

Abstract

Many researches have confirmed that listeners feel distressed in the process of dyadic affect regulation. Batson (1997) found that listeners could have two different natures of distress, which can be termed as other-oriented distress and self-oriented distress. However, past researches investigating this topic have ignored this important issue, the orientations of distress, which possibly have different underlying mechanisms. Moreover, correlational studies of distress mainly employed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, which can only reflect a person's tendency to feel distressed but not the actual amount of distress felt in a real situation. Therefore, the current study aims to explore how personal characteristics, namely emotion contagion, self-esteem, and affect regulation affect listeners' two distinctive orientations of distress. A new mechanism was proposed to suggest the relationships between the personal characteristics mentioned and the orientations of distress. It is demonstrated that emotion contagion is a general factor which contributes to listeners' general sensitivity to distress. Self-esteem and affect regulation are discovered to be the specific factors that associate with self-oriented distress.

Keywords: self-oriented distress, other-oriented distress, emotion contagion, self-esteem, affect regulation, alexithymia