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IS THE FEELING OF REGRET RELATED TO THE ADOPTION OF PROTECTIVE BEHAVIORS TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19?

Since the appearance of **COVID-19**, the governments of numerous countries have put in place **preventive measures** to limit its spread and its consequences. In order for these measures to be efficient, it is vital that a large number of citizens choose to respect them. **Decision making** has been shown to be influenced by socioemotional processes, including **regret avoidance** –people tend to avoid the decisions they would subsequently regret¹⁻²⁻³. Our aim is to investigate the influence of regret experience on the attitude regarding the protective behaviors aimed to limit the spread of Covid-19 and on the reported adoption of these behaviors, from adolescence to adulthood.

METHOD

Participants : 410 participants aged from 14 to 58 years.

109 adolescents (14 to 19 years, Mage = 16.85, SD = 0.85), 197 young adults (20 to 25 years, Mage = 21.76, SD = 1.29) and 104 middle aged adults (26 to 58 years, Mage = 40.27, SD = 6.98).

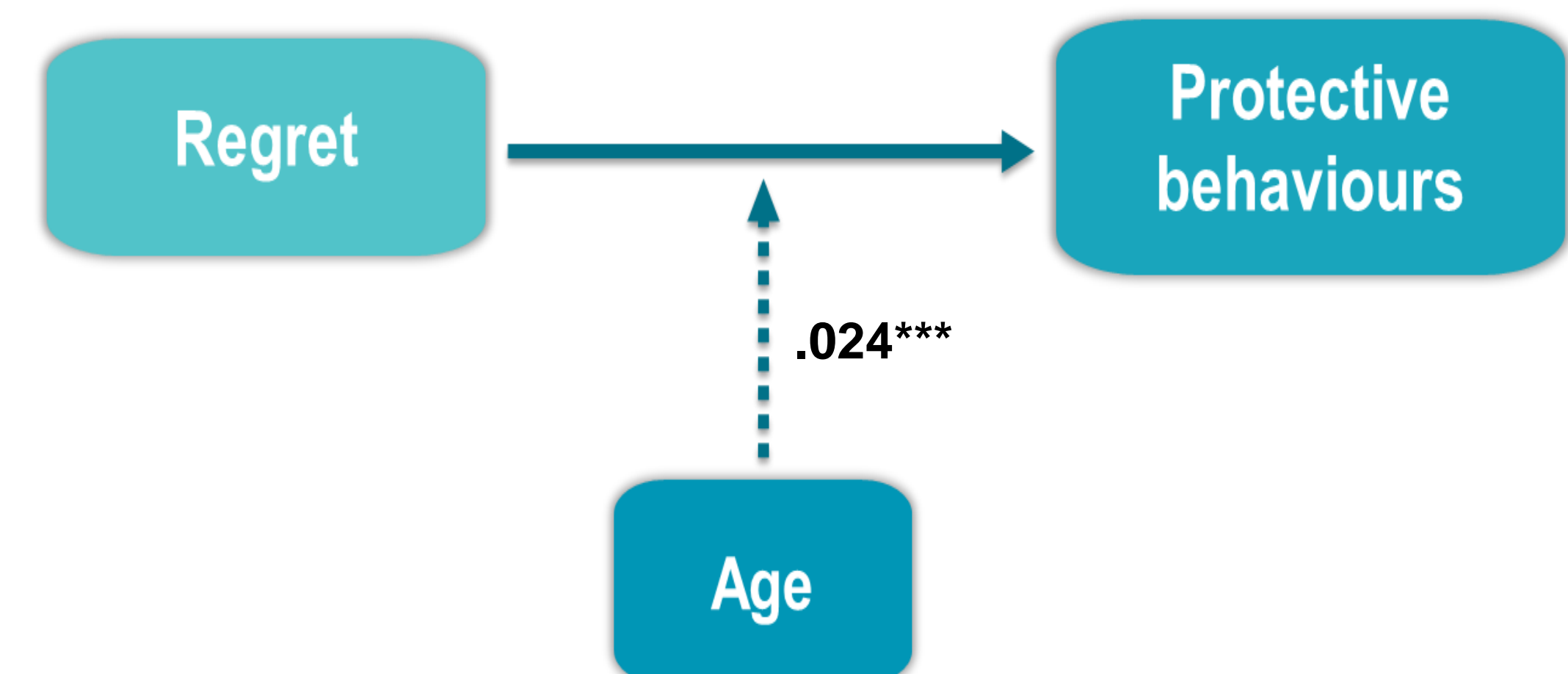
Method : Participants completed a **30-items questionnaire** to report their **attitudes towards protective behaviors** to limit the spread of Covid-19, their engagement in **protective behaviors**, and their **regret experience** when they did not engage in protective behaviors.

The **positive attitude toward protective behaviors** was assessed with 4 items on a **10-point Likert scale**. E.g. "How important they think it is to reduce the spread of the virus".

Participants indicated how much they do adopt five kinds of **protective behaviors**, with 15 items on 10-point Likert scales. E.g. "How much they do respect each of these behaviors".

Regret experience and anticipation was assessed with 6 items on a 10-point Likert scale like. E.g. "How much would they regret being infected with Covid-19 due to noncompliance of barrier procedures".

RESULTS : MODERATION ANALYSIS



***p < 0.001

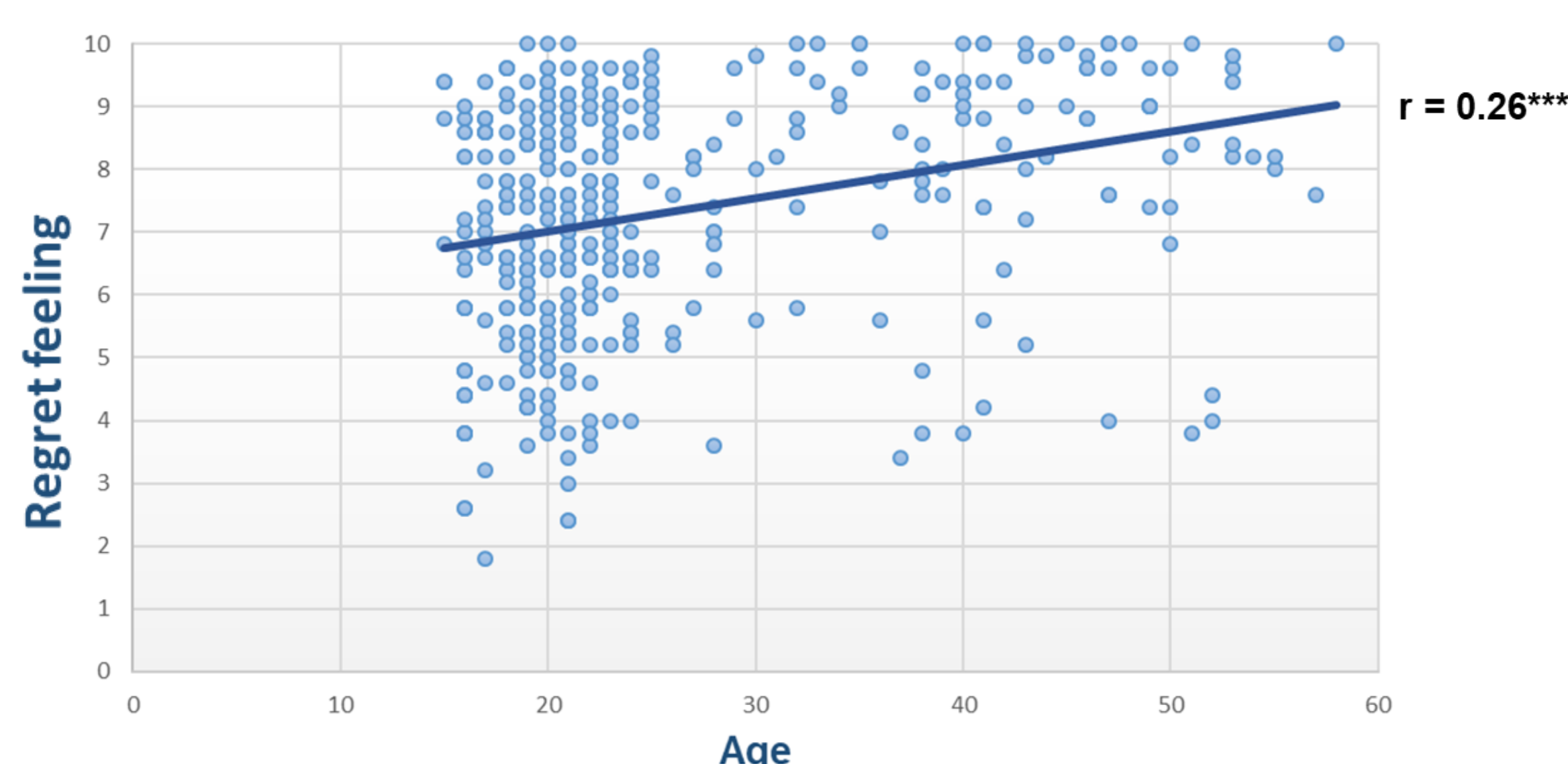
Figure 2: Model of the indirect effects of feeling of regret on protective behaviors supposedly moderated by age.

RESULTS : VARIABLES CORRELATIONS

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Age	26.19 (8.45)	-	0.24***	0.34***	0.26***
2. Positive attitudes towards protective behaviours	8.14 (1.19)		-	0.63***	0.62***
3. Compliance with protective behaviours	6.70 (1.38)			-	0.65***
4. Feeling of regret	7.19 (2.07)				-

***p < 0.001

Table 1: Pearson's r correlation coefficients among measures used in the study.



***p < 0.001

Figure 1: Feeling of regret based on age and based on compliance with protective behaviors.

RESULTS

Participant age was positively related with positive attitudes towards protective behaviors ($r = .24, p < .001$), with the compliance with protective behaviors ($r = .34, p < .001$) and with the feeling of regret ($r = .26, p < .001$) (**Table 1, Figure 1**).

The **feeling of regret** was positively related with positive attitudes towards protective behaviors ($r = .62, p < .001$) and with compliance with protective behaviors ($r = .62, p < .001$) (**Table 1, Figure 1**).

Compliance with protective behaviors was highly positively related with positive attitudes towards protective behaviors (**Table 1**).

Moderator variable : To investigate the link between regret feeling and protective behaviors, a moderation analysis was performed. The outcome variable for analyses was the engagement in protective behaviors. The predictor variable for the analysis was the feeling of regret. The moderator variable for the analysis was the age. The indirect effect of the age on the protective behaviors was found to be statistically significant [effect = .024, 95% C.I. (.35, .44)] (**Figure 2**).

CONCLUSION

These results suggest that people with positive attitude towards protective behaviors appear to be more compliant with protective behaviors and to express and anticipate more regret.

In addition, regret contributes to a higher compliance with preventive measures and thus with the reduction of Covid-19-related risk-taking.

Finally, the relation between regret feeling and protective behaviors appears to be modulated by age.

The older people are, the more they seem to anticipate a high feeling of regret and the more they seem to respect protective behaviors.

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3. Sandberg & Conner (2008). British journal of social psychology, 47(4), 589-606. doi:10.1348/014466607X258704