



Emotion regulation in eating disorders: Measurement, latent profiles, intraindividual processes, and treatment

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Introduction: Eating disorders are severe psychiatric conditions associated with long illness duration, significant impact on quality of life, and high mortality. Based on problems with low remission and high relapse rates, there is a need to improve both assessment and treatment by exploring transdiagnostic processes that may underpin the psychopathology. One such process of interest is emotion dysregulation.

Aims: The aim of this thesis was to advance the understanding of emotion dysregulation in individuals with eating disorders by addressing identified gaps of knowledge. Specifically, it aimed to psychometrically examine a commonly used emotion dysregulation measurement (Study I), identify clinically meaningful subgroups based on emotion dysregulation (Study II), explore intraindividual emotion dynamic processes (Study III), and examine the effects of a novel emotion regulation intervention (Study IV).

Methods: The four studies recruited adult participants with eating disorders from psychiatric outpatient units in Sweden. Studies I and II used a large sample of 857 individuals drawn from the Swedish Stepwise clinical database. In Study I, the factor structure and psychometric properties of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) were assessed. Study II used factor mixture modeling to classify eating disorder patients into latent subgroups based on their emotion regulation difficulties. Study III recruited 42 individuals with eating disorders from psychiatric outpatient units and explored several aspects of emotion dynamics using intensive daily diary data in a measurement burst design, analyzed with dynamic structural equation modeling. Study IV recruited 12 individuals with eating disorders from

psychiatric outpatient units in Östergötland to a replicated single-case experimental design study and evaluated both the feasibility of a novel internet-delivered emotion regulation intervention, as well as the added treatment effect of emotion regulation interventions in eating disorder treatment including common interventions aimed at normalized eating.

Clinical implications: Overall, the findings further support the central role of emotion dysregulation in eating disorder pathology and add novel, nuanced insights into specific emotion regulation difficulties within this population.

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