

Do difficulties in emotion regulation impact self-esteem and adult attachment? – the role of trauma

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esteem and attachment [1]. Strategies of emotional regulation (ER) are extremely important in the individual's development and have implications in their self-concept and self-esteem [2]. The literature suggests that a better ER is directly associated with better self-esteem [3]. Some studies also show an association between attachment and the level of self-esteem [4]. Better attachment in adults is associated with high and stable levels of self-esteem [5]. The objective of this research is to study the impact of ER, self-esteem and attachment in Portuguese adults (above 18 years old) who have experienced trauma. This study contributes to scientific innovation in this field, considering that we found results never obtained in a Portuguese sample.

Materials and Methods: This study comprised 137 Portuguese individuals' (69.3% women and 30.7% men) with ages between 18 and 70 years ($M = 39.49$, $SD = 12.49$), of which 74 (54.0%) experienced trauma in the last three years. This study was carried out by filling out online questionnaires and the link to the study was disclosed by e-mail and in social networks. The participants responded to a sociodemographic questionnaire, a checklist of some types of trauma experienced in the last three years, the Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS) [6], the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) [7], and the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS-R) [8]. The study was conducted in accordance with all the ethical principles.

Results: The results showed a significant negative correlation between the DERS and the total score of the RSES ($r = -0.509$, $p < .001$) as well as between the DERS Strategies subscale and the RSES ($r = -0.541$, $p < .001$). There was a significant statistical negative correlation between the DERS Awareness and the AAS-R ($r = -0.232$, $p = .006$), and a significant statistical positive correlation between the total score of the DERS ($r = 0.557$, $p < .001$), the DERS Non-Acceptance ($r = 0.500$, $p < .001$) the DERS Strategies ($r = 0.516$, $p < .001$) and the AAS-R Anxiety. The results also showed significant statistical differences between individuals who experienced trauma in the Anxiety dimension of the AAS-R [$F(1,136) = 8.91$, $p = .003$]. Those who experienced trauma showed higher anxiety ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.75$).

Discussion and conclusions: The results showed that if difficulties of emotional regulation and limited access to emotional regulation strategies decreases, self-esteem increases, which corroborates the literature [3]. Concerning the adult attachment, we found that if anxiety increases, difficulties of emotional regulation also increase, as well as lack of acceptance of emotional responses and limited access to emotional regulation strategies. Some studies reveal that attachment styles influence the strategies to express and regulate emotions [9]. All these findings have an impact on clinical and social levels, as they guide therapists to work in these specific areas with individuals who have suffered some form of trauma. Thus, our results help to develop psychological intervention programs to prevent psychopathology. Further studies should focus on the results of preventive and interventional efficacy of therapies implemented in society that focus on emotion regulation, self-esteem, and adult attachment in traumatised individuals.

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Polyvictimization among a juvenile Portuguese sample

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Some adolescents experience more than one type of abuse [1] that can occur under different incidents during childhood and/or juvenile development [2]. Polyvictimization can be defined as the experience of four or more types of violence, including childhood neglect, psychological, physical or sexual abuse, witnessing violence [3]. In Portugal, studies on polyvictimization are very scarce [4]. The objectives of the current study are to analyse the prevalence of polyvictimization in a sample of Portuguese youth, to compare differences in polyvictimization between age and gender groups, and to verify the probability of occurrence of different types of victimisation among boys and girls.

Materials and methods: The sample was composed of 849 participants, with 459 girls and 390 boys, and ages between 12 and 17 years old ($M = 13.70$, $SD = 1.43$). The study was conducted in Portuguese schools. The data collection was conducted according to ethical principles, with the authorisation of the schools, the parents, and the youth. Participants answered face to face to a sociodemographic questionnaire and to the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ) that assesses to conventional crimes, child maltreatment, peer and sibling victimisation, sexual victimisation, and witnessing and indirect victimisation [4].

Results: Over the last year, 67% ($n = 388$) of the participants had experienced at least one type of victimisation. The results reported differences in polyvictimization concerning age groups and not between gender groups. The difference between the group 12–14 years and the group 15–17 years was significant [$\chi^2(3, n = 849) = 8.793, p = .032$], and dependent on polyvictimization. Concerning gender groups, the difference in victimisation levels between boys and girls was not significant. However, the probability of occurrence of the various forms of victimisation was different between genders. Boys showed higher probability of occurrence of assault without weapon ($OR = 0.430; p < .01$; boys = 20.8%, girls = 14.2%), attempted assault ($OR = 0.540; p < .01$; boys = 18.5%; girls = 10.9%), nonsexual genital assault ($OR = 0.241; p < .001$; boys = 15.9%; girls = 4.4%), and burglary of family household ($OR = 0.407; p < .05$; boys = 6.2%, girls = 2.6%). However, girls revealed higher probability of occurrence of psychological/emotional abuse ($OR = 1.672; p < .01$; boys = 17.9%; girls = 26.8%).

Discussion and conclusions: This research studies the polyvictimization in a Portuguese sample of youth. The results highlight the high prevalence of victimisation among young Portuguese youth. They also point out the differences between boys and girls concerning the types of victimisation and between the oldest and the youngest concerning polyvictimization. Our results are in line with some recent researches [5,6], and they can help to develop future psychosocial prevention programs.

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Predictors of peer victimisation in the context of secondary school

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Peer victimisation is defined as the experience of being the target of aggressive behaviour, by one or more peers. This presents several configurations, and in this sense the study of multiple types of victimisation is