

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Journal of Adolescence

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jado

The process of self-regulation in adolescents: A narrative approach



Kelly Conover LCSW, MA *, Colette Daiute Ed.D

The Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Ave, 6th Fl, New York, NY 10016, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 August 2016
Received in revised form 17 March 2017
Accepted 18 March 2017
Available online 31 March 2017

Keywords:

Self-regulation
Emotion regulation
Adolescent development
High-risk setting
Narrative

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study utilized a narrative approach to explore the process of self-regulation in adolescents and to examine the functions of various relational genres on psychological state and context expressions in this process. Nineteen participants, who live in high-risk settings were recruited from a youth development and life skills program located at an urban public high school in the United States. The goal of this project is to craft a process method for research and practice on adolescents' self-regulation while providing evidence for self-regulation being a complex process. This research uses an exploratory study design with a narrative approach, utilizing text message based activities in the method. Findings from the plot analysis suggest that for adolescents, the process of self-regulation begins as highly emotional and then becomes a more emotionally and cognitively balanced process. In addition, adolescents utilize different strategies to resolve conflict situations across different contexts and relational genres.

© 2017 The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

An adolescent is sitting in a public high school classroom when his classmate intentionally kicks his chair while the teacher has her back to the class. This simple act of a classmate kicking his chair has the ability to set off a range of thoughts, feelings and behaviors for the adolescent. While the adolescent may be knowledgeable about the self-regulation strategies he could use in his reaction to the situation, how the adolescent self-regulates, or modulates his thoughts, emotions and behaviors, involves more than only strategy knowledge (Károly, 1993). Previous incidents and hostility between the adolescent and his classmate may evoke immediate physical or verbal retaliation while a lack of relationship may result in no response at all. Because this situation occurred in the classroom, the adolescent may decide not to give an aggressive response, motivated by the desire to succeed academically. However, leaving the room to “cool down”, which is typically identified as a positive self-regulation strategy, may not be appropriate if the adolescent will be disciplined by his teacher for walking out and subsequently identified as having poor self-regulation. Therefore, self-regulation is more complex than having knowledge of self-regulation strategies and using them. The context of the situation and the relationship with the characters involved are also factors in self-regulation as not all strategies work in the same way across all situations.

According to Steinberg (2014) “the capacity for self-regulation is probably the single most important contributor to achievement, mental health, and social success” (p. 16). Researchers have reported a relationship between adolescent self-

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: kellyaconover@gmail.com (K. Conover), CDaiute@gc.cuny.edu (C. Daiute).

regulation and adult outcomes, highlighting the impact self-regulation has on academic achievement, creating healthy relationships, maintaining a job and positive mental health (Mischel, 2014; Tough, 2012). In addition, the available literature indicates that adolescents living in high-risk settings are at risk for high school dropout, poor psychological functioning and lack of positive relationships, all of which are associated with self-regulation (Silk, Steinberg, & Morris, 2003; Tough, 2012). High-risk settings are defined as settings where experiences of trauma, family conflict, community violence and economic difficulty are prevalent (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2004). Adolescents living in high-risk settings are often presented with situations that call for regulation of emotions, cognitions and behaviors, yet these contexts are not ideal for building these skills (Gilligan, 2000; Gross, 2002). Regardless of setting, adolescence is a developmental period when risk-taking, decision making and interpersonal relationships are significant and play important roles for long term successes and failures (Steinberg, 2009). Therefore, an understanding of the adolescent self-regulation process is imperative to be able to support all adolescents, especially those living in high-risk settings, as they navigate experiences unique to their developmental period. The process of self-regulation is defined as the actions or lack of actions taken to use strategies of self-regulation.

1.1. Self-regulation assessment

To assess self-regulation, the current literature typically uses standardized measures, observations and lab-based tasks. Standardized measures, such as the Adolescent Self-Regulatory Inventory (ASRI), ask questions, such as “I can’t get started if I’m not interested,” with Likert-type responses ranging from “not true at all for me” to “really true for me.” Scores on these measures reflect participants’ self-regulation skill with higher scores reflecting greater ability to self-regulate (Moilanen, 2007). Self-regulation skill is also frequently assessed through lab-based tasks. Flanker Tasks, computerized tests used to assess response inhibition, have been designed to measure of self-regulation (Spreen, Strauss, & Sherman, 2006). In addition, observations are a common method used to measure self-regulation, typically self-regulated learning or self-regulation in the classroom (Ponitz, McClelland, Matthews, & Morrison, 2009). These measures frequently involve observation of children engaged in specific activities, such as the Head Toes Knees Shoulders task in Tominey and McClelland’s (2011) study on behavioral self-regulation.

1.2. Background and framework

Much of the literature focuses on the antecedents and consequences of self-regulation, naming poverty and poor attachment as risk factors and adult modeling of self-regulation strategies and early intervention as protective factors (Bernier, Beauchamp, Carlson, & Lalonde, 2015; Tough, 2012). The literature is broad when it comes to reviewing frameworks for assessment and development of self-regulation. These reviews encompass everything from self-regulated learning in the classroom to self-regulated management of health conditions (Bjork, Dunlosky, & Kornell, 2013; Mann, De Ridder, & Fujita, 2013). From a cognitive framework, mindset about the malleability of emotions influences self-regulation (Molden & Dweck, 2006) and a neuroscience framework uses the development of different brain regions to explain the development of self-regulation (Gyurak, Gross, & Etkin, 2011). A systems framework explains that affect and behavior systems act as feedback control mechanisms, and recalibration of this system evidences self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 2000).

The aforementioned frameworks and methods of self-regulation assessment do not focus on self-regulation across more than one context, situation or relational interaction. Questions on standardized measures are subject to the participant’s understanding of the question and are typically not related to a specific context. If context is taken into consideration, assessment of self-regulation across multiple contexts is not. Lab-based methods typically involve computerized tasks which are similar to computer games and unrelated to real life situations calling for self-regulation. These tests are designed measure attention, cognitive flexibility and processing speed which are only related to self-regulation (Spreen et al., 2006). Observation methods for assessing self-regulation typically occur in a specific context, such as the classroom and involve observation of specific and sometimes predetermined activities (Tominey & McClelland, 2011).

1.3. Gaps in the literature

Overall, discussion of self-regulation and the measures used to assess this skill typically can only point to an ability or inability to self-regulate, evidencing an “all or nothing” approach. Within the literature, the concept of self-regulation is often broken down into categories of emotional, cognitive and behavioral regulation, focusing on presumably individual and distinct functions of these three components (Gross, 2002). Self-regulation is also defined or labeled differently depending on the specific research questions being addressed (Murtagh & Todd, 2012). It becomes confusing when studies, like Raver’s (2004) research on the sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts of emotional self-regulation, use terms such as “emotional self-regulation” while including “ability to manage behaviors” in its definition. For example, the adolescent mentioned in the scenario at the beginning of this paper could reply emotion regulation skills or focus on managing his behaviors, but neither of these happens without the other. Also, in general, the scholarly literature on self-regulation tends to focus on childhood, while overlooking self-regulation in adolescence. While it is evident that self-regulation is important in all areas of life, the literature lacks a deeper understanding of adolescent self-regulation and an analysis across contexts and relational interactions.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5033948>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5033948>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)