

Do difficulties in emotion regulation impact self-esteem and adult attachment?

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Introduction

- Self-esteem is the judgment related to the self-being either positive or negative [1].
- Attachment is the ability to establish an emotional relationship from birth to adulthood appropriately [2]. There are several types of attachment, and the most commonly addressed in the literature are secure attachment and insecure/avoidant attachment. In terms of attachment styles, the most frequent emotions in the secure, are the trust, joy, pleasure, calm, and tranquility. However, in the avoiding attachment is frequently present the anxiety, fear, anger, hostility, and distrust prevail [3].
- Emotional Regulation (ER) is the capacity to deal with stressful situations in an adapted way, using the best possible emotions, regulating their intensity and duration [4].
- There is an association between attachment and the level of an individual's self-esteem [5]. Better attachment in adults is associated with high and stable levels of self-esteem [1].
- Strategies of emotional regulation (ER) are extremely important in the individual's development and has implications in their self-concept and self-esteem [2]. The literature suggests that a better ER is directly associated with better self-esteem [6]. People with better bonds (forms of ER) are safer and can cope better with negative emotions in their everyday social interactions [4].

Objectives

The objectives of this research are to study the relationship between the ER, the self-esteem and the attachment in a sample of Portuguese adults and to verify the influence of the experienced trauma in the last three years.

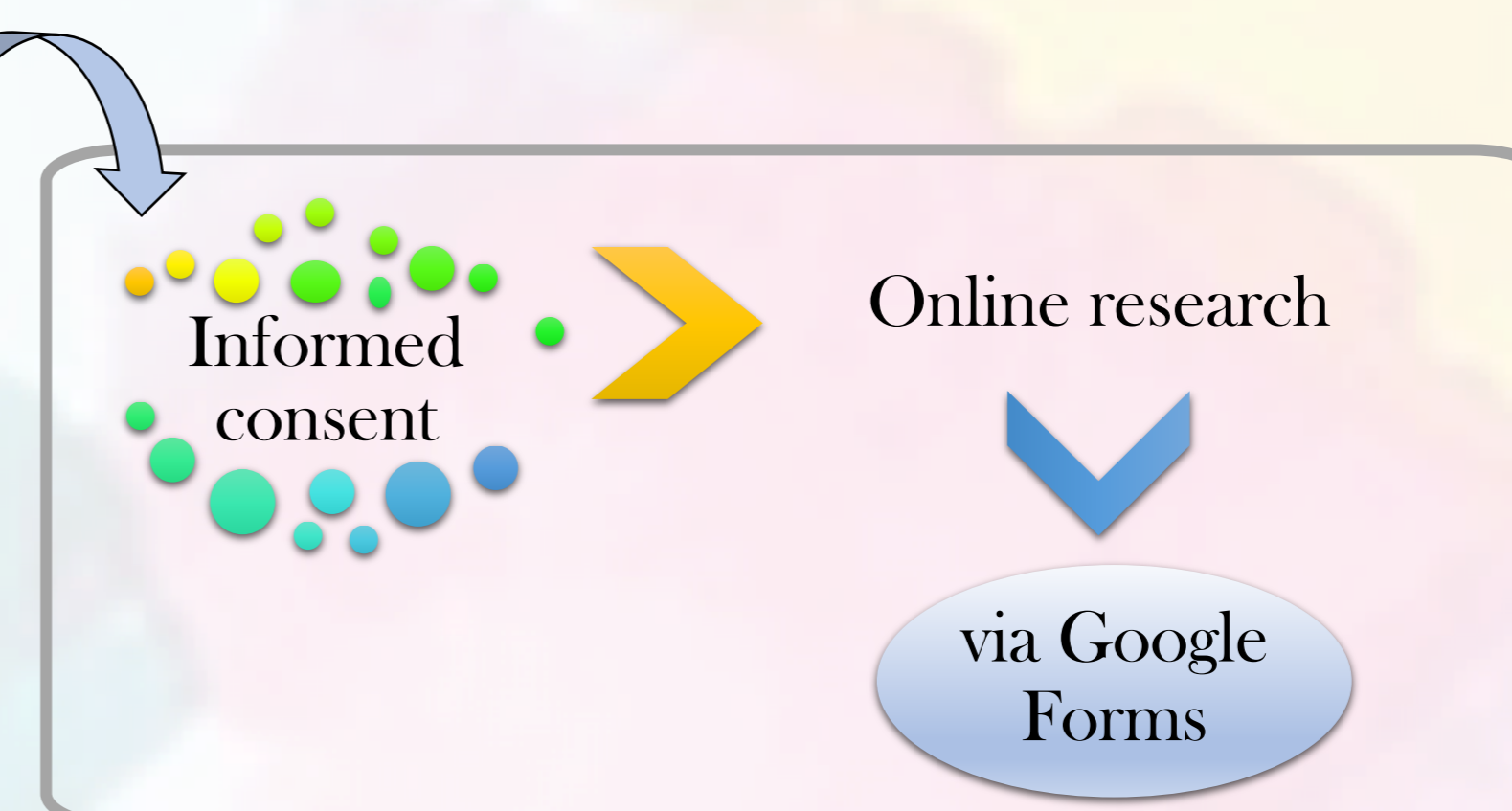
Materials and Methods

Participants:

- The sample was composed of 137 Portuguese adults;
- The majority was female (69.3%);
- Ages between 18 and 70 years ($M = 39.49$; $SD = 12.49$).

Instruments:

- Sociodemographic Questionnaire,
- Adult Attachment Scale - AAS - R [7],
- Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale - RSES [8],
- Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale - DERS [9].



The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki.

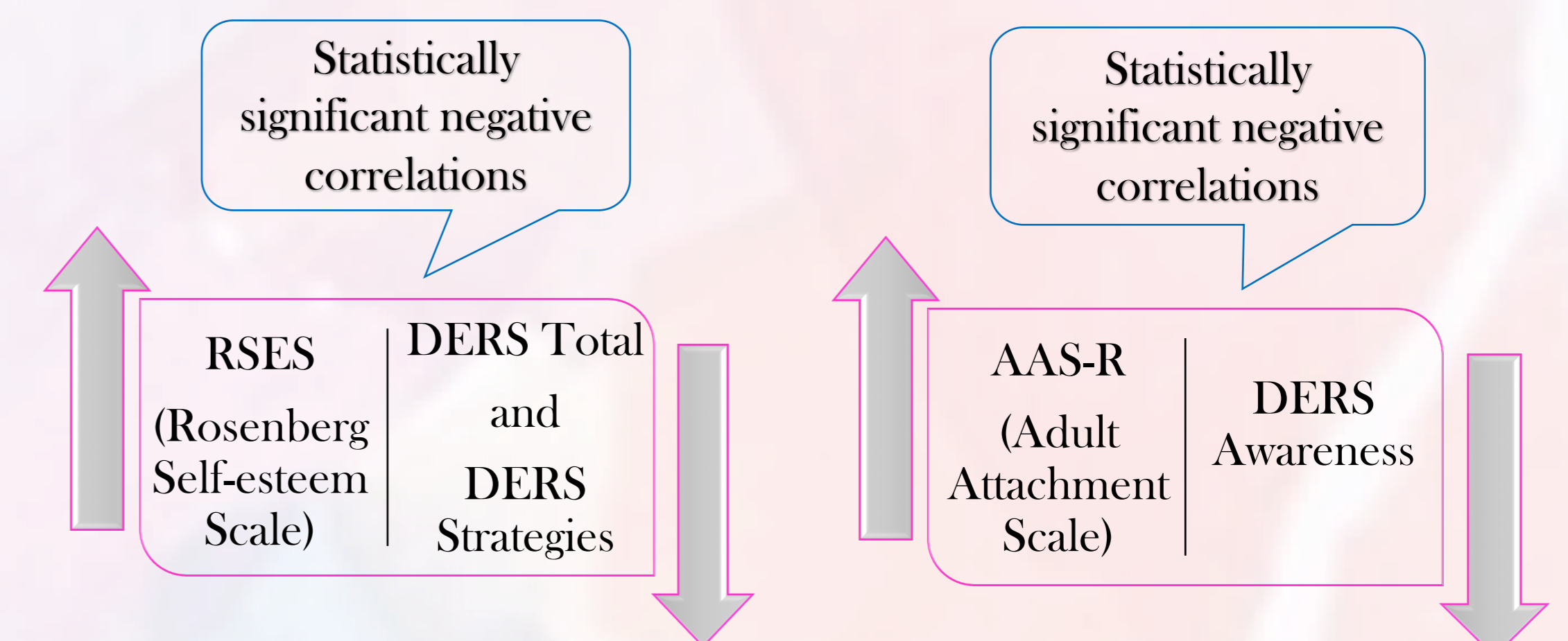
Results

Table 1
Correlations ($n=137$)

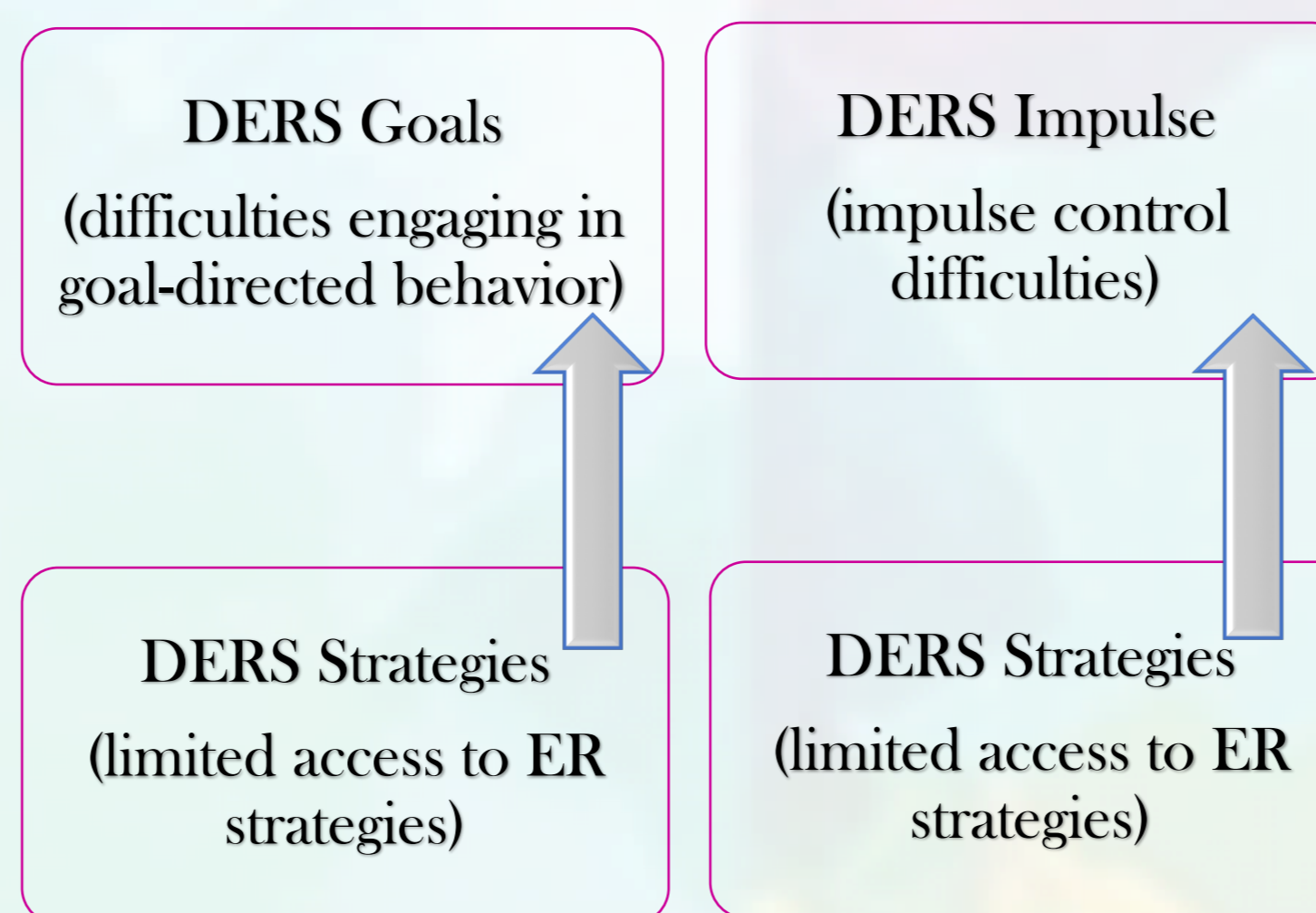
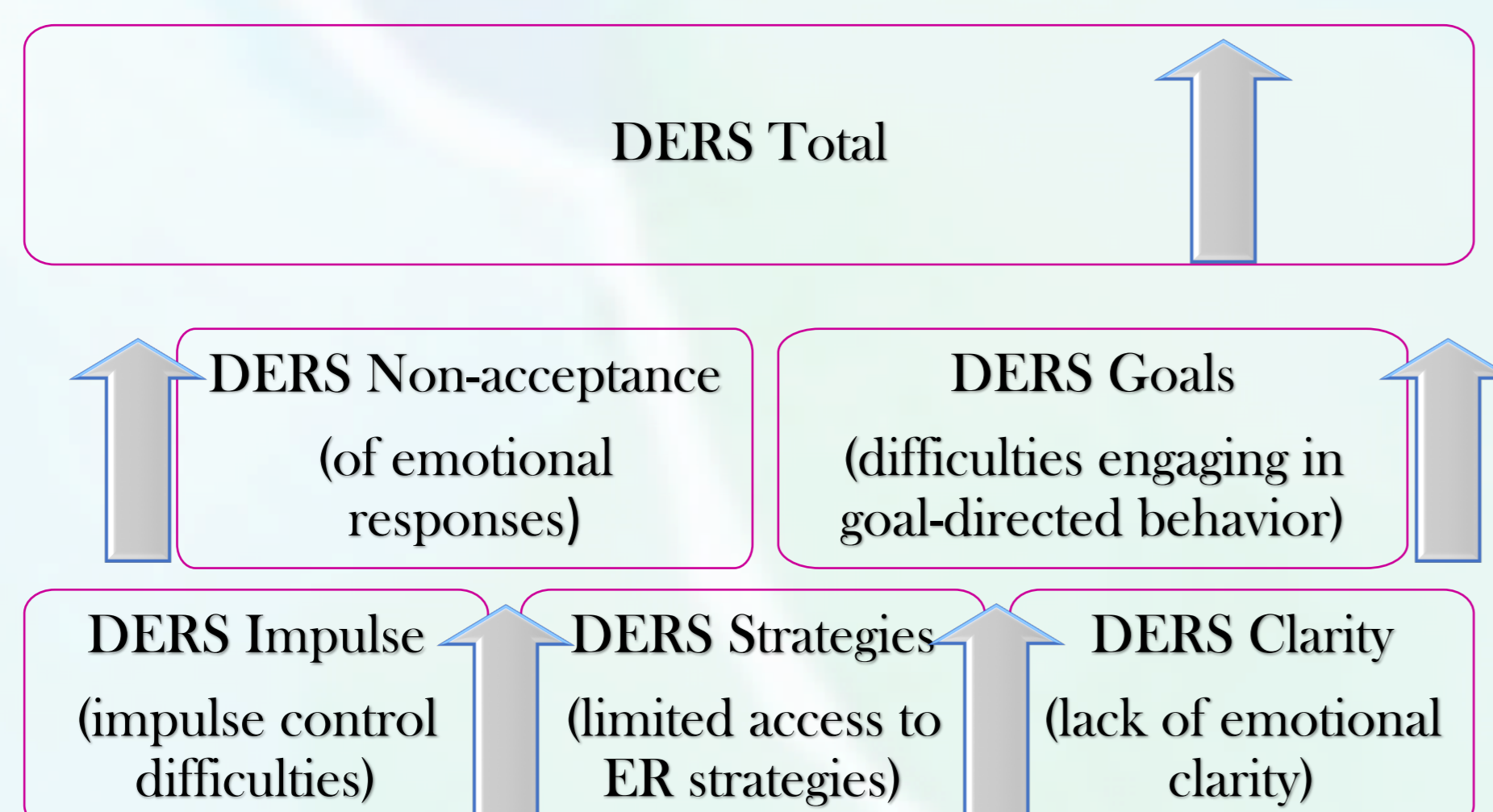
	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. RSES Total	.038	-.421**	.410**	.183*	-.509**	-.269**	-.340**	-.320**	-.329**	-.541**	-.492**
2. AAS-R Total	—	.290**	.543**	.521**	-.018	.159	-.060	.052	-.232**	-.047	-.038
3. AAS-R Anxiety	—	—	-.398**	-.450**	.557**	.500**	.409**	.426**	.087	.516**	.471**
4. AAS-R Comfort Proximity	—	—	—	.299**	-.462**	-.244**	-.408**	-.338**	-.300**	-.420**	-.384**
5. AAS-R Trust Others	—	—	—	—	-.273**	-.163	-.202*	-.132	-.146	-.304**	-.269**
6. DERS Total	—	—	—	—	—	.789**	.828**	.849**	.291**	.898**	.705**
7. DERS Non-Acceptance	—	—	—	—	—	—	.567**	.693**	-.067	.689**	.383**
8. DERS Goals	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.656**	.154	.738**	.465**
9. DERS Impulse	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.121	.707**	.467**
10. DERS Awareness	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.069	.442**
11. DERS Strategies	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.564**
12. DERS Clarity	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

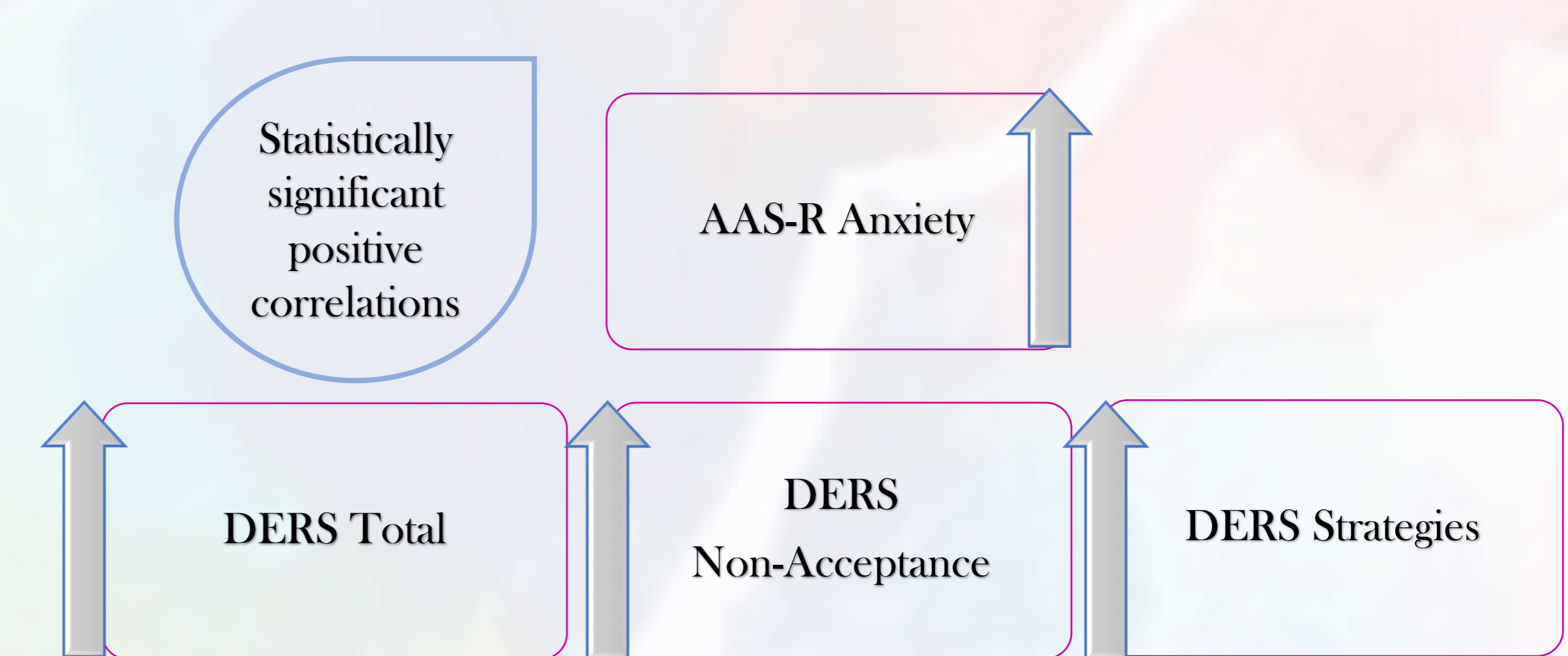
✓ Participants who experienced a trauma in the last 3 years showed higher mean of Anxiety in the Adult Attachment Scale ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .86$), [$F(1,136) = 8.91$, $p = .003$].



Statistically significant positive strong correlations



Statistically significant positive correlations



Discussion and Conclusion

- According to the results obtained in our study, we can verify that if the self-esteem increases, the difficulties of emotional regulation (ER) and the limited access to the ER strategies decrease, which corroborates the literature. Namely, better ER is directly associated with better self-esteem [6].
- Regarding adult self-esteem and attachment, in what concerns the comfort with proximity, the trust in the others, and the anxiety, our study verify significant relationships between the two concepts, which confirm our review of the literature that established the existence of an association between attachment and the individual's level of self-esteem [5].
- On adult attachment, we found that if anxiety increases, the difficulties of ER also increases, as well as the non-acceptance of negative emotions, inability to engage in goal-directed behavior when experiencing negative emotions, difficulty to control the behavior when experiencing negative emotions, limited access to regulatory strategies that are perceived to be effective, and lack of clarity. This is also corroborated by the literature review since attachment styles (e.g., safe or avoidant) influence the strategies used to express and regulate emotions [3].
- Further studies, with a larger sample, are recommended.

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