

Indirect Direct Self-Harm: Examining Functions of Self-Triggering with Nonsuicidal Self-Injury Content

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BACKGROUND

Self-triggering (ST):
intentional exposure to reminders of a traumatic event that incites reexperiencing symptoms of **posttraumatic stress (PTS)**

Nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI):
direct physical mutilation of body tissue performed without the intent to die and for purposes not socially sanctioned

Past studies:

- Extensive research on functions of NSSI while ST research nascent stages
- ST has only been studied within post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Individuals who engage in NSSI have reported seeking graphic online depictions of NSSI that incite psychological distress and the urge to self-injure

Current study aims:

- **Study 1:** Determine the extent to which ST occurs outside of PTS
- **Study 2:** Revise the existing Self-Triggering Questionnaire (STQ) to assess the function of ST when it is not linked traumatic event

METHODS

Study 1

Participants ($N = 12$) will:

- be 18-24 years old ($M = \#$, $SD = \#$);
- $\#$ % female ($n =$);
- $\#$ % White ($n =$); and
- **endorse co-occurring NSSI and ST engagement**

Prospective Procedure:

- All participants will respond to series of self-report questionnaires followed by semi-structured interview
- Codebook will be created to identify themes of functions not currently represented in the STQ for PTS
- **STQ Reasons subscale** will be revised to include and address NSSI-specific functions (ST-NSSI) endorsed by participants

Study 2

Participants ($N = 300$) will:

- be 18- $\#$ years old ($M = \#$, $SD = \#$);
- $\#$ % (fe)male ($n =$);
- $\#$ % [race/ethnicity] ($n =$); and
- **endorse co-occurring NSSI and ST engagement**

Prospective Procedure:

- Administer questionnaire online to Reddit forums with NSSI content
- Conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using maximum likelihood estimation and oblimin rotation
- **Revise items of generalized STQ Reasons subscale as necessary**

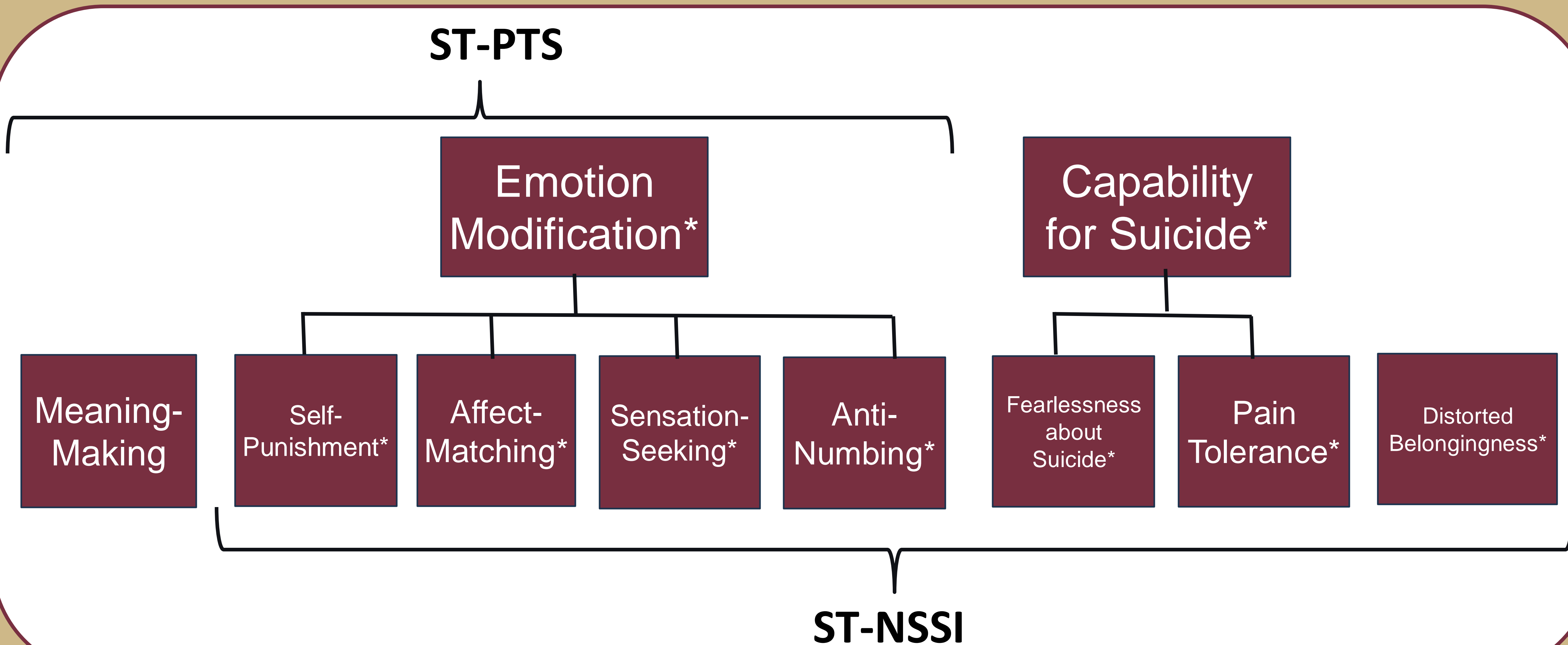
PROSPECTIVE RESULTS

3-factor solution:

(1) Emotion Modification; (2) Distorted Belongingness; and (3) Capability for Suicide
[Acceptable] fit, with NFI = [.##], RMSEA = .## (95% CI = [.##, .##])

PROSPECTIVE RESULTS

"[P]ictures trigger me a lot, so I want to self-injure again"



Note. Functions of **self-triggering with post-traumatic stress content (ST-PTS)** found in Bellet et al.'s (2020) exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and McGhie et al.'s (2023) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). *Functions of self-triggering with **nonsuicidal self-injury content (ST-NSSI)** are the predicted results of the EFA in Study 2.

DISCUSSION

ST found to be transdiagnostic:

- Individuals without lifetime PTS(D) engage in ST with NSSI content (ST-NSSI)
 - NSSI-specific content rather than content tied to one specific traumatic event as seen with ST-PTS
- Existence of ST-NSSI is evidence to support NSSI as a disorder**

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Clarify the role of ST-NSSI in the **Experiential Avoidance Model of NSSI**
- Distinguish between individuals who engage in co-occurring NSSI and ST with **content of a traumatic event** versus **content of direct self-injury**
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions targeting NSSI for individuals engaging in ST-NSSI

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REFERENCES

