

**The Relationship between Interpersonal Sensitivity, Emotion Regulation Strategies and  
Emotional Reactivity in adults**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of

Master of Science in Psychology

By

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**ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), ERNAKULAM**

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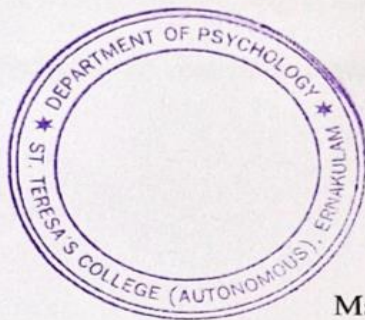
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**MARCH 2025**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, "The relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies and emotional reactivity in adults", is a bonafide record submitted by Fia F Shaji, Reg.no. SM23PSY011, of St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam under the supervision and guidance of Ms. Princy Thobias, and that it has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma, fellowship, title or recognition before.

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the project entitled “the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies and emotional reactivity in adults” is a bonafide work done by Fia F Shaji, under the supervision of Princy Thobias, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, St. Teresa’s College, Ernakulam, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the post graduate degree of M.Sc Psychology. I also affirm that this work has not been submitted before for the award of any degree or diploma elsewhere.

Place: Ernakulam

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Date:

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Thanking you

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity in adults. Interpersonal sensitivity involves heightened awareness of social interactions, especially regarding rejection and approval (Boyce & Parker, 1989). Emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal (adaptive) and expressive suppression (maladaptive), help modulate emotional responses (Gross & John, 2003). Emotional reactivity refers to the intensity and duration of emotional responses (Preece et al., 2019). Using a cross-sectional design, 220 adults (aged 18-55) completed the Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure, the Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale – Short Form, and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire. Non-parametric tests were conducted using Jamovi software. Results showed a significant negative relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and positive emotional reactivity, and a positive relationship with negative emotional reactivity, indicating that sensitive individuals experience more intense negative emotions and have difficulty sustaining positive emotions. However, no significant link was found between interpersonal sensitivity and emotion regulation strategies. These findings suggest the need for emotion regulation interventions, particularly cognitive reappraisal, for those with high interpersonal sensitivity. This study contributes to understanding the dynamics between sensitivity, emotion regulation, and emotional reactivity, emphasizing emotional resilience for mental well-being. Future research should explore longitudinal and cultural variations to expand these findings.

*Keywords:* Interpersonal Sensitivity, Emotion Regulation Strategies, Emotional Reactivity

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# **Chapter I**

## **Introduction**

## **Background of the study**

This study focuses on the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity. It seeks to understand how interpersonal sensitivity influences emotional responses and regulation in diverse adult age groups. Emotion is a complex psychological state involving subjective experiences, physiological responses, and behavioral expressions that help individuals navigate their social environment (Gross, 1998). Emotions significantly influence interpersonal sensitivity, as heightened emotional awareness can make individuals more attuned to social cues, increasing their sensitivity to criticism and rejection (Boyce & Parker, 1989).

## **Interpersonal Sensitivity**

Interpersonal Sensitivity is an undue and excessive awareness of and sensitivity to, the behaviour and feelings of others. Interpersonal sensitivity refers to an individual's heightened awareness of and responsiveness to social interactions, particularly in relation to perceived rejection, criticism, and approval from others (Boyce & Parker, 1989). It is often associated with social anxiety and emotional distress, as individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity tend to overanalyze social cues and react strongly to perceived negative feedback (Davidson et al., 1989). This construct is multidimensional and includes components such as fear of rejection, need for approval, social and interpersonal awareness, timidity, and separation anxiety (Boyce & Parker, 1989). While interpersonal sensitivity can enhance social perception and empathy, excessive sensitivity may contribute to emotional instability and difficulties in maintaining relationships (Derogatis & Cleary, 1977).

## **Emotion Regulation Strategies**

Emotion regulation refers to the cognitive and behavioral mechanisms individuals use to manage and modulate their emotional experiences and expressions (Gross, 1998). Emotion regulation strategies refer to the processes individuals use to manage, modify, or control their emotional experiences and expressions in response to situations. These strategies play a critical role in influencing emotional well-being, social interactions, and psychological health. Two primary strategies include cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression (Gross & John, 2003). Cognitive reappraisal is an adaptive strategy where individuals reinterpret a situation to reduce its emotional impact, leading to better psychological well-being and emotional resilience. In contrast, expressive suppression is a maladaptive strategy that involves inhibiting outward emotional expressions without altering the internal emotional experience, which can increase stress and impair social interactions (Gross & John, 2003). Individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity often struggle with emotion regulation, relying more on suppression, which in turn heightens emotional distress (Kelly & McDonald, 2014).

## **Emotional Reactivity**

Emotional reactivity refers to the intensity, duration, and ease of activation of an individual's emotional responses to various stimuli (Preece et al., 2019). It reflects how strongly and for how long a person experiences emotions, as well as how easily they are triggered. The Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale – Short Form (PERS-S), developed by Preece et al. (2019), is an 18-item self-report measure that assesses emotional reactivity across three dimensions: ease of activation, intensity, and duration of emotional responses. The scale separately evaluates positive emotional reactivity (9 items) and negative emotional reactivity (9 items), allowing for a comprehensive understanding of an individual's emotional

responsiveness. The Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale – Short Form (PERS-S) measures emotional reactivity across two primary dimensions: positive emotional reactivity and negative emotional reactivity (Preece et al., 2019). Positive emotional reactivity refers to the intensity and duration of pleasant emotional experiences, while negative emotional reactivity involves heightened sensitivity to distressing stimuli, leading to prolonged or intensified negative emotional responses. Individuals with high emotional reactivity often experience emotions more intensely and for extended periods, which can contribute to greater emotional dysregulation and psychological distress (Becerra et al., 2020).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Attachment theory provides insights into interpersonal sensitivity by explaining how early attachment experiences shape individuals' sensitivity to social feedback and rejection. Those with insecure attachment styles (e.g., anxious or avoidant) may exhibit heightened interpersonal sensitivity, influencing their emotional reactivity and emotion regulation strategies.

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions, both in oneself and others. High EI is associated with better emotion regulation strategies, such as emotional awareness and empathy, which are essential for managing interpersonal sensitivity. Individuals with high EI are more likely to respond adaptively to social feedback, and less likely to exhibit emotional reactivity when faced with interpersonal challenges or rejection. EI provides a framework for understanding how individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity use adaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as emotional understanding and empathy, to mitigate emotional reactivity in social situations.

Gross's model emphasizes the distinction between adaptive (e.g., cognitive reappraisal) and maladaptive (e.g., expressive suppression) emotion regulation strategies. This model is directly relevant to understanding how individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity manage emotional responses to perceived rejection or criticism.

Bandura's theory underscores the role of social experiences and cognitive processing in shaping behaviors and emotions. It is relevant for understanding how individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity interpret social cues and employ regulation strategies in response.

Social Comparison Theory suggests that individuals evaluate their own abilities, opinions, and emotional states by comparing themselves to others. Those with high interpersonal sensitivity may be particularly prone to these comparisons, which can increase emotional reactivity, particularly in situations of perceived social rejection or criticism. Emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, can help mitigate the negative emotional impact of these comparisons. This framework sheds light on how social comparison processes contribute to emotional reactivity in social situations and how individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity may use adaptive or maladaptive emotion regulation strategies to cope with the emotional consequences of these comparisons.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

Miller & Long (2020) conducted a longitudinal study titled “Emotion Regulation and Emotional Reactivity in Adults with High Interpersonal Sensitivity”, which aimed to explore how emotional reactivity interacts with emotion regulation strategies in highly sensitive individuals. Their findings indicated that higher interpersonal sensitivity was associated with greater emotional reactivity, which in turn influenced the use of maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as expressive suppression.

Boyce & Parker (1989) in their study titled “Development of a Scale to Measure Interpersonal Sensitivity” aimed to define and measure interpersonal sensitivity as an excessive awareness of and sensitivity to the behavior and feelings of others. Their findings highlighted that high interpersonal sensitivity is associated with heightened emotional distress, increased vulnerability to perceived rejection, and difficulties in emotional regulation.

### **Interpersonal Sensitivity and Emotional Reactivity**

Johnson & Lee (2020) conducted research titled “The Influence of Emotional Reactivity and Interpersonal Sensitivity on Self-Esteem” to examine how emotional reactivity mediates the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and self-esteem. Their findings indicated that higher emotional reactivity magnified the negative impact of interpersonal sensitivity on self-esteem, leading to a greater vulnerability to feelings of inadequacy and lower psychological well-being.

Brown & Carter (2017) in their study titled “The Role of Emotional Reactivity in the Experience of Interpersonal Sensitivity” aimed to examine how emotional reactivity mediates the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and social anxiety. Using multiple regression analysis, they found that higher emotional reactivity significantly increased vulnerability to social anxiety in individuals with heightened interpersonal sensitivity.

Brown & Clark (2017) in their study titled “Coping Styles and Emotional Reactivity in Individuals with High Interpersonal Sensitivity” aimed to explore the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotional reactivity, and coping styles. Their research found that individuals with heightened interpersonal sensitivity were more likely to employ avoidant coping strategies, which exacerbated their emotional reactivity in difficult social situations. This avoidant tendency made it harder for them to regulate their emotions effectively, often leading to greater psychological distress.

Schneider & Weidner (2016) conducted a study titled “The Impact of Emotional Reactivity on Social Functioning in Highly Sensitive Individuals,” which aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional reactivity and social functioning in individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity. Their findings revealed that individuals with high emotional reactivity faced greater challenges in social situations, exhibiting poor social communication and an increased tendency to withdraw socially, which worsened their emotional distress.

Zaki & Williams (2013) conducted an experimental study titled “The Influence of Interpersonal Sensitivity on Emotional Reactivity”, which aimed to explore how individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity react emotionally to social cues. Their findings revealed that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity exhibited heightened emotional reactivity, particularly in response to negative feedback and perceived rejection.

## **Interpersonal Sensitivity and Emotional Regulation Strategy**

Jackson & Williams (2021) investigated the role of positive affect in emotional regulation in their study titled “Positive Affect and Emotional Regulation in Highly Sensitive Individuals.” The study found that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity who could generate and sustain positive emotions through strategies like savoring were better able to regulate their emotional responses and reduce reactivity. This ability to foster positive emotional states acted as a buffer against negative emotional reactions, facilitating the use of more adaptive regulation strategies.

Smith & Brown (2019) conducted a study titled “The Influence of Interpersonal Sensitivity on Emotional Regulation in Adults”, which aimed to explore the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and emotion regulation strategies. The study found that individuals with heightened interpersonal sensitivity relied more on expressive suppression and had difficulty using adaptive strategies like cognitive reappraisal.

Davis & Edwards (2017) conducted a study titled “Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Sensitivity in Adolescents: Developmental Perspectives” to investigate how interpersonal sensitivity and emotional regulation strategies evolve during adolescence. They found that during this developmental period, adolescents with high interpersonal sensitivity were more likely to engage in maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as emotional avoidance, which were linked to increased emotional reactivity and heightened risk for emotional disorders.

Smith & Taylor (2016) explored the role of rumination in emotional regulation in their study titled “Rumination as a Maladaptive Regulation Strategy in Highly Sensitive Individuals.” The study found that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity were more prone to rumination, which amplified emotional reactivity and led to poorer emotional regulation. This maladaptive strategy often led to increased anxiety and depression, making it more difficult for these individuals to cope with social challenges.

Niven, Totterdell, & Holman (2007) in their study titled “The Role of Interpersonal Sensitivity in Predicting Emotion Regulation Strategies” aimed to investigate how individuals with varying levels of interpersonal sensitivity select their emotion regulation strategies. The study found that individuals with higher interpersonal sensitivity were more likely to use maladaptive strategies such as expressive suppression and avoidance, while those with lower interpersonal sensitivity were more likely to engage in cognitive reappraisal.

### **Emotional Regulation Strategy and Emotional Reactivity**

Moll & van den Bos (2017) conducted a study titled “Maladaptive Emotion Regulation Strategies and Emotional Reactivity: A Longitudinal Analysis.” They found that individuals with high emotional reactivity were more likely to rely on maladaptive emotion regulation strategies such as avoidance and rumination. These strategies exacerbated their emotional reactivity, creating a vicious cycle of emotional distress and poor emotional regulation, leading to greater vulnerability to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema (2012) conducted a meta-analysis titled “Emotion Regulation and Its Impact on Emotional Reactivity: A Study of Adaptive and Maladaptive Strategies”, which aimed to evaluate how different emotion regulation strategies affect

emotional reactivity. Their findings indicated that cognitive reappraisal was associated with lower emotional reactivity and better emotional control, while expressive suppression was linked to increased emotional reactivity and greater psychological distress.

Troy et al. (2010) conducted a study titled “Emotion Regulation Training and Its Effect on Emotional Reactivity” to assess the effectiveness of emotion regulation interventions in reducing emotional reactivity. Their findings demonstrated that training individuals in emotion regulation techniques, such as cognitive reappraisal and acceptance, led to significant reductions in emotional reactivity, especially in response to stressors. These trained individuals were more capable of regulating their emotional responses, preventing excessive emotional arousal in difficult situations.

Gross & John (2003) in their study titled “Emotion Regulation Strategies and Psychological Well-Being”, aimed to examine how different emotion regulation strategies impact emotional reactivity. They found that cognitive reappraisal was associated with reduced emotional intensity and improved well-being, whereas expressive suppression was linked to higher emotional distress and maladaptive coping mechanisms.

### **Rationale of the study**

The study is grounded in the premise that interpersonal sensitivity, an excessive awareness and sensitivity to others’ behaviours and feelings, has significant implications for emotional health. It aims to understand how heightened sensitivity to perceived rejection influences emotional responses and regulation strategies. Exploring these dynamics helps extend existing research on rejection sensitivity, uncovering broader patterns in interpersonal sensitivity that contribute to emotional well-being. Despite its importance, there is limited research examining the intricate connections between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring how heightened sensitivity to perceived rejection influences emotional responses and regulation strategies. Understanding these dynamics is crucial, as ineffective emotion regulation strategies, such as expressive suppression, can exacerbate emotional distress, interpersonal conflicts, and maladaptive coping mechanisms. Conversely, adaptive strategies, like cognitive reappraisal, may mitigate the negative effects of interpersonal sensitivity, fostering better emotional and social outcomes.

Furthermore, the current research is driven by the need to understand these relationships across diverse adult age groups, which remains under-explored in existing literature. Emotional reactivity, measured through the intensity, frequency, and duration of emotional responses-adds another layer of complexity, as it can both influence and be influenced by interpersonal sensitivity.

### **Current Study**

This study examines the relationships between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity across three adult age groups. A sample of 220 adults is selected based on defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data has collected using the Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure (Boyce & Parker, 1989), the Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale, and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire. Ethical guidelines, including informed consent and confidentiality, is adhered to. The findings aim to provide insights into how interpersonal sensitivity impacts emotion regulation and reactivity, addressing a key research gap by including diverse adult age groups.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

## **Aim**

To examine the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies and emotional reactivity in adults.

## **Problem Statement**

Does interpersonal sensitivity have a significant relationship with emotion regulation strategies and emotional reactivity in adults?

## **Objectives**

- To examine the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and emotion regulation strategies in adults.
- To examine the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and emotional reactivity in adults.

## **Hypothesis**

H1: There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression in adults.

H2: There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive reappraisal in adults.

H3: There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal sensitivity and positive emotional reactivity in adults.

H4: There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal sensitivity and negative emotional reactivity in adults.

## **Operational Definitions**

Interpersonal Sensitivity is defined as the sum of total scores assessed using the Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure (IPSM), which consists of 36 items and was developed by Boyce & Parker (1989). The scale assesses heightened awareness and sensitivity to others' behaviors, criticism, and perceived rejection.

Emotion Regulation is defined as the sum of total scores assessed using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which consists of 10 items and was developed by Gross & John (2003). The scale evaluates cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression as strategies for emotion regulation. The cognitive reappraisal has 6 items and expressive suppression has 4 items.

Emotional Reactivity is defined as the sum of total scores assessed using the Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale – Short Form (PERS-S), which consists of 18 items and was developed by Preece et al. (2019). The scale assesses emotional reactivity in terms of ease of activation, intensity, and duration of emotional responses. It separately measures positive emotional reactivity (9 items) and negative emotional reactivity (9 items), allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's emotional responsiveness.

### **Research Design**

The study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies and emotional reactivity.

### **Sampling**

The population of the current study includes both male and female adults aged between 18-55 years. The data has collected from adults. A sample of 220 adults both male and female is selected using a convenience sampling method to ensure accessibility and diverse demographic representation.

### ***Inclusion Criteria***

- Adults of age 18-55 is included
- Adults who understands English language are included

### ***Exclusion Criteria***

- Adults with limited cognitive ability or language comprehension.
- Individuals who have diagnosed with mental disorders.

### **Measures**

#### ***Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure (IPSM)***

The Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure (IPSM), developed by Boyce & Parker (1989), is a 36-item self-report scale designed to assess excessive awareness and sensitivity to others' behavior and emotions. It measures five dimensions: fear of rejection, need for approval, social and interpersonal awareness, timidity and lack of assertiveness, and separation anxiety. Each item is rated on a Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater interpersonal sensitivity. The IPSM has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. Additionally, test-retest reliability over four weeks was reported to be 0.80, confirming its stability over time. The scale has also shown good construct validity, correlating significantly with measures of social anxiety, self-esteem, and interpersonal dependency.

#### ***Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale – Short Form (PERS-S)***

The Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale – Short Form (PERS-S), developed by Preece et al. (2019), is an 18-item self-report measure designed to assess emotional reactivity across three key dimensions: ease of activation, intensity, and duration of emotional responses. It includes nine items measuring positive emotional reactivity and nine items measuring negative emotional reactivity, providing a comprehensive assessment of individual differences in emotional sensitivity. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unlike me) to 5 (very like me), with higher scores indicating greater emotional reactivity. The PERS-S has demonstrated strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > 0.80) and test-retest reliability (> 0.75), ensuring its stability over time. Factor analysis has

confirmed its distinct subcomponents, and it has shown strong construct validity by correlating significantly with measures of emotional dysregulation, mood disorders, and personality traits, making it a reliable tool for assessing emotional reactivity in both clinical and research settings.

### ***Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)***

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), developed by Gross & John (2003), is a 10-item self-report scale that assesses two major emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Cognitive reappraisal, measured through six items, refers to altering one's thoughts about an emotional situation to change its impact, whereas expressive suppression, measured through four items, involves inhibiting outward emotional expressions. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater use of the respective strategy. The ERQ has demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.79 for cognitive reappraisal and 0.73 for expressive suppression. Test-retest reliability over three months was found to be 0.69 for cognitive reappraisal and 0.72 for expressive suppression, ensuring the scale's temporal stability. The ERQ has also exhibited strong construct validity, with significant correlations to measures of emotional well-being, affect regulation, and personality traits.

**Table 1**

*Shows the reliability of Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure, Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale and Emotion Regulation Questionnaire*

<b>Scales</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
<b>Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure</b>	0.902
<b>Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale</b>	0.906
<b>Emotion Regulation Questionnaire</b>	0.807

## **Procedure**

The data for the study is collected using a direct questionnaire method. A total of 220 adults aged 18 to 55 years is selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The data has collected through google forms. Informed consent has been obtained before data collection. Socio-demographic data has collected, followed by the administration of standardized questionnaires assessing interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity. Confidentiality of the data is ensured, and the collected information is used solely for research and publication purposes. Participants is informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Ethical considerations has followed, ensuring that the research does not cause any distress or harm to participants.

## **Ethical Consideration**

Participation in this study is fully voluntary, allowing individuals to choose whether or not to take part. Before participating, each subject is given a written consent form that explains the study's objective, procedures, potential benefits, and any dangers.

To ensure that ethical research requirements are met, participants' confidentiality and privacy are strictly protected. All collected data is securely saved, and any personally identifiable information is anonymised or coded to avoid publication.

## **Data Analysis Technique**

Data were analyzed using Jamovi version 2.6.44. Since the data were non-parametric, the Mann-Whitney U test was used for group comparisons. Spearman correlational analysis was used to examine the relationships between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity.

**Table 2***Shows the normality*

	Shapiro-wilk	
	<b>W</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure</b>	0.979	0.002
<b>Emotional Reactivity</b>	0.980	0.004
<b>Emotion Regulation Strategies</b>	0.990	0.129

## **Chapter IV**

### **Result and Discussion**

The present study aims to examine the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity in adults. Data were analyzed using Jamovi, employing non-parametric tests, including the Mann-Whitney U test for group comparisons and Spearman's correlation analysis for assessing relationships between variables. The results and discussion of these findings are presented here.

## Descriptive Statistics

**Table 3**

*Descriptive statistics of Interpersonal Sensitivity, Emotional Reactivity and Emotion Regulation Strategies*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interpersonal Sensitivity	220	99.1	16.0
Emotional Reactivity	220	63.8	13.6
Emotion Regulation Strategies	220	43.9	11.6

The sample size for Interpersonal Sensitivity, Emotional Reactivity, and Emotion Regulation Strategies is 220 participants. The mean values for each variable are 99.1 for Interpersonal Sensitivity, 63.8 for Emotional Reactivity, and 43.9 for Emotion Regulation Strategies. The standard deviations for these variables are 16.0 for Interpersonal Sensitivity, 13.6 for Emotional Reactivity, and 11.6 for Emotion Regulation Strategies.

## Correlation Analysis

**H1:** There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal Sensitivity and expressive suppression in adults.

**Table 4**

*Shows the correlation between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Expressive Suppression*

	Expressive Suppression
Interpersonal Sensitivity	0.066

Spearman's rho correlation shows low positive relationship [ $r(220) = 0.066$ ] between interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression among adults. There is no significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression. The lack of a significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression might be because their connection is too weak. The influence of expressive suppression on interpersonal sensitivity could be subtle or context-dependent, and individual differences in how these traits are expressed may further weaken any potential link. While emotional suppression might affect emotional expression, it does not necessarily have a direct or consistent impact on interpersonal sensitivity. Hence, the H1, is not rejected.

Previous studies have shown similar findings regarding the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression. Butler et al. (2003) found that expressive suppression had a weak correlation with interpersonal sensitivity, suggesting that suppressing emotions does not significantly impact social interactions but may contribute to social distress. Similarly, Srivastava et al. (2009) reported that while expressive suppression was not strongly linked to interpersonal sensitivity, it was associated with reduced emotional sharing and weaker social bonds. These studies support the current finding that there is no significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression.

**H2:** There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Cognitive Reappraisal

**Table 5**

*Shows the correlation between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Cognitive Reappraisal*

	Cognitive Reappraisal
Interpersonal Sensitivity	-0.107

Spearman's rho correlation shows low negative relationship [  $r(220) = -0.107$ ] between interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive reappraisal among adults. There is no significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive reappraisal. The lack of a significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive reappraisal might be because their connection is not strong or consistent. While previous studies suggest a weak negative correlation, individual differences in emotional reactivity and coping strategies might limit the strength of the relationship, making it difficult to detect a significant effect. Hence, the H2, is not rejected.

Previous studies have reported a low negative correlation between interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive reappraisal. Egloff et al. (2006) found that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity were less likely to engage in cognitive reappraisal, possibly due to heightened emotional reactivity. Likewise, Kühn et al. (2011) observed that those who are highly sensitive to social cues tend to rely less on cognitive reappraisal, as they may struggle to reframe emotional experiences objectively. These findings align with the current study, indicating a weak but negative relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive reappraisal.

**H3:** There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Positive Emotional Reactivity

**Table 6**

*Shows the correlation between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Positive Emotional Reactivity*

	Positive Emotional Reactivity
Interpersonal Sensitivity	-0.151*

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Spearman's rho correlation shows significant negative relationship [  $r(220) = -0.107$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ] between interpersonal sensitivity and Positive emotional reactivity among adults.

There is a significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and positive emotional reactivity. The significant negative relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and positive emotional reactivity may reflect that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity are more emotionally reactive, but they may have difficulty sustaining or experiencing positive emotions. This could be due to their heightened awareness and processing of social cues, which may lead to emotional overwhelm or distress, thus limiting their ability to enjoy positive emotional experiences. Hence, the H3, is rejected.

Previous studies have reported similar findings regarding the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and positive emotional reactivity. Boyce and Ellis (2005) found that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity are more prone to heightened emotional responses, which can limit their positive emotional experiences. Similarly, Aron and Aron (1997) suggested that highly sensitive individuals may process social interactions more deeply, leading to increased emotional distress and a reduced ability to sustain positive emotions. These studies align with the current finding that there is a significant but low negative relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and positive emotional reactivity.

**H4:** There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Negative Emotional Reactivity

**Table 7**

*Shows the correlation between Interpersonal Sensitivity and Negative Emotional Reactivity*

	Negative Emotional Reactivity
Interpersonal Sensitivity	0.227***

\*\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

Spearman's rho correlation shows significant positive relationship [  $r(220) = -0.107$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ] between interpersonal sensitivity and negative emotional reactivity among adults. There is a significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and negative emotional reactivity. The relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and negative emotional reactivity is significant because highly sensitive individuals are more likely to experience stronger emotional responses, particularly to negative stimuli or stressful situations. Their heightened awareness of social and environmental cues makes them more vulnerable to emotional distress, which leads to a greater tendency to react negatively to challenges. Hence, the H4, is rejected.

Previous studies have shown similar findings regarding the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and negative emotional reactivity. Boyce & Ellis (2005) found that highly sensitive individuals tend to exhibit stronger negative emotional responses to social and environmental stressors, making them more reactive to negative experiences. Likewise, Liss et al. (2005) reported that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity are more prone to heightened emotional distress, anxiety, and negative affect in response to interpersonal challenges. These studies support the current finding that there is a significant positive relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and negative emotional reactivity among adults.

## **Chapter V**

## **Conclusion**

## **Key Findings**

- There is no significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression in adults.
- There is no significant relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and cognitive reappraisal in adults.
- There is a significant negative relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and positive emotional reactivity in adults.
- There is a significant positive relationship between interpersonal sensitivity and negative emotional reactivity in adults.

## **Implications**

The findings of this study have practical, theoretical, and policy implications. Practically, individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity often experience heightened emotional reactivity, which can negatively impact social interactions and mental well-being. The study highlights the need for emotion regulation training in clinical settings, particularly focusing on cognitive reappraisal techniques to help individuals better manage emotional responses. Theoretically, the study adds to the literature by confirming that interpersonal sensitivity has a significant positive relationship with negative emotional reactivity and a significant negative relationship with positive emotional reactivity, aligning with findings from Boyce & Ellis (2005) and Aron & Aron (1997). From a policy perspective, these findings suggest that incorporating emotional regulation programs into mental health interventions could be beneficial in promoting emotional resilience, particularly for individuals prone to heightened interpersonal sensitivity.

## **Limitations**

Despite its contributions, this study has several methodological and practical constraints. One major limitation is its cross-sectional design, which prevents establishing

causal relationships between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation, and emotional reactivity. A longitudinal study would be necessary to determine how these relationships evolve over time. Another significant limitation is the low sample size of 220 participants, which reduces the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the use of convenience sampling may not fully represent the diversity of the population, limiting the external validity of the findings. Finally, cultural and contextual factors were not considered, despite evidence from Kim & Martinez (2019) that cultural background significantly influences emotion regulation and interpersonal sensitivity.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

To overcome the limitations and build upon the findings, future research should take several directions. First, a longitudinal study is needed to examine how interpersonal sensitivity and emotion regulation strategies evolve over time, which would provide stronger evidence of causality. Second, increasing the sample size would improve the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Studies with larger and more diverse samples would offer more comprehensive insights. Third, experimental research should be conducted to test the effectiveness of emotion regulation interventions, such as cognitive reappraisal training, mindfulness therapy, or cognitive-behavioral techniques, in reducing negative emotional reactivity among individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity. Finally, cultural comparisons should be explored to understand how different social norms and values shape emotion regulation strategies and interpersonal sensitivity. Given that emotion regulation strategies differ across cultures, such studies would contribute to a more global understanding of interpersonal sensitivity.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity, emotion regulation strategies, and emotional reactivity in adults. The tools used in the study were the Interpersonal sensitivity measure (IPSM), Perth emotional reactivity scale- short form (PERS-S) and Emotion regulation questionnaire (ERQ). The results indicated that interpersonal sensitivity has a significant positive relationship with negative emotional reactivity and a significant negative relationship with positive emotional reactivity, suggesting that individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity tend to experience stronger negative emotions and lower positive emotional responses. However, no significant relationship was found between interpersonal sensitivity and expressive suppression or cognitive reappraisal, implying that individuals with heightened interpersonal sensitivity may not rely on these emotion regulation strategies effectively. Among the emotion regulation strategies examined, cognitive reappraisal emerged as the most effective, as previous research suggests it is associated with better psychological well-being and emotional resilience. Given these findings, developing interventions that enhance cognitive reappraisal skills could help individuals with high interpersonal sensitivity regulate their emotions more adaptively. Overall, this study underscores the importance of understanding the interplay between interpersonal sensitivity, emotional reactivity, and regulation strategies, contributing to psychological research and informing therapeutic approaches aimed at improving emotional well-being.

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## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Consent Form**

I, Fia F Shaji pursuing postgraduate degree under the department of psychology at St Teresa's College, Ernakulam is conducting research for my academic purpose. Your participation is highly appreciated and it would help contribute towards the advancement of my study. Please don't dwell on the statements too much and instead provide the first answer that comes to your mind. Please read the instructions carefully and answer the questions without any consequence. It will only take 30 minutes of your valuable time. You are entirely free to decline participating in this study without having any negative effects. Even if you agree to take part in the study, you can withdraw at any time. The data will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for academic purpose only. Kindly fill the details required. If you have any doubts, please contact fiashaji62@gmail.com. Here by I express my sincere gratitude for your cooperation.

## **Appendix B: Sociodemographic Details**

Name (in initials):

Age:

Gender:

Qualification:

Area of Living: Rural / Urban

### Appendix C: Interpersonal Sensitivity Measure

#### Instructions to Subjects

A number of statements are listed below which relate to how you might feel about yourself and other people in your life. Please indicate with a tick in the appropriate place how each one applies to you - i.e. whether it is "very like you", moderately like you, moderately unlike you, or very unlike you. Respond to each statement in terms of how you are generally and not necessarily just at present. There are no right or wrong answers.

		Very Like	Mod Like	Mod Unlike	Very Unlike
1.	I feel insecure when I say goodbye to people				
2.	I worry about the effect I have on other people				
3.	I avoid saying what I think for fear of being rejected				
4.	I feel uneasy meeting new people				
5.	If others knew the real me, they would not like me				
6.	I feel secure when I'm in a close relationship				
7.	I don't get angry with people for fear that I may hurt them				
8.	After a fight with a friend, I feel uncomfortable until I have made peace				
9.	I am always aware of how other people feel				
10.	I worry about being criticised for things I have said or done				

11.	I always notice if someone doesn't respond to me				
12.	I worry about losing someone close to me				
13.	I feel that people generally like me				
14.	I will do something I don't want to do rather than offend or upset someone				
15.	I can only believe that something I have done is good when someone tells me it is				
16.	I will go out of my way to please someone I am close to				
17.	I feel anxious when I say goodbye to people				
18.	I feel happy when someone compliments me				
19.	I fear that my feelings will overwhelm people				
20.	I can make other people feel happy				
21.	I find it hard to get angry with people				
22.	I worry about criticising other people				
23.	If someone is critical of something I do. I feel bad				

24.	If other people knew what I am really like, they would think less of me				
25.	I always expect criticism				
26.	I can never be really sure if someone is pleased with me				
27.	I don't like people to really know me				
28.	If someone upsets me, I am not able to put it easily out of my mind				
29.	I feel others do not understand me				
30.	I worry about what others think of me				
31.	I don't feel happy unless people I know admire me				
32.	I am never rude to anyone				
33.	I worry about hurting the feelings of other people				
34.	I feel hurt when someone is angry with me				
35.	My value as a person depends enormously on what others think of me				
36.	I care about what people feel about me				

### Appendix D: Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale

This questionnaire is designed to measure different aspects of how you typically react to experiencing emotional events. Please score the following statements according to how much they apply or do not apply to you on a typical day. Circle one answer for each question.

		Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither Like or unlike me	Somewhat Like me	Very like me
1.	I tend to get happy very easily	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I tend to get upset very easily	1	2	3	4	5
3.	When I'm happy, the feeling stays with me for quite a while.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	When I'm upset, it takes me quite a while to snap out of it.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	When I am joyful, I tend to feel it very deeply	1	2	3	4	5
6.	If I'm upset, I feel it more intensely than everyone else.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I feel good about positive things in an instant	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I tend to get disappointed very easily.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	When I'm feeling positive, I can stay like that for a good part of the day	1	2	3	4	5
10.	It's hard for me to recover from frustration	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I experience positive mood very strongly	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Normally, when I'm unhappy I feel it very strongly	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I react to good news very quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I tend to get pessimistic about negative things very quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I can remain enthusiastic for quite a while.	1	2	3	4	5

16.	Once in a negative mood, it's hard to snap out of it.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	When I'm enthusiastic about something, I feel it very powerfully	1	2	3	4	5
18.	My negative feelings feel very intense.	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix E: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

We would like to ask you some questions about your emotional life, in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions. The questions below involve two distinct aspects of your emotional life. One is your emotional experience, or what you feel like inside. The other is your emotional expression, or how you show your emotions in the way you talk, gesture, or behave. Although some of the following questions may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways.

For each item, please answer using the following scale:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span><b>strongly</b></span> <span><b>neutral</b></span> <span><b>strongly</b></span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span><b>disagree</b></span> <span></span> <span><b>agree</b></span> </div>

1. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about.
2. \_\_\_\_ I keep my emotions to myself.
3. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I'm thinking about
4. \_\_\_\_ When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them.
5. \_\_\_\_ When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.
6. \_\_\_\_ I control my emotions by not expressing them.
7. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.
8. \_\_\_\_ I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in.
9. \_\_\_\_ When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them.
10. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.