



Collaborative Development and Initial Validation of the Researcher and Consumer Emotion Regulation Scale for Serious Mental Illness

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Introduction

- Biosystemic approaches to psychiatric rehabilitation encourage the development of assessment tools that address biological, psychological, and social functioning.
- This study used a 3-stage model of consumer-academic collaboration to develop a prototype instrument to measure emotional regulation (ER) in individuals with serious mental illness (SMI).

Method

- Stage 1: Features of emotion processing deficits in SMI identified via research literature review
- Stage 2: Researchers collaborated with consumers at a day rehabilitation center to translate principles and concepts of emotional dysregulation into terms and experiences recognizable and salient to people who have experienced such difficulty
 - 6 groups were conducted on a series of topics
 - 4-6 consumers and 2 researchers at each group
 - The product was a prototype questionnaire instrument for clinical assessment of emotional dysregulation in SMI, the Researcher & Consumer Emotion Regulation Scale (RACERS)
 - 25 items rated from (1) *not like me at all* to (6) *very much like me*
 - Higher scores represent greater emotion regulation
- Stage 3: Initial evaluation of the psychometric properties of RACERS in the same population that supported Stage 2 and in an undergraduate sample

Sample Demographic Characteristics

	Undergraduates			SMI		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>mean</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>mean</i>
Age			19.2			48.0
Sex						
Male	269	41.1		37	92.5	
Ethnicity						
Caucasian	546	83.5		35	87.5	
African American	13	2.0		3	7.5	
Native American	6	1.0		2	5.0	
Marital Status						
Single	610	93.3		30	75.0	
Married	48	7.3		1	2.5	
Divorced/Widowed/ Separated	5	0.8		8	20.0	
Axis I Diagnosis						
Schizophrenia, Paranoid Type				11	27.5	
Schizophrenia, Other Type				10	25.0	
Schizoaffective Disorder				11	27.5	
Bipolar I Disorder				6	15.0	

RACERS Psychometric Properties

	Undergrads	SMI
Cronbach's α	.79	.77
Item-Total Correlation (<i>r</i> , range)	.11-.49	.05-.65
Correlation with DERS		$r = -.55^*$

Note: DERS = Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004); Lower scores represent greater ER
* $p = .001$

Discussion

- RACERS performance demonstrated general difficulties in managing emotions. This converges with previous findings.
- It was expected that undergraduates would have better ER, but average RACERS scores did not differ for the SMI and undergraduate populations. Refining item selection may improve sensitivity.
- This study replicated previous research demonstrating that consumers can create reliable and valid scales. It has been argued that assessment instruments for the SMI population address the interests of the scientific community and may include items that are not understood by this population. This study addressed these concerns by involving mental health consumers as integral contributors to the development of RACERS. RACERS items have practical relevance to this population and address the issues the focus groups found to be most pertinent to their experience with ER.
- This study demonstrates the usefulness of a three-stage model of collaborative research in developing an instrument for assessing ER in the SMI day rehabilitation population.
- As social cognitive deficits, including deficits in ER, are associated with functional difficulties in SMI, rehabilitation of these deficits is essential.
- Reliable and valid assessment of the emotional experiences of individuals with SMI is the first key step toward effective conceptualization and treatment of emotion dysregulation.

Average Scores

