

# Effect of Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Relations: Mediating Role of Interpersonal Communication

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## ABSTRACT

The current study examined the role of interpersonal relationships, interpersonal communication and emotional regulation strategies among North India and NCR service sector employees. The sample incorporates 671 insurance, banking, education and health sector employees with diverse demographic characteristics, selected through purposive sampling. The study tests the mediation effect of interpersonal communication among reappraisal and suppression strategies of emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships while examining the proposed model fitness. Structural equation modeling (SEM) results uncovered a significant relationship between i) emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) & interpersonal communication, ii) emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) & interpersonal relationship and iii) interpersonal communication & interpersonal relationship. Interpersonal communication proves to be partially mediating in the relationship between emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) & interpersonal relationships.

Further, the results highlight that the model is a good fit, thus having predictive relevance. The present research findings have both theoretical and practical implications. The study contributes by

extending the theory of workplace relationships. The proposed model introduces interpersonal communication as a mediator between emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) and interpersonal relationships among service sector employees. The findings suggest that organizations conduct training programs for employees, which can guide them in a constructive way to regulate emotions using reappraisal and suppression. Thus, maintaining the quality of interpersonal communication at the workplace in order to create a healthy ambiance in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Emotional regulation, Interpersonal Communication, Interpersonal relationship, PLS-SEM, Model fit

## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Relationships are the lifeblood and an engine of any workplace that pushes every individual to work better. Along with this, employees are the most valuable asset of the organization. Though the workplace is going through digital transformation with lesser interaction among employees, the employee's interpersonal relations are priceless to keep the work environment healthy. Among the basic requisites for performing work, relations are the ones that employees develop at their workplace, and subsequently, it becomes a reason for their stay in that job even when they are no longer required to work (Halbesleben, 2012). Positive work relationships are marked by pleasant

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interpersonal interactions and emotions and involve a genuine sense of relatedness and mutuality, where both parties improve and enrich each other's experiences (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

In building healthy relations at work, interpersonal communication works like a channel that transfers one's emotions to another. Xie and Derakhshan (2021) define interpersonal communication as a two-edged sword that can build employees up or tear them down if unconstructive. Accordingly, communication is the substance of relations that are established and maintained. This way relationship loses its charm if feelings are not expressed or reciprocated through any mode of communication. Interpersonal relationships cannot be created and maintained without communication and the practical ability to communicate (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). However, commonly known that communication adds to the relationship quality, but among the studies focusing on employees, majorly studies have focused on the relationship in the context of superior and subordinate relations at the workplace. Surprisingly, there is a dearth of research focused on employees' mutual relationships and further very scarce in the Indian service sector.

In an article from September 2021, Munro stated that learning to regulate one's emotions can facilitate improving one's communication skills, which will create a positive difference in managing professional relationships. This way, emotions are the base of a relationship and how emotions are regulated and communicated to one another acts as a pillar of the relationship.

Emotional regulation is a person's ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience, giving authority to the user to dampen, intensify or simply maintain those emotions. Its significance is confined to selfand management of emotions influence relationships. The buffer-blocking technique

transforms the conflict in a group by acting as a behavioral control measure in interpersonal interactions (Van Den Berg *et al.*, 2014). Hence, the relationships are not just the content of conversations but the emotions behind those conversations. The exchange of emotions works like a glue that holds a relationship between people at work.

It is suggested by theorists that emotions are either suppressed or reappraised. Suppression is a kind of emotional regulation tactic that makes uncomfortable, crushing moods and feelings more controllable. At the same time, suppression deals with regulating emotional expression by means of controlling to express or neutralizing emotional behavior (Matsumoto, 2008). Reappraisal is the control over emotional experience by altering the self-thought contents after an emotion has emerged or evaluating emotion-eliciting stimuli differently. Reappraisal strengthens the relationship (Kardum *et al.*, 2021). When a person cannot manage emotions via reappraising, resorting to suppression also restrains the individual from damaging the bond by communicating unhealthy emotions (Le & Impett, 2013; Geisler *et al.*, 2015).

Lopes *et al.* (2005) insisted that research needs more exploration of the role of emotional regulation abilities in interaction quality. However, the literature still faces a dearth in considering the role of emotional regulation abilities in interpersonal communication, which the present study addresses. Further, very few researchers have considered the role of reappraisal and suppression in interpersonal communication and particularly in the service sector. The service sector involves frequent interaction with clients, and such job roles require emotional regulation competence and high social competence skills, considering the sector's growth (Johnson *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, as contended by Methot *et al.* (2017), the study of relationships at work is a cornerstone in management research at current

times. The present study focuses on two significant dimensions (emotional regulation and interpersonal communication) that influence relationships at work among service sector employees. Many studies have discussed the role of emotional regulation in an interpersonal relationship, but the most common mechanism used to regulate emotions which are reappraisal and suppression, has not been studied in the context of relationships at work.

Thus, based on the discussed void in the literature, the present study raises a few major questions:

- RQ1. How much influence does reappraisal and suppression of emotions have on interpersonal communication in service sector employees of North India?
- RQ2. Does interpersonal communication among service sector employees of North India significantly influence interpersonal relationships?
- RQ3. How much effect do reappraisal and suppression of emotions create on the interpersonal relationships of North Indian service sector employees?
- RQ4. Does interpersonal communication mediate the relationship between emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) and interpersonal relationships?

The paper is organized as follows: initial part includes the meaning and significance of the variables undertaken (emotional regulation, reappraisal, suppression, interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationship) in the study. Next, the rigorous review makes the foundation for the model proposed in the study. Further, collected data was analyzed using PLS-SEM (partial least squares-structural equation modeling). Afterward, findings from the research were described, and the results were reported with their theoretical implications. Lastly, the

practical implication of the current findings has been discussed along with the scope for prospective researchers.

## 2. REVISIT TO LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

### 2.1 Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Communication

Emotional regulation, being a part of emotional intelligence, has been overlooked in the context of the quality of its effect on social interactions (Lopes *et al.*, 2005). It was observed that several researchers had uncovered the role of emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) in interpersonal communication. In this direction, following the gross process model, Kafetsios *et al.* (2013) comment that using reappraisal to regulate emotions by doctors may cause effective communication with their patients as compared to suppression, while they found that higher emotional regulation competency of a doctor perceived by patients was related with better non-verbal communication among them. While English and John (2013) opine that suppressing one's emotions may have a different effect as per the cultural differences, East Asians use suppression in specific instances to maintain smooth interactions in relationships.

Considering the role of emotional regulation as a whole, researchers have highlighted its role in interpersonal communication. Matsumoto *et al.* (2005) stated that regulating one's emotional reactions is a gatekeeper in building successful intercultural communication. Further, Sutton *et al.* (2009) deduced through their research that practicing emotional regulation supports teachers in confidently communicating their positive emotions in class. Also, in an investigation by Oz (2015), it was found that the ability to regulate the emotions of participating students played a distinctive role in their willingness to communicate in a second language learned by them. In another

study, McCloughen and Foster (2017) conducted that students manage their emotional reactions to resolve challenging interactions.

In line with this research, Ghaemi *et al.* (2018) also underlined that regulating emotions enhances the quality of interaction in personal and professional aspects of life. Similarly, Çiray *et al.* (2021) opine that problems in regulating emotions may cause ineffective communication in social settings for adolescents with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. Further, it was confirmed in a study conducted by Eweida *et al.* (2022) as well that applying various emotional regulation strategies by nurses resulted in their effective communication with patients.

This way, controlling emotions results in better communication. Thus, based on the available studies showing the role of emotional regulation and its strategies (reappraisal and suppression) ineffective communication, we postulate that-

- **H<sub>1</sub>:** *Reappraisal has a positive and significant influence on interpersonal communication.*
- **H<sub>2</sub>:** *Suppression has a positive and significant influence on interpersonal communication.*

## **2.2 Interpersonal Communication and Interpersonal Relationship**

The concomitant role of communication and interpersonal relationships is as old as life on this earth. Social exchange theory also points out that self-interest drives people to social interaction and develop relationships, Blau (1964). Various studies have highlighted the significance of communication in personal relations, social relations and at work, mainly in leader-member exchange relationships. In this direction, Jablin (1979) asserted that open communication plays a significant role in the relationship between superior and subordinate. Graen and Scandura(1987) further contributed

to a theory of LMX by proposing that daily interactions build an understanding of the relationship between leader and member at the workplace. Waldron (1991) also confers through his study that maintaining the relationship with the supervisor is the vital goal of communication for the subordinate in the leader-member relationship.

Communication is a primary component in any social relationship in development, maintenance and even at the stage of demise (Duck, 1994). Frymier and Houser (2000) asserted through their research that communication skills are functional in various relationships. Interpersonal communication and relationships are interdependent, and Bakaret *al.* (2009) found that for the best results, workers need to be encouraged to share their needs with their supervisor. Further, Awad and Alhashemi (2012) suggest strengthening communication ties to build healthy organizational relationships.

Lack of communication ability results in difficulties in interpersonal relationships, as faced by adolescents with attention deficit and hyperactivity (Çiray *et al.*, 2021). In line with the above research study, Barton *et al.*(2017) figured out that a program for couples focusing on improving communication resulted in better relationship quality in an assessment after 9 months. While Agarwal and Narayana (2019) studied the relationship between buyer and supplier, they also deduced that frequent interaction of supplier regarding quality information with the buyer cause trust building and, ultimately, satisfaction in the relationship. Kusmaningtyas and Erfiana (2021) also stamp through their study that effective communication is required to build relationships. Kalu and Lake (2022) also supported that a lack of communication skills degrades the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Thus, based on strong literature support, we propose that:-

- *H<sub>3</sub>: Interpersonal communication has a positive and significant influence on interpersonal relationships.*

### **2.3 Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Relationship**

Emotional regulation serves the purpose of maintaining a relationship (Cassidy, 1994). In a study, Waldron and Krone (1991) identified that employees express and suppress their emotions to effectively maintain their relationships at work. Similarly, Gross and Muñoz (1995) also acknowledged the need for emotional regulation in maintaining social and personal relations. In another research, Contreras and Kerns (2000) deduced that the development of emotional regulation skills starts within a parent-child relationship, which is further reflected in other relations, like relationships with peers and in relations outside the family. Further, in a study on students, Lopes *et al.* (2005) conveyed that a higher score in terms of emotional regulation ability improved the quality of social relationships in such a manner that students found themselves more prosocial and sensitive in interpersonal interactions as compared to their counterparts.

Extending further research, teachers reported using different emotions regulating interventions as it improves their relationship with children in the classroom (Sutton *et al.*, 2009). In line with these researches, Curşeu *et al.* (2012) also found that task conflict has the lowest chance of getting into relationship conflict with affective and emotional regulation mechanisms. In another study by Oz (2015), regulating emotions resulted in establishing and maintaining a mutually satisfying nature of relationships among students. Looking at its imperative role, Miano *et al.* (2017) suggest employing more emotional regulating interventions for better social relations and interpersonal interactions.

Some studies have also explored the effects of reappraisal and suppression on

relationship quality Gross, and John (2003) concluded through their research that people following reappraisal share both positive and negative emotions with others, due to which they had a close relationship with their friends while those following suppression had a relationship but not that close as they are reluctant to share their emotions with others. Considering the role of reappraisal of emotions, Finkel *et al.* (2013) found that it reduced distress caused by interpersonal conflict and acted as a shield against a decline in marital relations. At the same time, following suppression by even one person in a relationship caused dissatisfaction (Sasaki *et al.*, 2021). Even Kardum *et al.* (2021) found that reappraisal resulted in a significant and positive effect on satisfaction in a relationship in both males and females, while suppression created by only women created dissatisfaction in a relationship.

Contrary to the studies resembling the negative effect of suppression on relations, Sy and Côté (2004) aver that individuals can promote trust and respect in a relationship by suppressing such unpleasant emotions, which can damage a relationship. Supporting this, Leand Impett (2013) assert that in a relationship where people are highly dependent on each other, they sacrifice their interests for their relationship to survive, which contributes to promoting relationship quality. Geislerand Schröder-Abé (2015) also found that suppressing emotions was positively related to satisfaction in a relationship among couples for those with high self-regulatory strength, while unhealthy consequences for couples with low self-regulation strength.

Thus, it is unclear whether the consequences of suppressing emotions by self-control are harmful (Geisler & Schröder-Abé, 2015; Fahd *et al.*, 2021). Fahd *et al.* (2021) opine that when it is challenging to reappraise, people might only be left to suppress their

negative emotions. Hence, we hypothesize that-

- **H<sub>4</sub>:** *Reappraisal has a positive and significant effect on interpersonal relationships.*
- **H<sub>5</sub>:** *Suppression has a positive and significant effect on interpersonal relationships.*

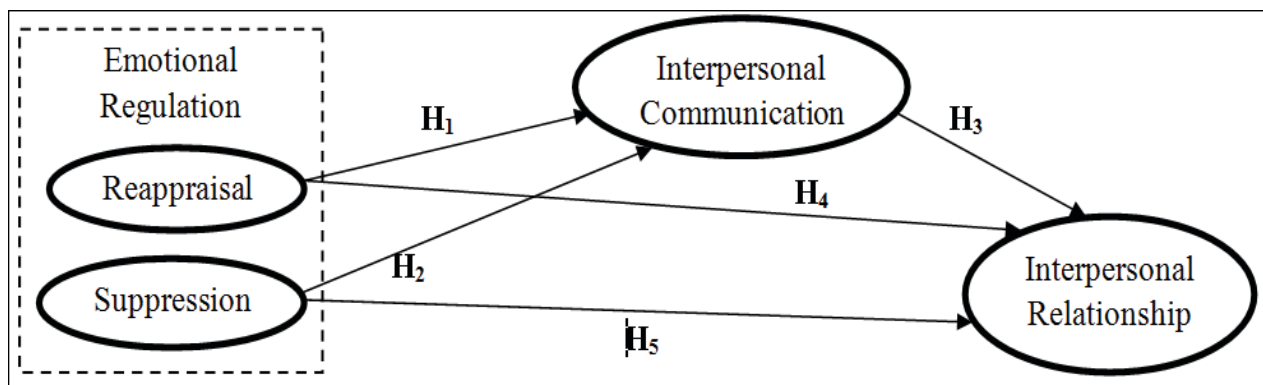
### 2.4 Interpersonal Communication as a Mediator

The literature outlined in developing the previous hypotheses explains that regulating emotions leads to better interpersonal communication (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2008; Eweida *et al.*, 2022) and enhances relationship quality (Oz, 2015; Fahd *et al.*, 2021). Further, studies prove that higher interpersonal communication facilitates quality relationships (Barton *et al.*, 2017; Kusmaningtyas & Erfiana, 2021). Several studies have assessed interpersonal communication as a mediator, like in the research by Pitts *et al.* (2012). The quality of team communication in virtual settings mediated the association between emotional intelligence, including managing emotions and the team's ability to work together in a group. The study shows that

communication facilitates bonding in the team to work together. Further, Bloch *et al.* (2014), in a study on marital relations, identified constructive communication acted as a mediator between wives' down-regulation of negative emotions and wives' perception of satisfaction in marital relations. Giving further support to the mediatory role of interpersonal communication, Li *et al.* (2021) conveyed through their study that satisfaction in mutual communication partially mediated between emotional intelligence and job well-being, where well-being includes a better relationship between nurses and patients. Hence, the literature gives a sturdy base to analyze the following hypotheses for the present study:-

- **H<sub>6</sub>:** *Interpersonal communication mediates the relationship between reappraisal and interpersonal relationships.*
- **H<sub>7</sub>:** *Interpersonal communication mediates the relationship between suppression and interpersonal relationship.*

Thus, based on the literature, Figure 1 shows the proposed research model, representing the above set of hypotheses.



**Figure 1: Proposed Research Model** (Source: Researcher's Proposal)

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Data Collection Procedure and Participants

Data were collected from employees belonging to the insurance, banking, education

and health sector. Teachers, doctors & nurses and employees directly dealing with the public in insurance and banking were randomly selected based on convenience. A purposive sampling method was employed to select the

sample from numerous North India and NCR cities so that only employees with experience

above 1 year in a particular organization were included in the study.

**Table 1: Sample Characteristics**

Profile	Category	Frequency (671 employees)	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	484	72.1
	Female	187	27.9
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	481	71.7
	Unmarried	190	28.3
<b>Work Experience</b>	1-5 years	188	28.0
	5-10 years	163	24.3
	10-15 years	125	18.6
	above 15years	195	29.1
<b>Industry</b>	Insurance	212	31.6
	Banking	183	27.3
	Education	171	25.5
	Health	105	15.6

(Source: Primary Data)

The sample was collected from January 2019 to February 2020 through a questionnaire. Out of the total received responses, 780 data was cleaned based on missing responses, unengaged responses and outliers and finally, data of 671 was retained and carried further for analysis. As shown in Table 1, male employees responded more highly to the survey (72.1 percent) than females. Unmarried employees were comparatively lesser (28.3 percent), while married employees (71.7 percent) majorly participated in the study. 29.1 percent of employees had experience above 15 years, which is a significant contributor to the total sample. Only 15.6 percent of health sector employees gave their opinion to the survey.

**3.2 Instrument**

The predictor variable, Emotional regulation, was adopted from the study of

Gross and John (2003), a 10-item scale measuring reappraisal (REAP) with 6 items and suppression (SUPR) with 4 items on a 7 point Likert scale. Items of Interpersonal communication, a mediator variable, were adapted from the scale given by Bienvenu and Stewart (1976), and statements were reworded as per the requirement of the study. A final 17 items represented the scale of interpersonal communication. While the target variable, Interpersonal Relationship, was measured through a self-designed scale consisting of 21 items, where content validity was ensured before employing it for the data collection. The mediating and target variables were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale. The guidelines given by Jarvis *et al.* (2003) ensured that the scales used in the present study are reflective. Figure 2 shows the framework of the measurement model evaluated in the study.

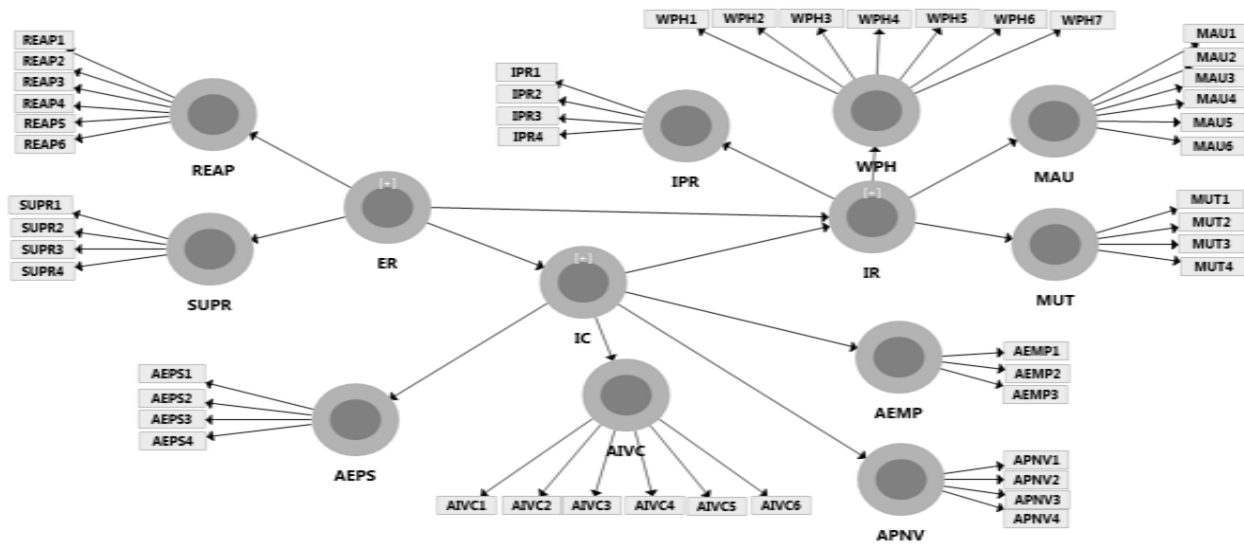


Figure 2: Measurement Model (Source: PLS-SEM)

### 3.3 Common Method Variance (CMV)

To ensure that the data is free from biases, firstly, the respondents have ensured the anonymity of their responses. Subsequently, Harman's single-factor test was employed to check the standard method biases (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). A single factor explained a variance of only 28.35 percent upon factor analysis, which covers less than 50 percent of the total variance. Hence, the data is free from CMV issues to further evaluate the measurement model.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### 4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

Initially, the measurement model's convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated to confirm the factors. Data were analyzed using SMART PLS 3 following the guidelines given by Hair *et al.* (2019), as the software can handle complex models

smoothly. Further, PLS-SEM is considered superior when it includes evaluating the mediation effect in the structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2021). Convergent validity.

In the first order, the measurement model was evaluated through the reliability and validity of indicators and constructs, respectively, as shown in Table 2. After that, based on the latent variable score of the first order, the second-order model was designed. The majority of the outer loadings of the items, resembling the reliability of the items, were above the threshold value of 0.708 (Hair *et al.*, 2019), while few items less than that were retained as the AVE limit was achieved for all the first order constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Further, Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 and composite reliability (C.R.) above 0.7 and less than 0.95 ensures internal consistency of the latent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

Table 2: Measurement Model Assessment at First Order

Variables	Constructs	Items	Outer loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE	VIF
Reappraisal as a tool for Emotional Regulation	Reappraisal (REAP)	REAP1	0.734	0.879	0.909	0.624	1.82
		REAP2	0.770				1.921
		REAP3	0.811				2.078
		REAP4	0.777				1.889



<b>(E.R.)</b>		REAP5	0.802				2.258
		REAP6	0.840				2.438
<b>Suppression as a tool for Emotional Regulation (E.R.)</b>	Suppression (SUPR)	SUPR1	0.901	0.856	0.903	0.701	2.821
		SUPR2	0.673				1.444
		SUPR3	0.890				2.593
		SUPR4	0.865				2.26
<b>Interpersonal Communication</b>	Active Involvement in Communication (AIVC)	AIVC1	0.815	0.831	0.877	0.546	2.016
		AIVC2	0.583				1.277
		AIVC3	0.700				1.479
		AIVC4	0.788				1.867
		AIVC5	0.733				1.567
		AIVC6	0.791				1.808
	Ability to Empathize (AEMP)	AEMP1	0.839	0.802	0.883	0.716	1.792
		AEMP2	0.868				1.851
		AEMP3	0.830				1.592
	Ability to Persuade through Non-Verbal Cues (APNV)	APNV1	0.770	0.754	0.843	0.574	1.489
		APNV2	0.807				1.547
		APNV3	0.694				1.452
		APNV4	0.757				1.549
	Ability to Express Self (AEPS)	AEPS1	0.814	0.826	0.884	0.657	1.738
		AEPS2	0.820				2.126
		AEPS3	0.845				2.179
AEPS4		0.761	1.468				
<b>Interpersonal Relationship</b>	Interpersonal Regard (IPR)	IPR1	0.792	0.806	0.873	0.632	1.675
		IPR2	0.798				1.602
		IPR3	0.829				1.77
		IPR4	0.758				1.599
	Mutual Acceptance and Upliftment (MAU)	MAU1	0.802	0.917	0.936	0.708	2.115
		MAU2	0.860				2.742
		MAU3	0.842				2.409
		MAU4	0.869				2.858
		MAU5	0.825				2.261
		MAU6	0.849				2.537
	Mutual Trust (MUT)	MUT1	0.874	0.889	0.923	0.750	2.49
		MUT2	0.865				2.52
		MUT3	0.863				2.315
		MUT4	0.862				2.358
	Workplace Harmony (WPH)	WPH1	0.725	0.873	0.902	0.570	1.686
		WPH2	0.835				2.321
WPH3		0.754	1.766				
WPH4		0.750	1.729				
WPH5		0.766	1.977				
WPH6		0.803	2.185				
WPH7		0.638	1.489				

(Source: Primary Data (PLS-SEM))

The average variance explained (AVE) of all the first-order (shown in table 2) and second-order constructs (shown in table 3) were above 0.5, indicating more than 50 percent of variance explained by all

constructs, thereby ensuring convergent validity. A variance inflated factor (VIF) less than 3.3 ensures that no item has a multicollinearity issue (Petter *et al.*, 2007).

**Table 3: Measurement Model Assessment at Second Order**

Variables	Constructs	Outer loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE	VIF
<b>Interpersonal Communication (I.C.)</b>	AMP	0.729	0.742	0.835	0.562	1.421
	AIVC	0.858				1.709
	APNV	0.774				1.426
	AEPS	0.618				1.284
<b>Interpersonal Relationship (I.R.)</b>	APR	0.788	0.862	0.906	0.708	1.618
	MAU	0.877				2.825
	MUT	0.879				2.477
	WPH	0.819				2.254

(Source: Primary Data (PLS-SEM))

**4.2 Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity needs to be assessed in the first order, confirming that all the constructs are dissimilar. Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion was used in the present study, where diagonal values reflect the square root value of the AVE of the latentvariable, and the

criterion says that those values should be higher than the off-diagonal values, indicating the latent variable's correlation with another latentvariable. Hence, the results depicted in table 4 show that discriminant validity for all the constructs has been met.

**Table 4:Discriminant Validity using Fornell Larcker Criteria**

	AEMP	AIVC	APNV	AEPS	IPR	MAU	MUT	REAP	SUPR	WPH
AEMP	<b>0.846</b>									
AIVC	0.524	<b>0.739</b>								
APNV	0.374	0.501	<b>0.758</b>							
AEPS	0.311	0.419	0.381	<b>0.81</b>						
IPR	0.301	0.416	0.393	0.277	<b>0.795</b>					
MAU	0.230	0.379	0.317	0.212	0.523	<b>0.842</b>				
MUT	0.253	0.385	0.353	0.227	0.601	0.716	<b>0.866</b>			
REAP	0.323	0.411	0.350	0.136	0.328	0.353	0.342	<b>0.79</b>		
SUPR	0.206	0.306	0.294	0.071	0.240	0.283	0.279	0.404	<b>0.838</b>	
WPH	0.243	0.368	0.214	0.245	0.467	0.729	0.627	0.283	0.158	<b>0.755</b>

(Source: Primary Data (PLS-SEM))

**4.3 Hypothesis Testing**

To test the hypothesis with direct and indirect relationships, PLS-Bootstrap with 5000 sub-samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) at a 5

percent level of significance was run, of which results are shown in Table 5. The outcomediscloses that both constructs of emotional regulation, reappraisal with a

t-value of 9.59 and suppression with a t-value of 4.721, has a significant and positive effect on interpersonal communication; their respective  $\beta$  value is 0.361 and 0.177. However, an F-square value below 15 percent (Cohen, 1988) shows that both reappraisal and suppression have a comparatively low effect on interpersonal communication.

Similarly, reappraisal and suppression of emotions significantly and positively influenced interpersonal relationships with a t-value of 5.013 ( $\beta= 0.192$ ) and 2.531 ( $\beta=0.09$ ),

respectively. However, the F-square value shows that such an effect size is small. The  $\beta$  value of 0.38 between interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationships with a significant t-value of 9.82 approves the positive and significant effect. Further, the F-square value shows that such an effect is moderate, the value of the F-square being above 15 percent. Thus, the result supports all proposed hypotheses measuring direct relationships. Figure 3 shows path coefficients and T-value of higher-order constructs.

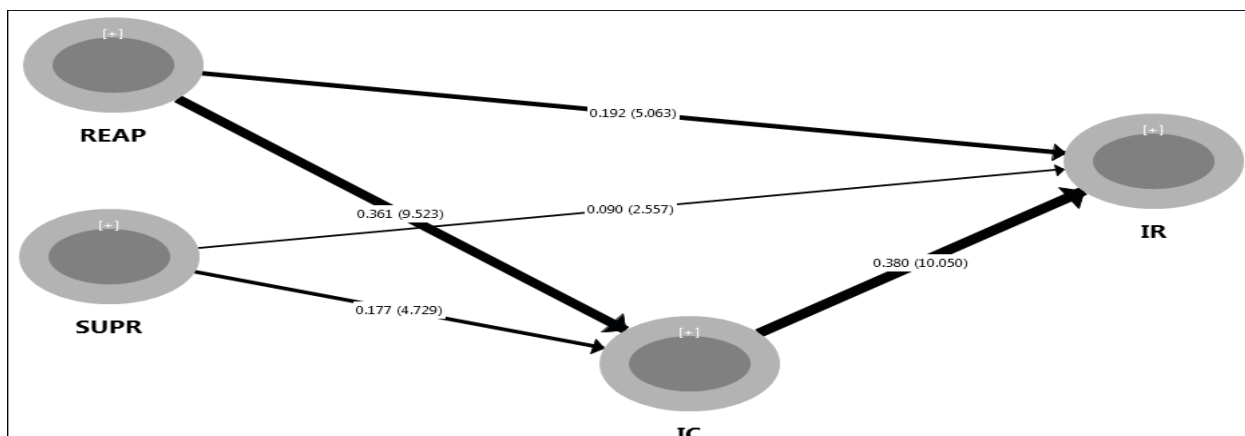
**Table 5: Hypothesis Testing and Mediation Analysis**

Hypotheses	Path	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	T-Value	Decision	F square	Effect size
<b>Hypothesis testing by Direct Effects</b>							
H1	REAP -> IC	0.361	0.038	9.523*	Supported	0.137	Low
H2	SUPR -> IC	0.177	0.038	4.729*	Supported	0.033	Low
H3	IC -> IR	0.380	0.039	10.050*	Supported	0.159	Moderate
H4	REAP -> IR	0.192	0.038	5.063*	Supported	0.038	Low
H5	SUPR -> IR	0.090	0.036	2.557*	Supported	0.010	Low
<b>Indirect effects caused by Mediation</b>						<b>VAF %</b>	<b>Level of Mediation</b>
H6	REAP-> IC -> IR	0.137	0.020	6.946*	Partially Supported	41.64	Partial Mediation
H7	SUPR -> IC -> IR	0.067	0.016	4.105*	Partially Supported	42.68	Partial Mediation

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$ ; Source: Primary Data (PLS-SEM)

**4.4 Mediation Analysis**

As all constructs significantly affect one another, we move ahead in finding the mediation power among the constructs.



**Figure 3: Path Coefficients and T-Value of Higher Order Constructs (Source: PLS-SEM)**

To assess the magnitude of Mediation, Hair *et al.* (2016) recommended two criteria: t-value and the VAF (variance accounted for). Table 5 highlights that both the indirect effects are significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) with  $\beta$  values of 0.137 and 0.067, respectively. Thus, interpersonal communication is a significant mediator in the relationship between reappraisal (t-value= 6.946) and interpersonal relationships and the relationship between suppression and interpersonal relationship (t-value= 4.105). However, as the direct relationship between reappraisal and interpersonal relationship and suppression and interpersonal relationship are significant in the presence of a mediator, the indirect path coefficients reveal that the mediation effect caused by interpersonal communication in such relationship is partial. Hence, the results partially confirm the hypotheses ( $H_6, H_7$ ).

Further, VAF also confirms the partial mediation effect. It is calculated manually by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect (direct+indirect effect). It shows the size of the mediation effect, and its value above 20 percent resembles that the mediation effect created by interpersonal communication is partial (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

#### 4.5 Model Fitness

**Table 6: Model Fit**

Endogenous Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	SRMR<0.08
IC	0.215	0.112	0.066
IR	0.289	0.197	

(Source: Primary Data (PLS-SEM))

Moving further to confirm the last parameter for structural model evaluation, PLS- blindfolding with a distance of 7 was used to assess the value of Q square, which explains the prediction power of a model. A

Conformity of the measurement model paved the way for structural model assessment, as shown in Table 6. To evaluate the mediation model, Preacher and Hayes' approach was adopted (Hair *et al.*, 2014). On the recommendation of Hair *et al.* (2016), based on 4 parameters structural model was assessed, which includes the t-value (significance of path coefficients), R<sup>2</sup> value (the coefficient of determination), f<sup>2</sup> (effect size) and the Q<sup>2</sup> (the predictive relevance of a model) evaluation. All path coefficients, as shown in table 5, were found to be significant. However, the value of f<sup>2</sup> revealed that reappraisal and suppression both created a common effect on interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationship, whereas interpersonal communication had a moderate effect on interpersonal relationships. However, the R-square, which explains the model's power, shows that both predictors (reappraisal and suppression) explain the moderate variance of 21.5 percent in interpersonal communication, a value below 26 percent (Cohen, 1988). While in the case of interpersonal relationships, all predictor variables (reappraisal, suppression, interpersonal communication) create a substantial effect, explaining a variance of 28.9 percent. This implies that other than reappraisal and suppression, both the endogenous variables (I.C. and I.R.) depend on many factors which explain them.

value above zero ensures that the model has adequate predictive relevance (Hair *et al.*, 2016), with interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationship as an endogenous variables. Further, the SRMR value of 0.066

shows that model has a good fit as its value below 0.08 is recommended (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

## 5. DISCUSSION AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study aimed to unearth interpersonal communication as a mediator amid reappraisal and suppression forms of emotional regulation and interpersonal relations. Factors were confirmed for all the variables undertaken through PLS-SEM, and all variables fulfilled the required criteria. Bootstrapping results disclosed that reappraisal and suppression significantly influenced interpersonal communication at work, which approves hypotheses H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>. However, the effect was low, showing that various other factors affect employees' communication levels. Suppression was found to have significantly less effect on interpersonal communication as compared to reappraisal, which has parallels with literature (Kafetsios *et al.*, 2013) as well. Thus, the results analyzed in the study contribute to the theory in this area where research is still in its infancy (Lopes *et al.*, 2005)

Consistent with the literature (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Agarwal & Narayana, 2019), interpersonal communication significantly influenced relationships among service sector employees, supporting hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>. The moderate effect size of interpersonal communication on interpersonal relationships is depicted through the F-square value. Results contribute to extending the theory on workplace relationships, especially in sparse studies on employees, whereby many studies are confined to the sphere of leader-member relationships.

The significance of the t-value shows that following employee reappraisal and suppression of emotions significantly affects their relationships, confirming hypotheses H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub>. The effect of reappraisal, as evaluated in the present study, is in line with previously established studies (Gross & John, 2003;

Kardum *et al.*, 2021). While as explained by Kardum *et al.* (2021), that suppression has some positive effects which might cut off its detrimental effect on a relationship owing to which results in the present study also explains the positive effect of suppression on the relationship within service sector employees. However, the F-square value shows that such an effect size is small. However, the study still has a worthy contribution by explaining the role of reappraisal and suppression of emotions in relationships of service sector employees, where surprisingly, research is sparse.

Mediating effect results show that interpersonal communication is a cornerstone in building effective relationships, and only regulating emotions is insufficient to establish relationships.

Owing to the significant direct effects between emotional regulation strategies and interpersonal relationships and as the VAF value was above 20 percent, it was deduced that interpersonal communication partially mediated in the relation. To the finest authors' knowledge, no study has considered interpersonal communication as a mediator between emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) and interpersonal relationships among service sector employees; thus, the study is bridging a giant vacuum in this arena. Further, SRMR value within limits ensured that the proposed model has adequate fitness, and the result reveals that it has satisfactory predictive relevance for further research.

## 6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Besides theoretical contribution, the study offers numerous practical implications for employees and organizations. First, the study assists organizations should recognize the significant role of relations between co-workers to retain its most valuable assets, which are employees. Second, organizations should consider conducting training programs

for employees to guide them on the constructive way to regulate emotions using reappraisal and suppression. Third, organizations should boost employees for healthy mutual interaction, like encouraging team works, because only regulating emotions does not significantly affect relationships. However, when the appropriate emotions are interchanged through interaction, the quality of relationships improves. Fourth, the study advises employees to use reappraisal of emotions over suppression to enhance their relationship quality at work, along with giving equivalent concern to the quality of interpersonal communication.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE

The study has left the footsteps of further research in the areas not covered in the present study. First, a longitudinal study can be conducted to examine the frequency of reappraisal and suppression of emotions by employees under different situations and to measure its effect on interpersonal communication and relationships. Second, the study undertook only service sector employees, which opened the avenues for further research on the general population and personal and social relations. Third, as the present study is under the boundary line of employees of insurance, banking, education and health sector, future research can uncover other industries in the service sector and explore other sectors like agriculture and manufacturing. Fourth, though the study has included a significant portion of North India and NCR, future researchers can replicate the study in other Indian regions and abroad and on a large sample. Further, the study can be explored by conducting an experimental study considering the model of the present study. Above all, in the present model, interpersonal communication partially mediated the relationship between emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) and interpersonal relations, which can be extended further by exploring other mediators in this relationship.

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