

The Relationship Between Emotional Dysregulation, Ontological Well-Being, and Psychological Well-Being in Refugees

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Abstract

Emotional dysregulation leads to psychological symptoms in refugees that are experienced in post migration process. Refugees with emotional dysregulation evaluate their whole life includes past, present and future timelines as negative because of their negative mood. Accordingly, they feel hopeless about the future and their psychological well-being decrease. The aim of this study is to examine whether emotional dysregulation and ontological wellbeing predict psychological well-being in refugees. The participants of this study consisted of 323 (248 men, 75 women) refugees between the ages of 18-49. The mean age of the participants was 28.66 and the standard deviation was 7.05. When the results of the research were examined, it was found that psychological well-being was negatively correlated with emotion regulation difficulty and positively correlated with ontological well-being. Ontological wellbeing and difficulty in emotional regulation together explain 46 % of psychological well-being.

Keywords: emotional dysregulation, ontological well-being, psychological well-being, refugees, migration

1. Introduction

Refugees generally experience several cumulative traumatic events like severe human rights violations (e.g. torture and sexual assault) as well as traumas related to deprivation (Li, et al., 2016; Sigvardsdotter, et.al., 2016). It is clear that exposure to traumatic events and post-migration stressors leads to psychological problems that are related with adaptive functioning. Hence, it was supported that refugees have difficulties in emotion regulation (Doolan et al., 2017; Koch et al., 2020).

Emotion dysregulation is defined as the reduced ability to monitor and modify emotional responses according to situations (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Lougheed and Hollenstein (2012), also suggested that adaptive emotion regulation skills are related with better psychological well-being. Ryff (1989) stated that the psychological well-being includes self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Besides, it was supported that psychological well-being is temporary and related with the harmony of life (Antonovsky, 1987). Emotional regulation abilities play important role in psychological well-being (Balzarotti et al., 2016) that people with high level of emotion regulation skills show higher psychological well-being (Dumciene & Pozeriene, 2022).

In parallel, Demir et al. (2020) organized a study with Syrian refugees in Germany and found that emotion regulation difficulties are correlated with psychopathologies like depression and anxiety. An other study showed that decrease in the social support of Syrian refugees leads to lost of their hope and motivation in Turkey and they have more pessimistic ideas about their future (Yildirim et al., 2020).

Simsek and Kocayoruk (2013) defines ontological well-being as a life project that people examine their “whole life” within the past, present, and future component. Simsek and Kocayoruk (2013) mentioned that ontological well-being consists of affective judgments on the completed (past), the ongoing (present), and the prospective (future) parts of their life projects in its continuity. Simsek (2009) supported that ontological well-being (OWB) focuses on the integrity of the individual's life. It can be expressed as the structure closest to the meaning or purpose of life, which is one of the most basic searches of people.

Simsek and Kocayoruk (2013) found in their research that the “nothingness” factor was strongly correlated with environmental superiority variables and personal development dimension, and was strongly positively correlated with negative mood. On the other hand, the “hope” factor of the life project, which is related to the future, shows a strong positive relationship with the personality trait of being open to innovations. Accordingly, it can be said that the integrity of human life may be disrupted by traumatic experiences, and this deterioration may cause psychopathology or aggravate the course of existing psychopathology (Tunc, 2021).

Traumatic experience can change one's ontological well-being of people that negatively affect the past, present and future evaluations of the individual. Moreover, it can weaken the most basic life skills such as setting goals, setting goals, and being able to hope. Lavalee and Campbell (1995) suggested that people interpret the impact of negative daily life events according to their relevance to their goals. Emmons (1986) also mentioned that affect and motivation play key roles to achieve personal goals or personal strivings. It can be said that refugees have emotion regulation difficulties when they

experience negative life events because of migration that they have negative emotions. So, they evaluate their whole life includes past, present and future timelines as negative because of their negative mood. Accordingly, they feel hopeless about the future and their psychological well-being decrease. The aim of this study is to examine whether emotional dysregulation and ontological well-being predict psychological well-being in refugees.

2. Method

2.1.Participants:

The participants of this study consisted of 323 (248 men, 75 women) refugees between the ages of 18-49. The mean age of the participants was 28.66 and the standard deviation was 7.05(see Table 1).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

		N	%
Gender	Women	248	76,8
	Men	75	23,2
	Total	323	

65 % of the participants attended elementary school, 22,9 % high school, 5,3 % associate degree, 5,9 % bachelor’s degree, 6% master degree education (see Table 2).

Table 2 Education Level

		N	%
Education Level	Primary School	211	65,3
	High School	74	22,9
	Undergraduate	17	5,3
	Bachelor's	19	5,9
	Master	2	,6
	Total	323	

25,1 % of the participants were have a job, 74,9% of them unemployed (see Table 3).

Table 3 Working Status

		N	%
Working Status	Unemployed	81	25,1
	Working	242	74,9
	Total	323	100,0

2.2.Measuring Tools

2.2.1. *Demographic Information Form*

This form was collected on intention to obtain demographic information such as gender, age, education level, immigration date and employment status of the participants

2.2.2. *Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale –Brief Form (DERS)*

The scale consists of 16 questions of 5-point Likert type. The Arabic form was adapted by Bjureberg et al. (2016). The internal consistency value was calculated as .91. The scale consists of five dimensions which are clarity, impulse, goals, non-acceptance and strategy. Internal consistency coefficient for this study was .93.

2.2.3. *Ontological Well-Being Scale (OWB)*

The scale was developed by Şimşek (2009) in order to measure one's life project in terms of past, present, and future. It consisted of 24 items of 5-point Likert type with four factors which are regret (past), nothingness, activation (today), and hope (future). Items 1, 3, and 8 were reverse coded. Internal consistencies for original scale were ranging from .82 to .87 for sub-factors. The overall score was .74. The internal consistency value was calculated as .66 for regret, as .83 for activation, as .85 for nothingness and as .99 for hope.

2.2.4. *Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB)*

Diener et al. (2010) was developed the scale which consists of 8 items with 7 points Likert scale to measure the well-being of individuals. The higher score indicates better mental health. The Arabic version of the scale was adopted by Zaidi et al. (2015) in which the internal consistency coefficient was determined as 0.92. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated as .98.

2.3.Process

Research model was correlational survey model. The data was analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics 24 and Lisrel 8.51 package programs in the study

2.4.Data Analysis

Percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation were used in the analysis of descriptive data.

The normality assumption regarding the variables of the study was evaluated with box-line graphs, branch-leaf graphs, Q-Q graph and data on skewness and kurtosis.

As Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) stated, normal distribution is accepted when the kurtosis and skewness coefficients are between +1.5 and -1.5. In this context, it was seen that the data were normally distributed and parametric analyzes were used. Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to analyze the relationships between variables. Moreover, Multiple Regression Analysis was applied to determine the predictors of psychological well-being.

3. Results

It was found that psychological well-being was negatively correlated with emotion regulation difficulty and positively correlated with ontological well-being (see Table 1).

Table 3 Correlations

Scales	1	2	3
1.PWB	-		
2.EMD	-.496*	-	
3.OWB	.598*	-.299*	-

Note: PWB: Psychological Well-Being; EMD: Emotional Dysregulation; OWB: Ontological Well-Being, $p < .05$

Ontological well-being and difficulty in emotional regulation together explain 46 % of psychological well-being (see Table 4).

Table 4 Linear Regression Analysis

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	4.470	5.049	-	.885	.377
EMD	-.389	.048	-.348	-8.095	.000
OWB	.812	.071	.494	11.496	.000

Note: PWB: Psychological Well-Being; EMD: Emotional Dysregulation; OWB: Ontological Well-Being; $p < .05$, $R = .684$ $R^2 = .468$ $F(2,316) = 139.103$ $p < .01^{**}$

4. Discussion

When the results of the research were examined, it was found that psychological well-being was negatively correlated with emotion regulation difficulty and positively correlated with ontological well-being. Ontological wellbeing and difficulty in emotional regulation together explain 46 % of psychological well-being.

Fazel et al. (2005) conducted a research in western countries with refugees and found that refugees have more tendency to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than an age-matched western population. It was supported that traumatic people have impaired ability to regulate their emotions compared to non-traumatic ones (Ehring & Quack, 2010; Bardeen, Kumpula, & Orcutt, 2013). It is known that migration is one of the traumatic situations and so, refugees may be especially more vulnerable to develop psychopathologies that are related with emotion regulation difficulties (Ehring & Quack, 2010; Weiss et al., 2012).

4.1. Emotion Regulation Difficulties and Psychological Well-Being

It was found that healthy emotion regulation has positive effect on both psychological (Fonagy, et al. 2002; Stern, 2004; Wei et al.,2005) and physiological health (John & Gross, 2004). However, difficulties in emotion regulation are related with psychological problems like, personality disorders, psychopathical symptoms and maladaptive behavior (American Psychological Association [APA], 1994; Conklin et al.,2006; Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Furthermore, research indicates that inhibition, suppression, and control of negative emotion are negatively related with psychological and physiological health (Gratz, 2007; Gross & John, 2003). Functional emotion regulation styles include awareness of feelings, processing the information about the salient negative experience, and recognition of the negative emotions that have positive relationship with social behaviors (Salovey et al.,1995); whereas difficulties in emotion regulation are related with psychopathologies like PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Koch et al.,2020). Likewise, the findings of this study also supported the hypothesis that when emotion regulation difficulties increase, psychological well-being decreases

4.2. Ontological Well-Being and Psychological Well-Being

Kocayoruk et al. (2018) defines ontological well-being as the individuals' life project that involves the past, the present and the future components and meaning or purpose of life. It was suggested that having meaning in life is correlated with finding purpose in life that has positive relationship with psychological well-being and optimal functioning (Brassai et al., 2011; Park & Gutierrez, 2012). Moreover, having a sense of meaning in life also decreases the stress level of people and increases the adaptation of them to the challenging situations (Park & Gutierrez, 2012). It can be thought that when ontological well-being that is characterized with meaning or purpose of life increases, psychological well-being increases. Likewise, this study supported that when ontological well-being increases, psychological well-being also increases. It can be thought that when ontological well-being that is characterized with meaning or purpose of life increases, psychological well-being increases.

Suggestions

As a result, it can be suggested that in clinical practices it can be useful to consider the person's life story and to re-evaluate his perspective on the story and to restore hope, as well as to build life purpose. On the other hand, short-term group work with refugees such as self-compassion and mindfulness may be beneficial in restoring psychological well-being. City halls can organize rehabilitative studies for refugees by making arrangements for free group work. In addition, an experimental study can be designed for the claim of this study which is the effect of self-compassion, one's view of its own life project and one's purpose of life. It

may also be suggested to examine the role of self-compassion and ontological well-being in the relationship between emotion regulation difficulties and PTSD and other psychopathological problems in other studies.

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