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Life satisfaction and emotional regulation in aging : temporal perspective and effect of gender.

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Introduction: Paradoxically, older people report higher levels of life satisfaction than adults under 65 (Urry & Gross, 2010). For some authors, this finding can be explained by the emotional regulation strategies adopted by seniors. Gross and John (2003) postulate that it is the greater use of cognitive reappraisal (though more cognitively costly) and the lesser recourse to expressive suppression that enable access to greater life satisfaction. At the same time, motivational theory postulates that an increasingly narrow temporal perspective would induce the use of more efficient strategies (Carstensen et al., 1999). However, the roles of gender and perception of future time remain to be clarified.

Issues in this study:

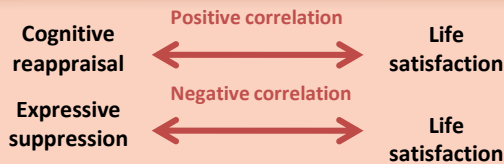
- Does gender influence life satisfaction and emotional regulation strategies in the elderly?
- Do gender and perception of future time influence the emotional regulation of older people, and thus their life satisfaction?

Hypothesis :

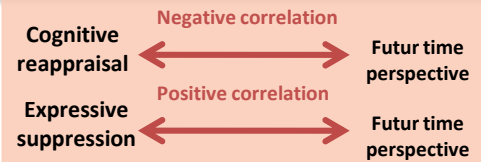
H1

- Life satisfaction : $m > f$
- Expressive suppression : $m > f$
- Cognitive reappraisal : $m = f$

H2



H3



Méthod :

Tools

- * « Emotion Regulation Questionnaire » (ERQ) Gross & John (1998 ; 2003)
- * « Satisfaction With Life » Diener et al. (1985).
- * « Future Time Perspective » (FTP) Carstensen & Lang, (1996)

Randomized order. Individual Interviews

N = 59

28 males and 31 females aged 65 to 80 (M=70,51 SD=3,98)

Controlled variables

- * absence of recent pathology or disability
- * widowhood status for men
- * depressive symptoms
- * perceived social support

Results

Life satisfaction

X $m = f$

Student t test $p=0,17$

Expressive suppression

X $m = f$

Student t test $p=0,61$

Cognitive reappraisal

V $m = f$

Student t test $p=0,61$

Cognitive reappraisal

X Negative correlation
Pearson test $p < .01$ $r = -.34$

Life satisfaction

Expressive suppression

X No correlation
Pearson test $p = .07$ $r = -.23$

Life satisfaction

Futur time perspective

X No correlation
Pearson test $p = 0,12$; $r = -.2$ (cognitive reappraisal)

$p = 0,5$; $r = .09$ (expressive suppression)

Emotional regulation

Conclusion : Gender and temporal perspective are not inter-individual differences to be considered in order to better understand the role of emotional regulation in the age paradox. It is the use of compensatory strategies that enables us to continue to be satisfied with our lives despite advancing age.

Limitations : This study was restricted to psychosocial models and self-assessments to examine regulation strategies.

Openness: Understanding the specifics of emotional regulation remains a difficult undertaking. However, effective management of negative moods in old age remains a priority, and would seem to benefit from the use of innovative technologies (Virtual Reality, Therapeutic Trainer, Magic Table).

Bibliography:

- * Carstensen, L. L., Isaacowitz, D. M., & Charles, S. T. (1999). Taking time seriously: a theory of socioemotional selectivity. *American psychologist*, 54(3), 165.
- * Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 85(2), 348.
- * Urry, H. L., & Gross, J. J. (2010). Emotion regulation in older age. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19(6), 352-357.

Contrary to expectations, a restricted temporal perspective correlates with low-cost cognitive strategies.