The Association Between Health Regulatory Focus and Responses to Physicians

Michael Vang, Jacqueline Hua, MA, & Jennifer L. Howell, PhD
University of California, Merced

INTRODUCTION

Regulatory Focus

- A goal-pursuit theory that explains an individual's motivation to either accomplish gains (promotion-focused) or avoid losses (prevention-focused; Ferrer et al., 2017).

Regulatory Focus and Health

- Past studies suggest that one's regulatory focus may influence one's health behaviors (Uskul et al., 2008).
- Taking medication is associated with being prevention-focused.
- Eating healthy food is associated with being prevention-focused.

Health Regulatory Focus

- The Health Regulatory Focus scale measures regulatory focus specifically toward health goals (Ferrer et al., 2017).
- Health regulatory focus has been linked to a host of health behaviors such as:
  - Purchasing healthy foods or visiting physicians (Gomez et al., 2013).
  - Practicing sports (Laroche et al., 2019).

Health Regulatory Focus and Responses to Physicians

- Past research suggests that health regulatory focus may also relate to how patients respond to physicians. For example:
  - Regulatory focus influences patient adherence (Zhang et al., 2019).
  - Tailoring messages to fit a patient's regulatory focus improves medication adherence (O'Connor et al., 2019).
- Nevertheless, no studies have examined whether health regulatory focus relates to perceptions of physicians.

OBJECTIVE

- In two studies, we examined the associations between health regulatory focus and affective reactions to physicians.
  - Study 1 examined health regulatory focus and reactions to physicians among an online sample.
  - Study 2 examined health regulatory focus and reactions to physicians among a patient sample.

RESULTS

STUDY 1

Results: Bivariate correlation test

- Promotion focus was positively related to positive affective reactions toward the physician, \( r(87) = .213, \ p < .01 \).
- Prevention focus was not related to positive affective reactions toward the physician, \( r(87) = -.011, \ p = .812 \).

CONCLUSIONS

- Based on our results, it seems that health regulatory focus is related to perceptions of healthcare providers during patient-physician interactions.
- The findings suggest that being promotion-focused may be related to more positive reactions to physicians.
- Conversely, being prevention-focused was not related to affective reactions to the physician.

STUDY 2

Results: Bivariate correlation test

- Promotion focus was positively related to positive affective reactions toward the physician, \( r(89) = .250, \ p < .019 \).
- Prevention focus was not related to positive affective reactions toward physician, \( r(88) = -.058, \ p = .592 \).

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mentor: Dr. Jennifer Howell
Graduate Student: Jacqueline Hua
UC Merced Summer Opportunity for Advanced Research (SOAR) Program

CONTACT INFORMATION

Michael Vang
mvang65@ucmerced.edu