

TOWARDS AN EMOTIONAL REGULATION SCALE FOR ADOLESCENTS

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Introduction: Mental Health of adolescents is of global concern as rising suicide rates and evidence of the impact of mental health issues on disability-adjusted life years (DALY) of adolescents, is alarming. In South Africa, most adolescent suicides occur due to mental illness, drug abuse and the availability of weapons at home. A key concept in adolescents' mental health is the ability to regulate their emotions.

Objectives: A group of researchers identified the need for the development of an emotional regulation scale, with the purpose of early detection and identification of ineffective and risky emotional regulation strategies used by adolescents. This presentation will describe the process followed thus far in the development of this scale, through reporting on three research studies conducted.

Method: A preliminary scale was developed from indicators in literature. A quantitative, descriptive study was done on a population of 404 adolescents, with the aim to identify and describe valid scale items. Results obtained were used to refine the scale and this process was repeated through another two quantitative descriptive studies on respectively 719 and 307 adolescents from diverse contexts.

Results: The current scale, still in development, consists of 90 items and categorises emotional regulation strategies into self-harm, social expression, creative activities, substance use, physical activity, avoidance and spiritual engagement.

Conclusion: Even though the scale tested valid on the respective populations described, further development is indicated to ensure the applicability of the scale on diverse adolescent populations, as well as diverse health care settings in South Africa.