

Trait Anxiety, Cognitive Flexibility, Self-Efficacy and Emotion Regulation: A Moderation Model

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Abstract : Emotion regulation, a transdiagnostic process, is often impaired in individuals with high trait anxiety due to compromised executive functioning and attentional control. Recent research underscores the importance of studying individual differences and contextual factors in understanding the adaptability of emotion regulation processes, particularly in those with high trait anxiety. Prior studies have emphasized the role of self-efficacy in promoting positive cognitive flexibility outcomes and mitigating executive function impairments in highly anxious individuals. Accordingly, the objective of this study was to examine the moderating influence of attentional control, cognitive flexibility, and self-efficacy on the relationship between trait anxiety and emotion regulation. Using a correlational design, an online study was conducted with a sample of 82 participants (mean age: 22 years). Self-report questionnaires measured individual difference variables, and the Classic Stroop Task assessed attentional control. The findings revealed three significant interactions. Firstly, high cognitive flexibility and self-efficacy were linked to reduced expressive suppression in individuals with low trait anxiety. Secondly, elevations in cognitive flexibility and self-efficacy were associated with increased suppression in those with high trait anxiety. Thirdly, high trait anxiety was associated with reduced attentional control. The results suggest that typically adaptive processes can yield different outcomes in highly anxious populations, highlighting the need to explore additional variables that could alter the impact of cognitive flexibility and self-efficacy on emotion regulation in individuals with high anxiety. These findings have significant clinical implications, emphasizing the need to consider individual differences in emotion regulation and trait anxiety to inform more effective psychological treatments.

Keywords : attentional control, trait anxiety, emotional dysregulation, transdiagnostic, individual differences

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