting experience in NSSI. As such, it is understood that the first time of the NSSI is in adolescence. However, the NSSI may not start and stop at a certain time, but may last longer. However, despite the widespread prevalence of NSSI among teenagers, little is known about the process and maintenance of NSSI college students on a continuous development basis. Korea's NSSI research trends are mainly focused on individual internal vulnerabilities (high levels of painful emotions/awareness, lack of pain tolerance) and interpersonal vulnerabilities (poor communication skills and social problem solving), and little studies have been done on individuals' unique characteristics and environmental factors such as substrate or environmental vulnerability factors. In particular, environmental factors are associated with the occurrence of NSSI by acting as a vulnerability factor that can interfere with the emotional control of individuals, whereas individual factors play a more direct role by contributing to the maintenance of NSSI, so it is more important to consider this for personal environmental involvement in NSSI. This study focused on the Fight-Flight-Freeze System as a factor in the defensive avoidance system of Reward Sensitivity in individual factors. Also, Environmental factors include the level of expressed emotion in family. Wedig and Nock (2007) said that if parents with a self-critical cognitive style take the form of criticizing their children, the experience of NSSI increases. The high level of parental criticism is related to the increasing frequency of NSSI acts as well as to serious levels of NSSI. If the normal coping mechanism fails to control emotions, people want to overcome emotional difficulties even through NSSI, and emotional disturbances experienced by individuals within an unsupported social relationship increase vulnerability to NSSI. Based on these theories, this study is to find ways to prevent NSSI and intervene in counseling effectively by verifying the differences between the characteristics experienced NSSI persons and non-experienced NSSI persons. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine the relationship of Fight-Flight-Freeze System (FFFS), level of expressed emotion in family and emotion regulation difficulties, comparing those who experienced Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) with those who did not experienced Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI). The data were collected from university students in Seoul Korea and Gyeonggi-do province. 99 subjects were experienced student of NSSI, while 375 were non- experienced student of NSSI. The results of this study are as follows. First, the result of t-test indicated that NSSI attempters showed a significant difference in fight-flight-freeze system, level of expressed emotion and emotion regulation difficulties, compared with non-attempters. Second, fight-flight-freeze system, level of expressed emotion in family and emotion regulation difficulties of NSSI attempters showed a significant difference in correlation. The correlation was significant only freeze system of fight-flight-freeze system, Level of expressed emotion in family and emotion regulation difficulties. Third, freeze system and level of expressed emotion in family predicted emotion regulation difficulties of NSSI attempters. Fight-freeze system and level of expressed emotion in family predicted emotion regulation difficulties of non-NSSI attempters. Lastly, Practical implications for counselors and limitations of this study are discussed.

Keywords : fight-flight-freeze system, level of expressed emotion in family, emotion regulation difficulty, non-suicidal self injury

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