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PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY, EMOTIONAL REGULATION, AND WELL-BEING IN VARIOUS LIFE SITUATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

- Ability to act in a flexible manner seems to be an important indicator of health (Kashdan, 2010). Research shows that high psychological flexibility is associated with lower emotional exhaustion (Biron, van Veldhoven, 2012) due to applying emotional regulation techniques related to high emotional well-being (Brockman et al., 2016). However, it seems that this relation may be influenced by the character of the situations in which regulation occurs (Haines et al., 2016).
- The aim of the project was to analyze relations between psychological flexibility, situational suppression and reappraisal use, situational self-esteem, positivity, negativity, and mood in various contexts.

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

- 471 (79% female) students participated in the study. Data from 14 812 surveys were included in the analysis.
- The presented study was part of a larger investigation.
- The survey consisted of two phases. The first one required filling out online questionnaires (demographics, psychological flexibility) and the second one completing well-being and emotional regulation questionnaire on which participants were reminded by text messages six times a day.
- The study had been approved by the local ethical committee and at the end of the study, 15 randomly chosen participants received small gifts for their participation in the study.

MEASURES

Psychological flexibility

- Acceptance & Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II; Kleszcz, Dudek, Białaszek, Bond, & Ostaszewski, 2018).

Emotional regulation

- Suppression: „I controlled my emotions by keeping them to myself”.
- Reappraisal: „I controlled my emotions by changing the way I thought about the situation I was in”.

Well-being

- Mood: „How did you feel in this situation?”.
- Positivity: „I felt positive emotions (e.g. satisfaction, joy)”.
- Negativity: „I felt negative emotions (e.g. anger, sadness, anxiety)”.
- Self-esteem: „I had high self-esteem”.

Interaction with others

- „How many other people were you directly interacting with in this situation?”. Five categories: zero, one, two, three to four, five and more.

RESULTS

- Multilevel analysis was conducted using the Hierarchical Linear Modeling software (HLM, version 7.01).
- Mood and self-esteem scores were combined by converting each measure to the percent of maximum possible score to form an overall well-being index.

MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS

- Psychological flexibility was a significant predictor of situational positivity, negativity, mood, self-esteem, and suppression use.
- Interaction with others moderated relations between psychological flexibility, emotional regulation, and well-being. The number of people involved in the activities tends to increase the strength of the relationship between psychological flexibility and the situational positivity, self-esteem, suppression, and reappraisal use.
- Psychological flexibility moderated the relation between suppression use and well-being by weakening the relationship between those variables.

Table 1

Predicting emotional regulation and well-being measures from psychological flexibility.

	Positivity	Negativity	Mood	Self-esteem	Suppression	Reappraisal
Day	-0.02* (0.01)	0.18*** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)
Hour	0.06*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)
Psychological flexibility	-0.14*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.02)	-0.15*** (0.02)	-0.19*** (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
R ²	0.12	0.19	0.12	0.08	0.01	0.001

Note. Standardized betas with standard errors presented in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2

Moderation effects of the interaction with others on the relationships between psychological flexibility and emotional regulation and well-being measures.

	Positivity	Negativity	Mood	Self-esteem	Suppression	Reappraisal
Psychological flexibility x Interaction with others	0.11*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
R ²	0.09	0.16	0.09	0.08	0.001	-0.001

Note. Standardized betas with standard errors presented in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 3

Moderation effects of the psychological flexibility on the relationships between emotional regulation measures and well-being.

	Suppression	Reappraisal
Emotional regulation measure x Psychological flexibility	-0.11*** (0.02)	0.004 (0.02)
R ²	0.13	0.12

Note. Standardized betas with standard errors presented in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.001$

CONCLUSIONS

- People with a higher level of psychological flexibility experience more positivity and less negativity, rate their mood and self-esteem higher and to a lesser degree use suppression in everyday situations.
- Relations between psychological flexibility and situational positivity, self-esteem, suppression, and reappraisal use become stronger during activities undertaken in the presence of other people, which confirms the importance of situational context in predicting behaviors.
- The effect of psychological flexibility on the relation between suppression use and well-being suggests that for people with low psychological flexibility suppression use may be not associated with higher well-being.
- Obtained results broaden the knowledge about psychological flexibility relationships with emotional regulation and well-being, and indicate the usefulness of developing this trait through psychological interventions.



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