

Autobiographical Memory Functions and Perceived Control in Depressive Symptoms among Young Adults

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Abstract : Depression is a serious mental health concern that leads to significant distress and dysfunction in an individual. Due to the high physical, psychological, social, and economic burden it causes, it is important to study various bio-psycho-social factors that influence the onset, course, duration, intensity of depressive symptoms. The study aims to explore relationship between autobiographical memory (AM) functions, perceived control over stressful events and depressive symptoms. AM functions and perceived control were both found to be protective factors for individuals against depression and were both modifiable to predict better behavioral and affective outcomes. An extensive review of literature, with a systematic search on Google Scholar, JSTOR, Science Direct and Springer Journals database, was conducted for the purpose of this review paper. These were used for all the aforementioned databases. The time frame used for the search was 2010-2021. An additional search was conducted with no time bar to map the development of the theoretical concepts. The relevant studies with quantitative, qualitative, experimental, and quasi- experimental research designs were included for the review. Studies including a sample with a DSM- 5 or ICD-10 diagnosis of depressive disorders were excluded from the study to focus on the behavioral patterns in a non-clinical population. The synthesis of the findings that were obtained from the review indicates there is a significant relationship between cognitive variables of AM functions and perceived control and depressive symptoms. AM functions were found to have significant effects on one's sense of self, interpersonal relationships, decision making, self-continuity and were related to better emotion regulation and lower depressive symptoms. Not all the components of AM function were equally significant in their relationships with various depressive symptoms. While self and directive functions were more related to emotion regulation, anhedonia, motivation and hence mood and affect, the social function was related to perceived social support and social engagement. Perceived control was found to be another protective cognitive factor that provides individuals a sense of agency and control over one's life outcomes which was found to be low in individuals with depression. This was also associated to the locus of control, competency beliefs, contingency beliefs and subjective well being in individuals and acted as protective factors against depressive symptoms. AM and perceived control over stressful events serve adaptive functions, hence it is imperative to study these variables more extensively. They can be imperative in planning and implementing therapeutic interventions to foster these cognitive protective factors to mitigate or alleviate depressive symptoms. Exploring AM as a determining factor in depressive symptoms along with perceived control over stress creates a bridge between biological and cognitive factors underlying depression and increases the scope of developing a more eclectic and effective treatment plan for individuals. As culture plays a crucial role in AM functions as well as certain aspects of control such as locus of control, it is necessary to study these variables keeping in mind the cultural context to tailor culture/community specific interventions for depression.

Keywords : autobiographical memories, autobiographical memory functions, perceived control, depressive symptoms, depression, young adults

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