

Emotional Awareness and Working Memory as Predictive Factors for the Habitual Use of Cognitive Reappraisal among Adolescents

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Abstract : Background: Cognitive reappraisal refers to an emotion regulation strategy in which one changes the interpretation of emotion-eliciting events. Numerous studies show that cognitive reappraisal is associated with mental health and better social functioning. However the examination of the predictive factors of adaptive emotion regulation remains as an issue. The present study examined the factors contributing to the habitual use of cognitive reappraisal, with a focus on emotional awareness and working memory. Methods: Data was collected from 30 junior high school students, using a Japanese version of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale for Children (LEAS-C), and N-back task. Results: A positive correlation between emotional awareness and cognitive reappraisal was observed in the high-working-memory group ($r = .54, p < .05$), whereas no significant relationship was found in the low-working-memory group. In addition, the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a significant interaction between emotional awareness and working memory capacity ($F(1, 26) = 7.74, p < .05$). Subsequent analysis of simple main effects confirmed that high working memory capacity significantly increases the use of cognitive reappraisal for high-emotional-awareness subjects, and significantly decreases the use of cognitive reappraisal for low-emotional-awareness subjects. Discussion: These results indicate that under the condition when one has an adequate ability for simultaneous processing of information, explicit understanding of emotion would contribute to adaptive cognitive emotion regulation. The findings are discussed along with neuroscientific claims.

Keywords : cognitive reappraisal, emotional awareness, emotion regulation, working memory

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