

Abstract

Background: Adolescence is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood during which significant changes occur across dimensions of emotional experience, including emotional clarity. Although recent studies have examined deficits in emotional clarity across psychopathologies, how deficits in emotional clarity compare across psychopathologies in young adults remain unclear. As such, this review aimed to ascertain the importance of emotional clarity across psychopathologies.

Methods: Eight studies were selected from 458 articles, including a total sample of 1,705 patients and 1,790 healthy control participants. The studies measured emotional clarity using self-report measures, such as the Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS), Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS). A meta-analysis was conducted including 16 effect sizes, comparing patients with one or more psychopathology to healthy participants on level of emotional clarity.

Results: A significantly worse or more impaired emotional clarity was found in patients with one or more psychopathologies compared to healthy participants. There were insufficient effect sizes to compute subgroup differences in level of emotional clarity, highlighting the dearth of studies examining the normative development of emotional development and deficits in emotional clarity as a potential risk factor for young adults to develop psychopathologies.

Conclusions: Given the findings from this meta-analysis, impaired emotional clarity could be a common process across psychopathologies among young adults.

Keywords: emotional clarity, young adults, psychopathologies, psychiatric disorders, mental disorders