Abstract

To cope with challenges, some people spontaneously boost the self by affirming their core values; this is known as spontaneous self-affirmation. The current study was designed to test the relationships between individual differences in spontaneous self-affirmation (SSA; Harris et al., 2010) and other ways of coping with challenges and threats (e.g., emotion regulation strategies, coping skills). Seventy-seven participants completed an online survey that included the SSA measure, Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (two facets: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression; Gross, et al., 2005), Coping Skills (Hamby et al., 2013), Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003), and Trait Self-Control (Tangney et al., 2004). SSA was significantly and positively correlated with cognitive reappraisal, coping skills, and trait self-control. Because the SSA is a new measure, this study adds evidence that spontaneously self-affirming is related to but distinct from other ways of coping with threats.

Introduction

The general self-affirmation theory is the idea that humans have a response to threats through cognitive processes, physiological adaptations, and behavior (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Research suggests that spontaneous self-affirmation can be associated with better mental health and physical well-being (Emmanuel et al., 2018). The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between spontaneous self-affirmation and emotion regulation by surveying individuals on concepts such as, suppression and reappraisal, coping skills, and mindfulness. The item that measures spontaneous self-affirmation, known as the Spontaneous Self-Affirmation Measure (SSAM; Harris et al., 2019) was only published in 2019 which limits the amount of research that can be drawn from previous research on the self-affirmation theory.

Methods

Participants

Data was collected from people 18 years of age and older (N=77, M=20.61, SD=6.3). There were 65 women (M=18.5, SD=11.3) and 11 men (M=41.9, SD=11.2). The study was conducted as an online study using SurveyMonkey (survey and data collection website). The results collected in this study support ideas from previous research that spontaneous self-affirmation can be associated with cognitive reappraisal, coping, and self-control. There were several limitations in this study that limit the conclusions drawn. The data is currently still being collected, which could alter the current results. The SSAM is a new measure so there is a limited amount of research to compare this study and its results to. Future research should assess the trends among gender, as this study noticed differences in results from male participants to female participants.

Results

- The more people self-affirmed the more they used cognitive reappraisal as an emotion regulation (See Figure 1)
- The more people self-affirmed the more they used positive coping mechanisms (See Figure 2)
- Suppression was not correlated with self-affirmation
- Mindfulness is positively correlated with self-affirmation but the correlation was not significant
- The more people self-affirmed the higher the rate of self-control (See Figure 3)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>-49</td>
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<td>-80</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

This study was an exploratory study to observe correlational trends in individuals between spontaneous self-affirmation and emotion regulation.

References

- Fiona Buckley, Leah Weeks, Dr. Adrienne Crowell
- Sacred Heart University

Acknowledgements and Contact information

Fiona Buckley and Leah Weeks are undergraduate students at Sacred Heart University. They will be graduating May of 2021.

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