

Original Article

The Relationship of Cognitive Emotion Regulation and Integrative Self-knowledge with Conformity

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Abstract

Introduction: conformity is the change of behavior or attitude influenced by real or imagined presence of others. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between cognitive emotion, integrative self-knowledge and conformity among young people in Red Crescent Society in West Azerbaijan.

Methods: Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and hierarchical regression analysis. 260 members of Red Crescent Society in West Azerbaijan were selected through random cluster sampling method. Participants completed group conformity L-72 (GCL-72), cognitive emotion regulation (CERQ) and integrative self-knowledge (ISQ) questionnaires.

Results: The results showed there was a negative significant relationship between integrative self-knowledge and adaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation with conformity. ($p < 0.01$). There was a significant negative relationship between integrative self-knowledge and conformity ($p < 0.01$) and). There was also a significant negative relationship between integrative self-knowledge and conformity ($p < 0.01$). The results of hierarchical regression analysis showed that integrative self-knowledge and adaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation could explain 23% of conformity variance significantly ($p < 0.01$) and Partial Beta Coefficient of integrative self-knowledge ($P < 0.01$) and adaptive strategies ($P < 0.01$) are respectively (-0.074) and (0.156).

Conclusion: Overall the results showed integrative self-knowledge and adaptive strategies of cognitive emotion predict conformity

Declaration of Interest: None.

Key words: Conformity, Integrative self-knowledge, Cognitive emotion regulation, Social influence.

Introduction

Social influence encompasses a wide range of areas in which individuals decision are influenced by others (1, 2, 3), and it includes conformity, obedience, and compliance, in which individuals change their

attitudes and behaviors under the influence of others' view (4). There are different definitions of conformity, for example, conformity is a change in behavior and attitude under the pressure of real or imagined presence of groups (5), and in the other definition, conformity is giving up to group

pressures when the group does not directly request the individual to be matched with the group norms (6, 7, 8). This phenomenon makes life more adaptive for the person, but it can also have disturbing outcomes; for example, those who conform more to others are more prone to high-risk behaviors like addiction (9). Also, chaotic social conditions and charismatic personality can lead to the phenomenon of terrorism through conformity (10, 11). There are also historical examples in which conformity has led to inappropriate decision-making and has created hazardous events such as the defeat of the US Army in the Bay of Pigs and the Vietnam War (12).

Conformity, in general, is divided into two types of normative and informative. In information conformity, the action of a person depends on the actions of others because he thinks that the others have a correct answer to the situation, but in normative conformity people conform to the group because of social harmony and prevention from rejection (13, 14). Researches have shown that many inner factors, such as task interest (15), self-esteem (16), personality factors (17), commitment and self-engagement (18), cognitive hardiness and self-control (19) have effect on conformity. In addition to the factors mentioned, another inner factor that can affect conformity is cognitive emotion regulation.

Years of research shows that emotion regulation plays an important role in adapting to stressful life events (20). Cognitive emotion regulation is a cognitive approach to cope with emotion triggering information (21, 22, 23). Various cognitive strategies are used to deal with stressful situations and experiences to maintain mental and emotional health, which includes self-blame, blaming others, rumination, catastrophizing, putting into perspective, positive refocusing, acceptance, positive reappraisal and refocus on planning. Some of these strategies are adaptive and some are maladaptive. (24). Researches implicitly show that high emotion regulation can reduce conformity and emotion is generally recognized as an effective factor on conformity (14, 25). Although the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation and conformity has not been investigated, but

according to a research by Duo, Shen, Zhao, & Gong (26), in emergency situations, individuals who control and regulate their emotions with difficulty are more likely to conform to the group norms. High emotional regulation makes it possible for a person to use appropriate coping strategies in situations where the risk of substance abuse is high, he perceives the unwanted pressure of peers and resists more to the use of drugs (27), deals with the phenomena of being victimized by peers (28) and refuses a cigarette offer from a friend (29).

Another inner variable that appears to be related to conformity is integrative self-knowledge that refers to the active efforts of individuals to integrate their experience in past, present and the future in order to better adaptation and self-empowerment (30, 31, 32). There is no research investigating the relationship between integrative self-knowledge and conformity, but various researches investigated the relationship between self-consciousness based on Duval, & Wicklund (33) theory and conformity (34, 35). Self-consciousness is divided into two dimensions of private self-consciousness and public self-consciousness. In private self-consciousness, one focuses on his inner and personal aspects and, in public self-consciousness, the person sees himself as a social stimulus, and is more concerned about his social appearance (36). Oshimi (15) concluded that Japanese students in a high group pressure, with high public self-consciousness, showed greater conformity, and by increasing self-esteem, conformity decreased. In Froming, & Carver's (37) research, people with higher private self-consciousness were less likely to comply, and subjects with higher public self-consciousness were more likely to show compliance. In a study by Davis (38), those who had high self-consciousness conformed more in judging the future fissionability future than those in the group of judgments relating to the present fissionability. In contrast, people who low self-consciousness had conformed equally in both groups. Integrative Self-knowledge can also be a good predictor of emotion regulation. According to Ghorbani et al. (41), Integrative

Self- knowledge is a very important factor in self-regulation. In Faraji, Lavasani and Khalili's research (39), Integrative Self-knowledge is a mediator between the basic psychological needs and the cognitive emotion regulation. In a research by Ghorbani, Cunningham, and Watson (40) Integrative Self-knowledge has a negative relationship with perceived stress. Ghorbani, Bing, Watson, and Davidson (41) stated that experiential and reflective self-knowledge in a close link with each other can control and regulate behaviors, emotions, and thoughts. This is because of deep understanding of personal problems and momentary awareness of inner states which have constructive effect and reduces anxiety and annoying thoughts. In other researches, In addition to Integrative Self- knowledge construct, self-awareness and its relationship with emotion regulation and other emotional consequences have been investigated. (42, 43, 44, 45, 46).

Altogether, due to the large negative effects of conformity in different situations, such as addiction, terrorism, corrupt group decision making examination about conformity seems necessary, so by determining the effective inner factors on it, destructive effects of conformity decreases and prevent the social deviances affected by the group norms. Given that, to our best knowledge, there is no study, which exactly investigated it, and the research literature just shows the implicit relationship between the variables, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between Integrative Self- knowledge and cognitive emotion regulation with conformity.

Method

A descriptive-correlational study was conducted on 230 young volunteers of West Azarbaijan Red Crescent Society. The statistical population consists of young volunteers of West Azarbaijan Red Crescent Society. The sample participants are selected by cluster sampling from 13 cities of all the cities of West Azarbaijan province. Twenty people were randomly selected in each city and the questionnaires were distributed among the young volunteers.

Tools

Group Conformity L-72 Scale (GCL-72):

This questionnaire is developed by Lotfi (47), which can measure the degree of conformity in real life. The items that the subjects respond to do not relate to an artificial situation, but they are the representations of behaviors and beliefs that is experienced in a long period of time and in real groups. In this questionnaire, measuring conformity is not like the laboratory, which is limited to a specific situation. In answering the questionnaire's items, it is not necessary for the subject to accept one of the opposite answers (acceptance or rejection of group influence) but the subject can answer in a continuum of four choices. In general, it can be said that "conformity is not following the all-or-none law" so that one can't be regarded as complete conformist or the opposite. Given that in L-72 scale, options are (I disagree, I almost agree, I agree, I completely agree), there is no neutral answer for option (I do not know) and the score is zero for option "I disagree". The score obtained from this Questionnaire just shows the conformity rate. Unlike other questionnaires which are in Likert scale, the scores of this questionnaire is not comprehended differently so the subjects can be compared and statistical indices can be applied for analyzing the obtained data. The cut-off point of this questionnaire is 87.43, which means a lower score indicates lack of conformity and higher scores shows complete conformity. This cut-off point was calculated using standard error and confidence interval, which the upper limit of confidence interval is considered as the cut-off point (48). The reliability of this questionnaire was measured in Shamsaei et al (48), Javanmard & Gharegozlo (49) And Abedi et al. (19) studies; and the Cronbach's alpha were 0.91, 0.90 and 0.89, respectively. In this research, Cronbach's alpha was 0.95.

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire:

This questionnaire is based on the main CERQ questionnaire and is developed by Garnefski et al. (50) in the Netherlands. This is a multi-dimensional questionnaire designed to identify the strategies of cognitive coping after experiencing Negative events. Unlike other coping questionnaires that clearly do not

differentiate between individual thoughts and actual actions, this questionnaire assesses individual thoughts after encountering a negative experience or traumatic events (51). The questionnaire is a self-report tool with 18 items. The implementation of this questionnaire is very easy and can be used both for normal people and for clinical populations. The questionnaire consists of nine subscales. The subscales evaluate 9 cognitive strategies of self-blame, blaming others, rumination, catastrophizing, putting into perspective, positive refocusing, acceptance, positive reappraisal and refocus on planning. The scale range is from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Each subscale consists of 2 items. The total score of each subscale is obtained by summing the score of the items. So the range of scores for each subscale will be between 2 and 10. High scores in each subscale indicate the greater use of this strategy in stressful and negative events (52). In Garnefski, Rieffe, Jellesma, Terwogt, & Kraaij (53) study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the nine subscales of the questionnaire was reported to be between 0.62 and 0.80. In Iran, Hasani (51) also examined the validity of this scale by measuring the correlation between subscales, the correlations between the subscales were applied and the correlations ranged from 0.73 to 0.88 Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure these coefficients for the subscales.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was from 0.68 to 0.86. In this research, Cronbach's alpha was 79.

Integrative Self- knowledge Questionnaire (ISQ): This scale was developed by Ghorbani and et al (30), which consists of 12 items that measure both aspects of experiential and reflective self-knowledge in a coherent manner and respondents should answer in 5-point Likert scale (Largely untrue to Largely true). Ghorbani and et al. (30) reported that Cronbach's alpha coefficient on three Iranian and American samples were 0.82 in the first Iranian sample, 0.81 in the second Iranian sample and 0.81 in the third Iranian sample respectively, in the first Americans sample 0.81, the second American sample 0.78 and in the third American sample 0.74. In this research, Cronbach's alpha was 78.

Findings

230 young volunteers participated in this study. 51.1% of whom were male and 48.9% were female. 84% of the participants were single and 16% were married. 35.1% had a diploma or under diploma education, 17 % had an associate degree, 39.4% had a bachelor's degree and 8.5% had a master's degree. The languages of 68.6% of the subjects are Turkish, 28.2% are Kurdish and 2/7% speaks in Persian.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Conformity, Integrative Self- knowledge and Cognitive Emotion Regulation dimensions

Research variables	Dimensions of variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Conformity	Conformity	74.12	22.43
Integrative Self- knowledge	Integrative Self- knowledge	41.49	7.26
Cognitive Emotion Regulation	Adaptive strategies	30.58	7.16
	Maladaptive strategies	20.13	5.07

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between Conformity, Integrative self-knowledge, and

cognitive emotion regulation, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Conformity, Integrative Self-Knowledge and Cognitive Emotion Regulation dimensions

Variable		1	2	3	4
1	Conformity	-			
2	Integrative Self- knowledge	-0.29**	-		
3	Adaptive strategies	-0.39**	0.04	-	
4	Maladaptive strategies	-0.06	-0.32**	0.37**	-

According to Table 2, Pearson correlation results showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between integrative self-knowledge and conformity ($p < 0.01$). There is also a negative and significant relationship between Adaptive strategies and conformity ($p < 0.01$), and there is no

relationship between Non-adaptive strategies and conformity

In order to predict conformity based on integrative self-knowledge and cognitive emotion regulation, Hierarchical regression was used, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Hierarchical regression analysis of conformity based on of integrative self-knowledge and cognitive emotion regulation

Model	Variable	B	STE	Beta	T	Sig	R	R ²	R ² Adjusted
1	Constant	907.111	80.6	-	44.16	0.001	39.0	15.0	15.0
2	Adaptive strategies	23.-1	21.0	395.0	701.-5	0.001			
	Constant	76.145	50.10	-	13.88	0.001	48.0	0.07	0.07
	Adaptive strategies	199.-1	208.0	383.-0	77.-5	0.001			
	Integrative self-knowledge	84.-0	205.	273.-0	11.-4	0.001			

As shown in Table 3, the results of Hierarchical regression analysis indicate that integrative self- knowledge and adaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation could predict conformity significantly. Partial Beta Coefficient of integrative self- knowledge ($P < 0.01$) and adaptive strategies ($P < 0.01$) are respectively -0.074 and 0.156. Overall integrative self- knowledge and adaptive strategies could explain 23% of the conformity variance.

Discussion and conclu Conformity is like a double-edged sword so it can lead to better adaptation to the environment, on the other hand, it may have devastating effects on society and the person can commit crimes and behaves antisocially according to the values of the group that he would not imagine doing them alone.

Therefore, studying the factors affecting conformity is a step towards better understanding of it.

The results of this study indicate that integrative self-knowledge predicts conformity, in which by increasing integrative self-knowledge, conformity decreases. This finding is consistent with Froming and Carver (37) and Oshimi (15) Briggs (34); Wiekens, & Stapel, (35) researches, which Duval, & Wicklund (33) self-consciousness construct where used, and private self-consciousness is very similar to integrative self-knowledge, and this dimension has a negative relationship with conformity. Wiekens, and Stapel (35) concluded the more one gets aware of himself, the less conformity he shows. Briggs (34) and Froming and Carver (37) state that private self-consciousness reduces conformity. In contrast, his finding is inconsistent with Davis (38) which reported that those who had high self-consciousness conformed more in

judgment of future fashionability. He believed self-focused attention is related to an increase in susceptibility to social influence in conformity situations. To explain this finding, it can be said that individuals with higher self-knowledge are more aware of their moment-to-moment psychological processes and analyze their individual experiences through higher cognitive functions (30, 54) and possibly, based on their perception about themselves, they behave according to their own perspectives and values and pay attention to their present experience in an environment that required conformity. In other words, they have not gone under the influence of the dominant atmosphere.

There is also a negative and significant relationship between adaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation and conformity which is consistent with Gardner et al. (28), Trinidad et al. (29), and Trinidad and Johnson (27). Duo et al (26) reported in emergency situations, individuals who control and regulate their emotions with difficulty are more likely to conform to the group norm. Trinidad & Johnson (27) state that high emotional regulation make it possible for a person to use appropriate coping strategies in situations where the risk of substance abuse is high. To explain this finding, the better an individual regulates his emotions, the more adjustment he shows in stressful situations (24). Since a person in conformity situations experiences distress emotions, on way to deal with the phenomenon of conformity is to focus on emotions and decrease his anxiety (55). Therefore when an individual who applies adaptive strategies, he considers the distressful conformity situation as an opportunity and uses problem-focused strategies to regulate his emotions and conquer the conformity problem.

Conclusion

Considering the findings of this research and earlier studies, it seems that high self-knowledge and adaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation can reduce conformity. According to the literature and the results of this study, adaptive strategies and integrative self-knowledge are good inner determinants of conformity because it can predict and explain

some changes of conformity. So learning adaptive strategies specially focus on planning which is similar to problem solving can lead a person to be an active problem solver in distress conformity environment and improving self-knowledge skills results in knowing more aspects of his personality, emotion and cognition and it helps decide better in conformity pressure.

In general, it seems that inner variables could have great effects on conformity. In previous researches, many inner factors, such as task interest (15), self-esteem (16), personality factors (17), commitment and self-engagement (18), cognitive hardiness and self-control (19) had effect on conformity. These vast researches show the importance of inner determinants in decreasing/increasing of conformity. So it is suggested that teaching self-awareness skills and adaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation in media and educational settings could help prevent individuals from conforming to the wrong values of the group. Making TV programs and holding workshops for people especially adolescents and young people who experience peer pressure can help them decide better and regulate themselves in conformity situations. It is also suggested that cognitive variables could relate to conformity and can be investigated in other researches, because Cognitive emotion regulation is a cognitive variable besides being an emotional variable.

The present study, due to its novelty among Iranian and even foreign samples, requires more repetition in different populations and need more experimental supports. The research sample (young volunteers of Red Crescent Society in Azerbaijan province) and the type of research (correlational) make some limitations for the generalization of the findings, interpretations, and making cause and effect conclusions

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