



Pelagia Research Library

European Journal of Experimental Biology, 2012, 2 (3):646-650



## Design of Impulsiveness, Emotional Self-regulation and Thrill Seeking Relation Model with Identity Crisis

Fariborz Bagheri and Mostafa Ansariyon

*Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University (IAU), Tehran, Iran*

---

### ABSTRACT

*The present research studies relation of emotional self-regulation, thrill seeking and impulsiveness, and formation of identity crisis, aiming to understand a conceptual model within the theoretical framework and in form of a multivariate model. The study is of Ex post facto design and was performed in two phases. The subjects were assessed upon passing the least required score to identify identity crisis through personal identity test using MARS Emotional Self-regulation questionnaire, Zuckerman Thrill Seeking scale and Barratt Impulsiveness Scale. In order to test the authenticity of the theoretical model of the study and calculate the effectiveness indexes, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used. Low emotional self-regulation in the youth results in increase of thrill seeking and impulsiveness in them and high degree of thrill seeking and impulsiveness increases the formation of identity crisis in them. This study emphasizes on the key role of emotional self-regulation skill in growth of healthy identity and the most serious consequence of low emotional self-regulation disturbs growth of identity and gives birth to the identity crisis.*

**Key words:** Structural Equation Modeling, Impulsiveness, Thrill Seeking, Emotional Self-regulation, Identity Crisis.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Psychology has studied the topics of 'self' and 'identity' for decades, but it has found out in the recent two decades that no description of 'self' could be anywhere close to the reality, unless it is firstly understood how 'self' controls itself and adjusts its regulations in the best possible to maintain harmony with its social and physical environment [1]. Many studies indicate that individuals' success in life depends on acquired strategies used to regulate emotions to a large extent [2]. Emotional self-regulation is the set of attempts made by the individual to regulate his emotions, i.e., increasing positive emotions and decreasing negative ones. The strategies adopted by the individuals to increase and maintain happiness and decrease sorrow play a significant role in their mental health because human being has a better feeling of control and effectiveness over his emotions using such strategies. In other words, when the individuals become sad or stressful, they try to use any sort of methods to get rid of that feeling. Of course people might adopt efficient strategies to increase positive emotions (such as listening to music, doing exercise, etc.) or inefficient strategies (such as taking psychotropic drugs) and also adopt efficient strategies (such as receiving social support) or inefficient strategies (such as taking alcohol) in order to reduce negative emotions [1]. Zuckerman

(1979) defined thrill seeking as "seeking different new, complicated, exciting sensations and experience and inclination to take physical, social, legal and financial risks for the sake of the experience". Mal-adaptation in thrill seeking can generally lead to challenges such as using leisure time, selection of friends, cultural interests, social feedbacks, etc. Sensations play different roles in self-regulation. Sensations are potentially related to self-regulation successes as well as failures [3].

Studies showed that impulsive and high-risk behaviors increase remarkably in teenage period and the teenagers are more inclined to show a variety of high risk behaviors and or show several high risk behaviors together at this age. For example, drugs abuse and unsafe sexual relations might happen at the same time [4]. According to vast researches by well-known psychologists about the life of teenagers and the youth, the present generation faces more emotional problems in comparison with former generations and they are more lonely, depressed, angry, unruly, anxious, impulsive and aggressive. According to Glauser, 'identity' is the need to be distinct from other beings. This need is a psychological need that is shared among all humans in all cultures from when they are born up until when they die [5]. Identity disorder usually starts at the end of teenage period when the individual leaves his nuclear family and goes ahead with establishing an independent identity and a system of values on his own [6]. According to Erikson's theory, if an individual's personal identity is formed during time and according to the experience gained out of social challenges, and the teenager knows himself and finds him distinct from others, his psychological balance will be guaranteed, whereas if discouragement and distrust substitute confidence, and the teenager becomes isolated instead of socializing with others and moves toward depression instead of activity and is trapped in ambiguity of his role instead of awareness and development of a positive identity, he will lose his psychological balance and harmony, and will suffer from identity crisis. Lack of research and study regarding the impact of regulation of sensations in formation of identity in the youth and the effect of emotional self-regulation in the degree of thrill seeking and impulsiveness and formation of a polished identity and or outbreak of identity crisis in the youth and absence of knowledge about the extent to which these factors are influential to achieve goals and succeed in life plans demonstrate the necessity of this study. Hence knowing about an effective model in formation of identity that helps individuals achieve personal and social levels and dimensions of identity necessitated such a study by adopting emotional self-regulation strategies in the youth that could form characteristics such as the degree of thrill seeking, impulsiveness and effective information of the trend, symptoms and consequences of identity crisis.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, research was embodied within the framework of a structural model using Structural Equation Modeling as a qualitative method. The statistical society was between 18 to 25 years old, taking their educational level and marital status into consideration. Cochran formula was used to determine the sample volume. The statistical sample volume was calculated based on 384 people. Firstly, personal identity questionnaire was made available to the subjects under study. The subjects under study who acquired scores higher than the cutting line were faced with identity distinction crisis and the second phase of the test was conducted using those. In the second phase, the subjects were provided with MARS emotional self-regulation questionnaire, Zuckerman Thrill Seeking Scale (V) and Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11) to which they responded [3]. In order to test the authenticity of theoretical model of research and calculate the effect of indexes, Structural Equation Modeling method was used through Amos 20 software. Structural Equation Modeling is a comprehensive approach for testing hypotheses about the observed and hidden relations of variates. Structural Equation Modeling is the only method among the entire multivariate analytical methods that uses multiple regression analysis and factor analysis at the same time [7]. The modeling of this study had two phases: Fitting of measurement model and causal model that were conducted separately. Many researchers prefer two-phase method because this method prevents confusion in interpretation as well as misspecification of the model [8]. The following tools were used in this research:

Ahmadi's personal identity test (1999) was to study the level and intensity of individual identity crisis. This test was invented by Dr Ahmadi, academic staff of Isfahan University. In order to set the personal identity test, firstly the criteria to identify the identity crisis using diagnostic books are specified. The test was conducted for 60 high school students in Isfahan. The scores of this test showed 78% through halving the final results of the test to odd and even, then using Spearman & Brown final index, the final index of personal identity test was calculated as 92%. MARS emotional self-regulation questionnaire is to evaluate methods of emotional regulation. Assessment tool of emotional regulation was firstly invented by Larsen (1993) [9]. It was based on a list of strategies to regulate mood presented by Morris and Reilly (1987) [10]. The questionnaire had 44 questions including cognitive and behavioral

dimensions, change of situation, change of emotion, decrease of negative mood and increase of positive mood. The test validity was 0.75 by implementation of the questionnaire for 60 people (30 girls and 30 boys) and its Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.80.

Zuckerman Thrill Seeking Scale (V) was to assess the degree of thrill seeking. The scale had 40 two-choice statements divided into four minor sub-scales: Intensive and adventurous thrill seeking, experience seeking, inhibition and indisposition sensitiveness. The psychological assessment of the test using re-assessment was reported over 0.70. Also the validity of structure was 0.80 through correlating the test with similar tests. Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11) is to assess the type and degree of impulsive performance of the subjects of research. This scale was designed by Ernest Barratt, the psychologist of the medical school of Texas University to study the degree of impulsive performance. This scale had 30 statements including three scales. This scale assesses motor impulsiveness, cognitive impulsiveness and disorganization. Internal reliability of the final score was reported between 0.79 and 0.83. Also reliability indexes using Cronbach's alpha was 0.72 and using Bi-section method was 0.60.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows non-standard indexes, mean deviation, critical ratio and meaningfulness of indexes of measurement model. Considering the obtained results, all sub-scales except one stand at a meaningful level. In the proposed theoretical model, when the subscale (increase of positive emotions) is eliminated in self-regulation parameter, maximum fitting will be higher than the meaningful threshold. This shows that the individuals suffering from identity crisis would also enjoy increase of positive mood in regulating emotions.

**Table 1. Non-standard indexes, mean deviation, critical ratio and meaningfulness of indexes of measurement model**

Route	Subscale	Non-standard route index	Standard mistake	Critical ratio	P
Identity.Crisis	q10_1	1.105	.068	16.173	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q9_1	.784	.070	11.276	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q8_1	1.008	.067	15.082	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q7_1	.956	.069	13.939	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q6_1	.806	.059	13.578	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q5_1	.928	.066	14.126	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q4_1	.940	.068	13.831	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q3_1	1.262	.071	17.794	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q2_1	.840	.069	12.186	P<0.01
Identity.Crisis	q1_1	1.000			
Self.Regulation	ESR5_1	.788	.058	13.526	P<0.01
Self.Regulation	ESR4_1	.845	.069	12.230	P<0.01
Self.Regulation	ESR3_1	.837	.071	11.742	P<0.01
Self.Regulation	ESR2_1	.782	.072	10.872	P<0.01
Self.Regulation	ESR1_1	1.000			
Thrill.Seek	TS4_1	.810	.088	9.239	P<0.01
Thrill.Seek	TS3_1	.805	.085	9.455	P<0.01
Thrill.Seek	TS2_1	1.115	.107	10.438	P<0.01
Thrill.Seek	TS1_1	1.000			
Impulsiveness	I3_1	.925	.100	9.277	P<0.01
Impulsiveness	I2_1	1.198	.131	9.157	P<0.01
Impulsiveness	I1_1	1.000			

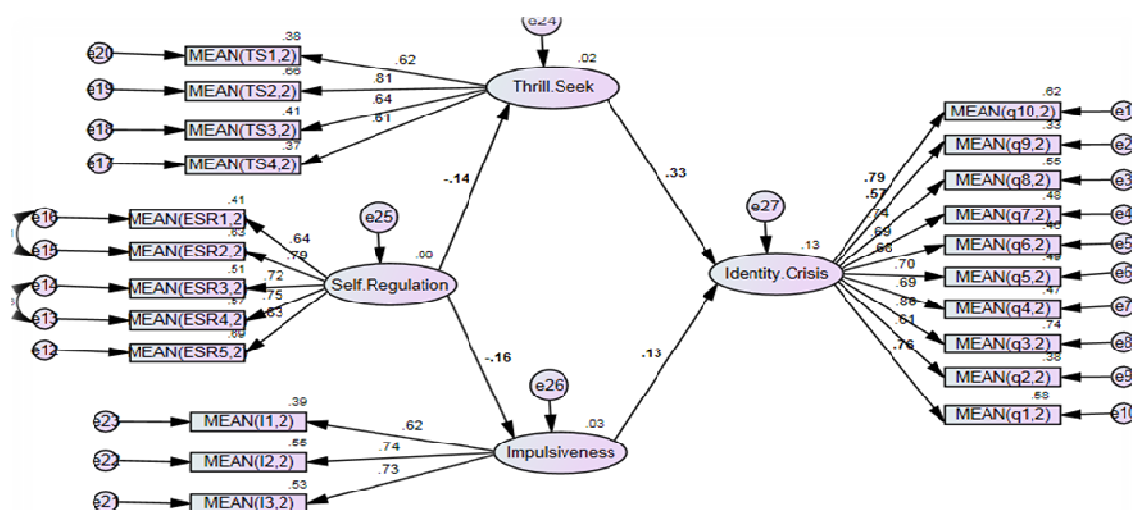
Figure 1 shows the research model according to standard indexes. The amount of factor analysis of constructing speeches of each variate is shown in the picture. On the other hand the route indexes are also shown in the picture.

As it is seen in table 2, the route indexes for each 4 meaningful relations were calculated. The research hypotheses could be studied considering the obtained results in the research model.

**Table 2. Route indexes in structural model**

Hypothesis	Route	Route index	P	Meaningfulness	Test result
1	Emotional self-regulation, Thrill seeking	-0.14	0.018	P<0.05	Positive
2	Emotional self-regulation, Impulsiveness	-0.16	0.010	P<0.05	Positive
3	Thrill seeking, Identity crisis	0.33	0.000	P<0.01	Positive
4	Impulsiveness, Identity crisis	0.13	0.027	P<0.05	Positive

In order to describe the relation between emotional self-regulation in formation and amount of thrill seeking, the route index is -0.14. Considering the meaningfulness of the calculated route index at 0.05 level, it can be concluded that there is a negative relation between emotional self-regulation and thrill seeking. Also when describing the relation between emotional self-regulation, and formation and degree of impulsiveness, the given route index of -0.16 is calculated as 0.01 for this index. This shows that there is a negative relation between emotional self-regulation and impulsiveness and the calculated route index is meaningful. When calculating the route index, the relation between thrill seeking and identity crisis is 0.33 and the calculated meaningfulness of route index at 0.01 is confirmed considering the amount of meaningfulness of this index. It means that there is a positive relation between thrill seeking and identity crisis. Also the route index between impulsiveness and identity crisis was calculated as 0.13 in the analysis which shows that the relation stands at 0.05 meaningful level. The clear result is that there is a positive relation between impulsiveness and identity crisis.

**Figure 1. Final research model with standard indexes**

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the research findings, the less the emotional self-regulation is in the youth, the more their thrill seeking will be. In the direction of this study, Graziano (2011) carried out a research in designing the mediating structural model of emotional self-regulation over the intensity of the children's symptoms (ADHD) and their parents' stress level [11]. Multiple analysis proves the relation between the amount of impulsiveness and hyperactivity with their parents' stress and impulsiveness. Surman (2011) also studied the relation between the parents who had attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and their children. According to the results of this research, emotional self-regulation deficit leads to formation of ADHD disorder in the children of such parents. Also low degree of emotional self-regulation in the youth increases the degree of impulsiveness in them. In the direction of this research [12], Heilman (2010) studied the impact of emotional regulation on impulsive decision-making [13]. The results showed that emotional self-regulation has key role in the individuals' correct social and economic decision making. On the other hand, absence of self-regulation and cognitive re-assessment by the individual plays a fundamental role in impulsive decision making. According to the findings of this study, there is a positive relation between thrill seeking and identity crisis and the higher the thrill seeking is in the youth, the higher the formation of identity crisis will be in them. Mason (2011)

studied the relation between thrill seeking & religiosity and drug abuse in the teenagers. The findings of the said research showed that religiosity adjusts the relation between thrill seeking and drug abuse. Findings of the study in hand also show that high impulsiveness in the youth increases the formation of identity crisis in them [14]. Ashenhurst's study (2011) confirms the findings of this research. He studied impulsiveness, risk taking and alcohol abuse using Barret test and reported a positive relation between inclination to take alcohol, impulsiveness and risk taking [15]. Wills (2011) studied behavioral and emotional self-regulation among teenagers who abuse drugs in a structural modeling. The teenagers who were identified unable to regulate their behavior (not their motions) were more able to continue their education. On the other hand the teenagers who were identified unable to regulate their behavior and emotions were less able to continue their education [16].

All in all, the confirmed model by the study in hand emphasizes on the key role of emotional self-regulation skill in the growth of a healthy identity. The problems of this skill are not just limited to formation of impulsiveness and thrill seeking behavioral models, but the most important issue shown by this study is that the most serious consequence of decrease of emotional self-regulation skill is disturbance of identity growth or in other words development of identity crisis in the youth.

### REFERENCES

- [1] K.D. Vohs, B.J. Schmeichel, *J Person Soci Psych*, **2003**, 85, 217–230.
- [2] E.R. Bidel, M. Turaner, *Childhood anxiety disorder*. New York: MC Graw- Hill, **2005**.
- [3] M. Zuckerman, *Sensation – seeking: beyond the optimal level at arousal*, Hillsdale, N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., **1979**.
- [4] A.D. Farrell, S.J. Danish, C.W. Howard, *J Consult Clinic Psych*, **1992**, 60, 705-712.
- [5] L. Shilling, *Counseling Theories (Counseling perspectives)*, Etellaat Publication, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, **1984**.
- [6] H. Kaplan, B. Sadock, *Summary of Psychology of Behavioral Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume, Shar-e-Ab Publication, **1998**.
- [7] J.F. Hair, W.C. Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (**2006**). *Multivariate Analysis* (6th Ed.) New Jersey, Pearson Education Inc.
- [8] D. Gallagher, L. Ting, A. Palmer, *Market Rev*, **2008**, 8 (3), 255-275.
- [9] R.J. Larsen, Symposium conducted at the 101st annual convention of the American Psychological Association, **1993**, Toronto, Canada.
- [10] W. Morris, N. Reilly, *Motiv Emotion*, **1987**, 11, 215–249.
- [11] P.A. Graziano, J.P. McNamara, G.R., Geffken, A.J. Reid, Florida International University, Miami, USA, **2011**.
- [12] C.B. Surman, J. Biederman, T. Spencer, D. Yorks, C.A. Miller, C.R. Petty, S.V. Faraone, **2010**, 168(6): 617-23.
- [13] R. Heilman, M. Crişan, G. Liviu, D. Houser, M. Miclea, Miu, C. Andrei, *Emot*, 10(2), **2010**, 257-265.
- [14] W.A. Mason, R.L. Spoth, *Psychol Addict Behav*, **2011**.
- [15] J. Ashenhurst, R. Jentsch, J.D. Ray, A. Lara. *Experi Clin Psychophar*, **2011**.
- [16] T.A. Wills, P. Pokhrel, E. Morehouse, B. Fenster, **2011**, 25(2): 279-92.