

The Role of Positive and Negative Experiences of Interpersonal Interaction and Goal Achievement in Development of Social Self-Regulation

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This study aims to examine the effect of positive/negative experiences of interpersonal interaction and goal achievement on social self-regulation (SSR), that the ability to inhibit or assert the self depending on internal and external needs in social settings. We investigated the process that the relation between SSR in junior high school years and SSR in college years could be mediated by interpersonal interaction and goal achievement experiences in high school years. Results of analysis using retrospective data from undergraduates indicated that the experiences of goal achievement contribute to SSR success. Additionally, experiences overcoming negative interpersonal conflict promoted SSR.

Key words: social self-regulation, interpersonal interaction, goal achievement

Social self-regulation (SSR) has been defined as the ability to inhibit or assert the self depending on internal and external needs in social settings when there is a discrepancy among desire, intention, and current perception (Harada, Yoshizawa, & Yoshida, 2008). Although previous studies (Harada, Yoshizawa, & Yoshida, 2009, 2010) have clarified that the effect of SSR on antisocial behavior is stronger than the effect of temperament facets of self-regulation (behavioral inhibition/behavioral approach system, effortful control), it remains unknown what factors promote SSR.

There is much evidence that parenting behavior relates to the development of self-regulation in young children (McCabe, Cunningham, & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). In comparison, the development of self-regulation in adolescents can be considered to be related to interpersonal interaction within a

broader range of people (parents as well as peers, partners, and teachers). The interpersonal interactions could promote self-regulation because they offer opportunities to learn social norms and behavior (Vygotsky, 1978). Actually, studies on early childhood suggested that sociodramatic play contributes importantly to the development of self-regulation (Elias & Berk, 2002), and that peers can create beneficial contexts for the development of self-regulation (Fabes, Hanish, & Martin, 2003). Although interpersonal interactions including friendships and romantic relationships affect socialization in adolescents, few studies have examined them directly (Arnett, 2008).

Adolescent self-regulation within social settings differs from that in early childhood from the aspects of autonomy. Self-regulation in adolescence is autonomous self-regulation in which regulation is based mainly on internalized social norms, whereas that in early childhood is heteronomous self-regulation in which regulation occurs as a response to a parent's request. Therefore, the experiences of achievement of goals which one set for oneself is critical to promoting subsequent self-regulation behavior in adolescents. This is consistent with Kashiwagi's claim (1988) that self-regulation develops along with shifts from external reinforcement to self-reinforcement. It is also suggested that self-regulated behavior is promoted by both extrinsic reward and by the fulfillment and satisfaction derived from goal achievement (Niina, 1998).

The purpose of this study is thus to explore the factors that promote self-regulation in adolescents with emphasis on interpersonal interactions and goal achievement. In particular, we investigated the processes by which the relation between SSR in middle-school years and SSR in college years is mediated by interpersonal interaction and goal achievement experiences in high-school years. In addition, we also predict that the development of SSR would be positively affected by negative interpersonal interactions, if one could overcome the experiences. To examine the processes, we examine both the experiences and whether one got over the experience or not.

METHOD

A total of 166 undergraduates were instructed to recall their middle-to-late adolescence (from middle school to college).

The self-regulation ability during middle-school years and current self-regulation ability was assessed using the Social Self-Regulation scale (Harada et al., 2008), consisting of self-assertiveness (e.g., "I can express my opinion, even if I am not supported by the majority."), patience (e.g., "I work without giving in to temptation when I have a role within a group."), and emotion/desire inhibition (e.g., "I can talk calmly without losing my cool even when things do not work out to my satisfaction."). Participants rated their responses on a five-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*).

The positive/negative experiences during high-school years were assessed by a scale measuring interpersonal interaction

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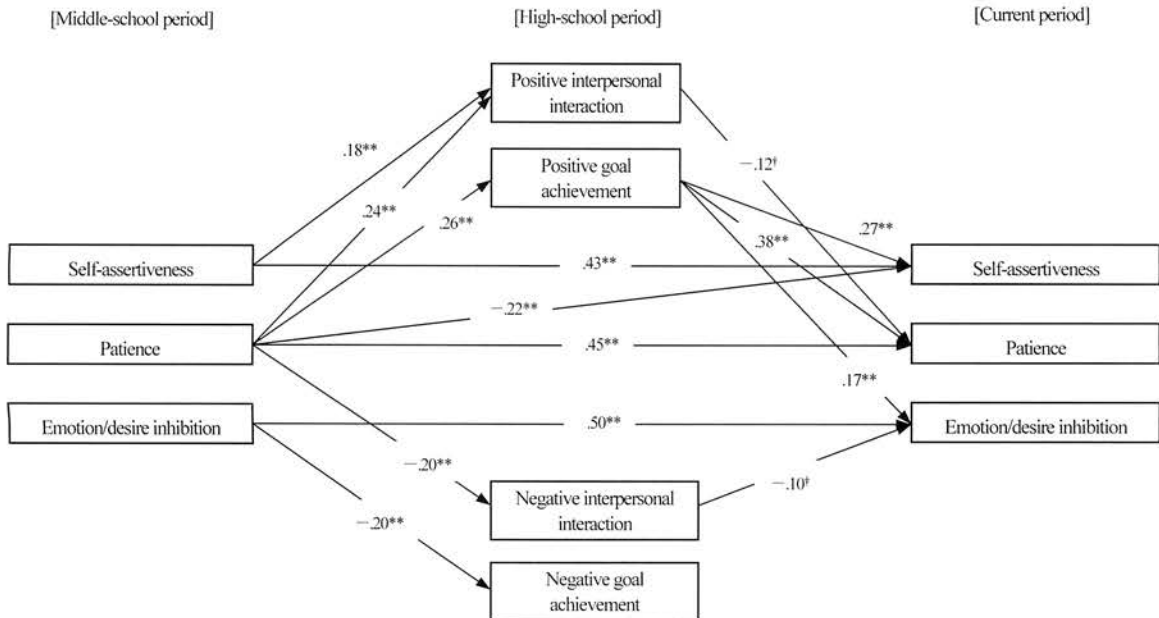


Fig. 1. The effect of interpersonal interaction and goal achievement on SSR.

and goal achievement experiences. The scale was a modified version of Takahira's scale (1998) consisting of positive experiences of the interpersonal domain (e.g., the experiences that were trusted by others), negative experiences of the interpersonal domain (e.g., the experience of being neglected by others, and of shortcomings being pointed out by others), positive experiences in the achievement domain (e.g., experiences in which studying went as planned), and negative experiences in achievement domain (e.g., experiences in which hobbies and enrichment lessons had not progressed as intended). Participants were asked how often they had experienced 60 distinct incidents (15 items \times 4 domains) during high-school years (coded from 0 = never to 7 = very often). For the 15 negative interpersonal conflict items, participants were asked how well they overcame each event (coded from 1 = did not get over the experience well, 5 = got over the experience well).

RESULTS

We adopted structural equation modeling approach to explore the processes; the relation between SSR in middle-school years and SSR in college years could be mediated by interpersonal interaction and goal achievement experiences in high-school years. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed measurement model. This model had an acceptable level of fit ($\chi^2(21) = 16.84$, $p = .72$, GFI = .98, AGFI = .95, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00).

In comparing the relationships between variables for middle school versus high school, SSR in middle school increased positive experiences and decreased negative experiences regardless of the domain.

In the effect of interpersonal interaction and goal achieve-

ment in high school on SSR in the current period, positive experiences of goal achievement promoted all three facets of SSR: self-assertiveness, patience, and emotion/desire inhibition. However, positive interpersonal interaction did not promote SSR.

Next, we examined the effect of the experiences in which one overcame negative interpersonal conflicts, on three facets of SSR separately. Among the participants who indicated high negative interpersonal conflicts (participants with scores above the mean of, $n = 63$), the result of multiple regression analysis, in which SSR in middle school was controlled, revealed that the experiences of getting over negative interpersonal conflict promoted self-assertiveness ($\beta = .22$, $p = .06$, $R^2 = .25$).

CONCLUSION

The result of our structural equation modeling approach indicated that the experiences of goal achievement contribute to self-regulation success in social settings. Moreover, it is revealed that both positive and negative experiences (if the individual gets over them) contribute to improving aspects of SSR. These findings are consistent with our hypothesis.

However, we did not observe positive effects of positive experiences of interpersonal interaction on SSR. The results indicated that effect of positive experience could not be observed because we had focused on the frequency of positive experiences. Future research could benefit from adopting a longitudinal and participant-observation based approach.

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