

Negative Transformational Process: The Maladaptive Nature of Accommodation in Relationships

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ABSTRACT

The theoretical focus is to understand the role of emotional regulation in the dyadic interactions and to account for well-being in marital relationships. Emotions are concealed or expressed at the level of human processing. Therefore, masking emotional expression becomes a threat to well-being. The model brings a distinction between the adaptive and maladaptive transformation of motivation by enabling the bridge between interdependence theory and emotion regulation theory. Transformation of motivation is defined as the shift in the person understanding and interpretation of the situation as defined by the interdependence theory. The activation between emotional stimuli and regulatory mechanism would signify that transformation occurs during the interpretive stage of the situation. It is therefore aiding in providing a concise description of effective use of emotional coping strategy in marital interaction by questioning long-term outcomes in relationships. The current paper reviews the emotional interdependence found in couple's interactions and the process of shift aiding in accommodating difficult emotions. The process model is based upon the theoretical underpinnings in interdependence theory and emotional regulation theory wherein the process of taking a decision involves reappraisal of the weighted advantage. This weighted advantage if seen as a profit, the person mostly likely to take the adaptive route. If there are alternatives that are perceived opposed to the weighted advantage, the emotional regulation strategies hence become maladaptive. This supports the given model indicating that well-being will be decreased if the transformational process involves suppressive nature which in turn leading to maladaptive coping patterns among the partners.

Keywords: *Emotion regulation, Dyadic Interaction, Interdependence, Communication, Marital relationship, Transformation of Motivation*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relationship is seen as a mandatory bond for any individual who are in the process of establishing human connections. But the study on marital relationships were lagging because it became the language of the commoners. Even though relationships seemed like a common language, it had a need to be refined. The researchers looked for refinement in the areas of interaction and exchanges that partners have amongst themselves (Reis, Collins and Berscheid, 2000). Interactions elicit emotions which are concealed or expressed at the level of human processing. These evaluations that arise during the interaction seems desirable based on the potential outcomes that are counterbalanced by the partners. The masking of emotional expression might reduce outer experience but not the inner experience which poses a threat to individual's well-being (Velotti *et al.*, 2015). S.T Fiske's in 1992 described interactions in terms of socio-cognitive processes as a key issue for the development and maintenance of relationships. Another component of interaction is with the basis of emotions where certain positive and negative emotions arise within the context of individuals in interaction (Fiske, 1992). The interactions functions on the basis of mutual dependence that the individual has or perceives in a relationship. This interdependence is clearly being seen as an influencing factor and analyzes the dyadic behavior in the general course of relationship (Arriaga, 2010). Emotions are mutilated or dominated in the dyadic interaction especially involving themselves in regulating the emotions (Richards, Butler and Gross, 2003). The extent to which the inner qualities of emotions will be evident and

indistinguishable with the expression is anonymous. These expressions are sometimes manifested in an intense manner and individuals usually have lesser control over the evaluation of the emotional stimuli. The evaluation leads us to the functional effects of coping by bridging the concept of 'emotional regulation' (Lazarus, 2006).

The present paper introduces a model to re-examine some of the flaws in the interdependence theory of Transformation of motivation by comparing it with regulatory mechanisms. This helps to understand the maladaptive nature of accommodation in Interaction. The relationship studies have aimed at improving well-being in couples and to alleviate their functioning within the sub-system. But the interaction process of transformation of motivation leading to well-being is debatable because the shift in transformation is based on the weightage of profit vs loss. The relationship satisfaction and well-being due to transformation of motivation is un-defined. The aim of the study is to understand the influence of emotion regulatory mechanisms in interaction and to account for well-being in the transformational process. Finally, the paper would be able to differentiate the adaptive and maladaptive nature of the process of transformation in interactions.

1.1.1 Theory of interdependence on dyadic interactions

The theory of interdependence was introduced by Kelley and Thibaut in 1959 which studied interpersonal relationships from a social psychology perspective. The interdependence focuses on within-person and between

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person processes on the influence of affect and cognition in dyadic interactions. The interdependence uses two formal tools to explain the interaction outcomes in terms of matrices and transition lists. The matrices and transition list inspired by game theory depends on the situation, needs, outcomes and motives which contributes to a shift in reacting to the situation. The interdependence introduces a core characteristic of interaction known as the “transformation of motivation” which is the shift in the person understanding and interpretation of the situation. (Lange and Rusbult, 2012).

The complexity of human interaction and emotional exchanges lies in the social relationships especially among romantic partners. The model integrates the role of context and personality in the perceptions of the interaction which is mutually dependent on each other. This is being understood by the frequent interaction’s individuals have over a period of time where each partner affects one another by habituated emotional patterns or evaluative patterns of the perceived stimuli. The interactions are being evaluated along an affective dimension where it will be activated if the benefits or outcomes are at the positive valence in interaction. The valence associated with interaction is perceived to be subjectively experienced as an actual outcome which represents satisfaction in relationships (Arriaga, 2010). The model explains the adaptive pattern of interaction that integrates emotions and cognitions to explain relationship satisfaction.

1.1.2 Emotion regulation

The process of emotion generation is being functioned at a multi-level processing of emotional stimuli. The activating agent in a context would be to attend most relevant goals in the environment. When these goals are battled among other relevant goals, it produces a resulting emotion. The elicited emotions are contained within a macro-level of subjective, behavioral and physiological measures of the emotions. Thus, leading us to adjust our needs to the context to accommodate the emotion with the goal (Gross, Sheppes and Urry, 2011). The emotion regulation on the other hand requires the modification of the emotion generative process and improvises certain motivated strategies to influence emotion generation. The two distinction which brings the goal-directed regulatory strategy at play is hedonic and instrumental. The hedonic aspect would require individuals to change their emotions to be less negative or more positive while instrumental aspect attains to achieve long-term goals. The process of emotional regulation involves five families of strategies: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change and response modulation (Gross, Sheppes and Urry, 2011).

The model distinguishes between antecedent focused and response focused emotional regulation strategies. The antecedent-focused are the evaluations that require prior activation to the emotional stimuli while response focused happens after the turn of events. These strategies are consciously and automatically activated. The two types of the regulation strategies are: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The cognitive reappraisal involves consciously reducing the emotional impact of the situation by evaluation while expressive suppression is an inhibition of the ongoing emotion (Gross and John, 2003).

1.1.3 Regulatory mechanisms in Interaction

The Interaction process involves the selection of the situation that is being modified by the outcomes i.e., the response to the situation structure based on the available alternatives. The available alternative is dependent on the context and long-term benefits that induces a positive valence in individuals (Rusbult and Van Lange, 2008). The context would help understand and predict the expression of the emotion (Clark and Taraban, 1991). It was found that the intensity of emotional experience and degree to which it is expressed are positively associated with interrelatedness with the interaction partner (Reis, Collins & Berscheid, 2000). The emotional regulation is at play when the interacting situation requires modification and cognitive change in turn leading to response modification (Gross, Sheppes and Urry, 2011).

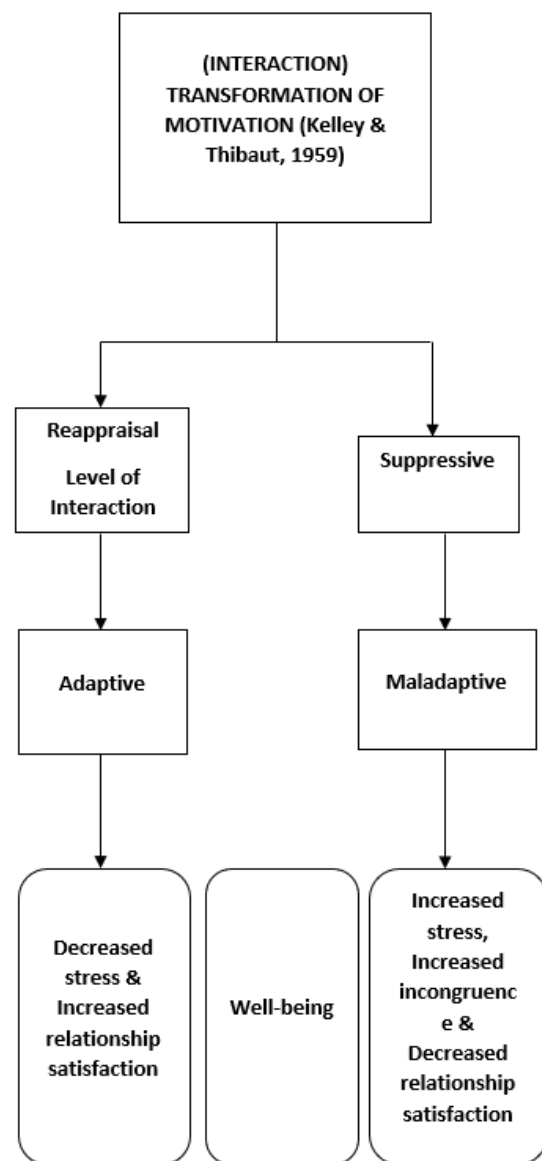


Figure 1 explain the dimensions of interactional process in transformation of motivation based on emotional regulation strategies

1.2 CONCEPTUAL METHODOLOGY

1.2.1 Expressive suppression as an aid in the transformation

Emotions unfold in interaction when occasional suppression of emotional expression is desirable. There are links that is found between emotional expression, social relationships and well-being where it brings a distinction between the emotional experiences during a conversation and those provoked by one's partner (Butler *et al.*, 2003). The psychological shift in the transformational process depending on the broader consideration by evaluation of alternatives might require regulating emotions to fit in the context. The suppressive nature of emotional regulation down-regulates the behavioral component of the emotional response. This also reduces the memory of the interaction by forgetting particular aspects due to the increase in cognitive load. The distraction have led to lesser responsiveness and closeness among the partners (Butler *et al.*, 2003).

1.2.2 Re-appraisers in the transformational process

The reappraisal component might require reappraisal ability for the regulation of the negatively interaction. The reappraisal frequency and well-being will increase only if the reappraisal ability is effective. This generalizes to the concept that if individuals use reappraisal frequently at least with little success, it is considered to be a powerful tool. The important factor that is measured in terms of reappraisal ability is said to improve life satisfaction through increasing the cognitive control of events. The set-shifting task (task requiring effective shift in situations) has been seen as a product of reappraisal ability where positive correlation was found with the cognitive measures such as attention (McRae *et al.*, 2012). The increased attentional span in assessing and evaluating the conversation will not necessarily depend on the long-term possibilities but will depend on the emotional quality of the event experienced. The emotional regulation does integrate into the transformational process of shifting one's internal focus or expectations into a desirable outcome.

Therefore, the activation of the emotional stimuli and bridging the gap between both the regulatory mechanism would signify that the transformation takes place during the interpretive stage of the situation. It requires an individual to assess the goal by carefully channeling the emotion for the benefit of the marital relationship. This helps understand the quality of interaction to be a necessary component in the maintenance of relationships and sustaining the well-being in the relationship.

1.2.3 Ambiguity in transformational process: An explanation on well-being

The transformational process leading to accommodative behavior is seen to increase relationship satisfaction and couple's well-being but when it is being observed under the factors of intrinsic personality factors arising in conditions of interaction structure, the results are different. The study by Finkel and Campbell in 2001 explores the area of self-control and accommodation in interaction. The psychological process involved in the transformational process requires discounting of one's self interest and

inoculating partner's self-interest. The results show that if individuals are pre-disposed to develop control over the emotions, there is pro-relationship outcomes in the relationship and couple's well-being. Therefore, the control of one's emotions and impulses seem to be a major contributing factor in enhancing the pro-relationship motivation by accommodating one's impulses (Finkel and Campbell, 2001).

The well-being would be accountable based on the expectations and broader consideration of outcomes doesn't necessarily enhance the relationship satisfaction but tends to alleviate stress. This supports the given model indicating that well-being will be decreased if the transformational process involves suppressive nature which in turn leading to maladaptive coping patterns among the partners. These maladaptive patterns can stem from the incongruence that is created by disregarding the self-interest and bringing in other's self-interest. These will lead to stress and decreased well-being which confirms that transformational process on relationships does not always guarantee well-being.

1.2.4 Consequences of suppressive pattern of transformational process

This brings us to the consensus that transformational process has two dimensions: adaptive and maladaptive. The adaptive dimension indicates that the process involves the use of reappraisal strategy where it supports the earlier hypothesis on improved well-being and decreased incongruence in the pro-relationship transformation. The maladaptive dimension focuses on the suppressive nature of transformational process where certain level of incongruence due to the discount of one's self-interest and increased stress leading to lesser well-being can account for the long-term problems in relationship.

The relationship is perceived as favorable when transformation of motivation is used in relationship interaction but the frequency of the suppression and reappraisal needs to be evaluated to confirm the long-term satisfaction of the pro-relationship and couple's well-being. The model proposes that if the frequency of the suppressive transformation is reduced, it will lead to decreased incongruence by improving well-being of the couples in the interaction situation. If the short-term goal of using maladaptive dimension produces a favorable outcome by the use of suppressive transformation, it will not necessarily lead to a long-term outcome because as previously mentioned the frequency and intensity contributes to the regulation of emotions. Otherwise, habituation of the emotional regulation strategy will lead to maladaptive coping and distressed relationship.

1.3 IMPLICATIONS

The model extends the application in the understanding of emotional difficulties in families especially couple's interaction in relationships. If the interdependence theory on interactions and social relationships is applied in the area of marital counselling or family therapy, the maladaptive factors need to be addressed to avoid problems in interventions. The nature of the transformational process paves way to form new understanding of emotional regulation as a factor.

1.3.1 Relationship specific emotional coping: a new arena in interdependence theory

The model integrates the understanding of the interdependence theory with the emotion regulation process to conceptualize the consequence of using maladaptive strategy in transformation of motivation and the use of adaptive strategy. These adaptive strategies are necessary to improve the long-term benefits in the relationship and improve the well-being of the individuals. The well-being cannot be accounted based on the outcomes as mentioned by the interdependence theory. Therefore, it gives a concise description of the process in terms of the effective use of emotional coping strategy in marital interaction.

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