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## The Role of Acting with Awareness on Sleep Quality and Difficulties with Emotion Regulation

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# Examining the Role of Acting with Awareness on Sleep Quality and Emotion Regulation

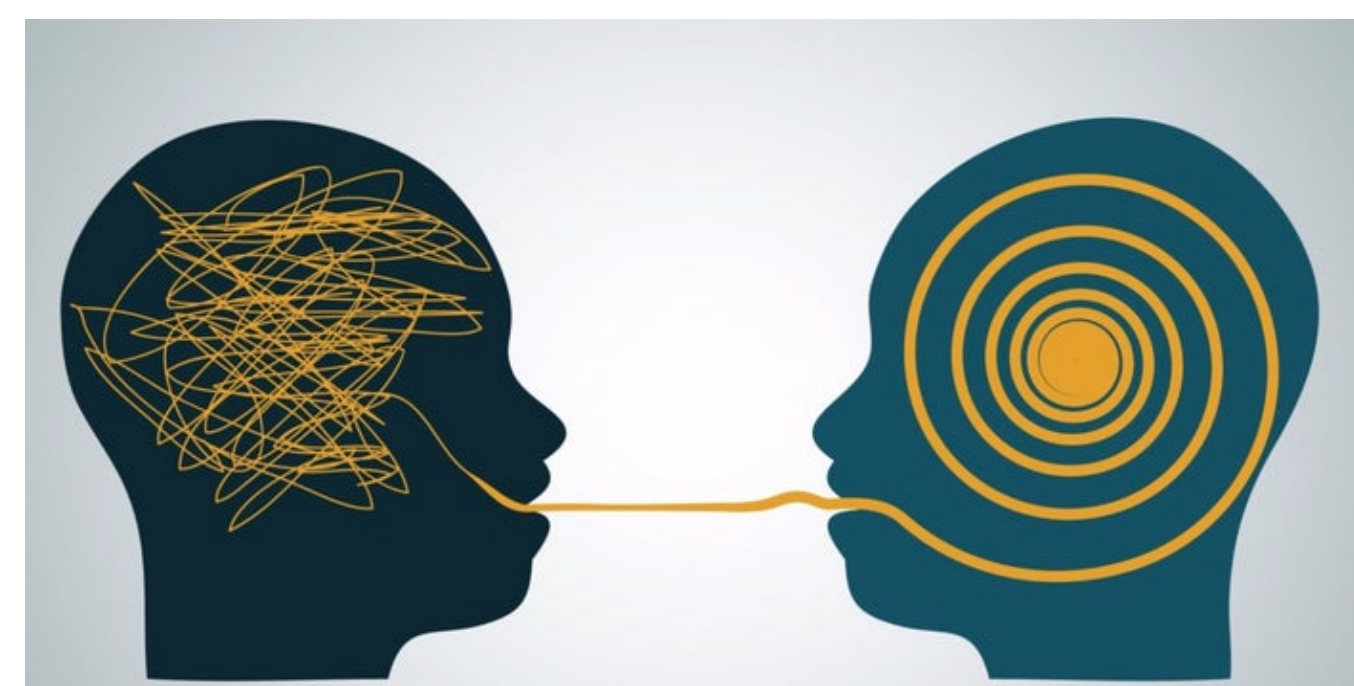
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## Introduction

- **Emotion Regulation:** strategies utilized to alter or manage the experience of intense emotions
  - Beneficial to our health and social relationships
- **Poor Sleep Quality:** challenges one's ability to effectively regulate emotions, especially in college-aged adults
- **Mindfulness:** how we focus our attention on internal feelings and emotions in relation to external experiences
  - **Acting with Awareness:** one of the five facets of mindfulness, defined as the ability to become and remain focused on the current activity, rather than "running on automatic"

Previous research has shown that individuals with poorer sleep tend to suffer more with accepting their own emotions and engaging in goal-directed behavior, controlling their impulses, and understanding their emotions – specifically during the experience of negative emotions (Voinescu & Sandru, 2014).



## Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be a positive relationship between poor sleep quality and difficulties with emotion regulation; such that poor sleep quality will be positively associated with greater difficulties in emotion regulation.

**Hypothesis 2:** The relationship between poor sleep quality and difficulties with emotion regulation will be in part explained by less acting with awareness.

## Methodology

### Participants

- N = 471 ( $M_{age} = 19.09$ ;  $SD = 2.25$ ; 72.70% Female)

### Procedures

Undergraduate students completed multiple self-reported measures

#### a. Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)

Measure of sleep habits, patterns, duration, efficiency, etc. in seven domains for the majority of days and nights within the past month including self-reported numbers and a 4-point Likert type scale.

- Sample item: "During the past month, how often have you had trouble sleeping because you cannot get to sleep within 30 minutes?"

#### b. Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)

Self-report measure of the six facets of emotion regulation on a 4-point Likert type scale. Higher scores indicated more difficulty in emotion regulation.

- Sample item: "When I'm upset, I acknowledge my emotions"

#### c. Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)

A 39-item measure that assessed five facets of mindfulness: observe, describe, acting with awareness, non-judgment, and non-reactivity. Higher scores indicated a higher level of each facet. 8-items specific to Acting with Awareness.

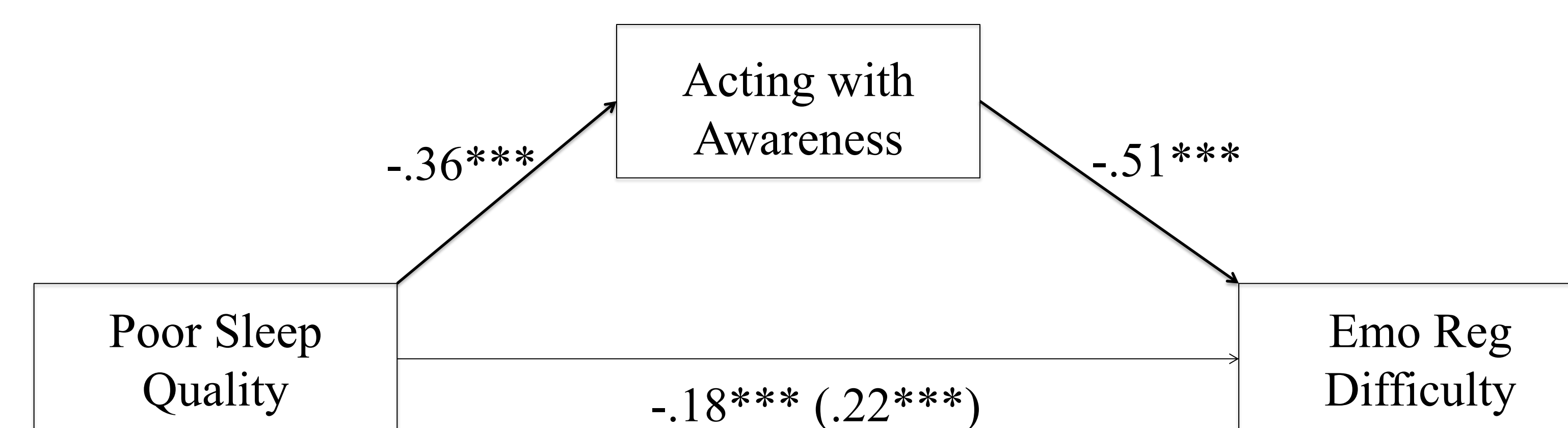
- Sample item: "When I have distressing thoughts or images, I "step back" and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it."

## Results and Figures

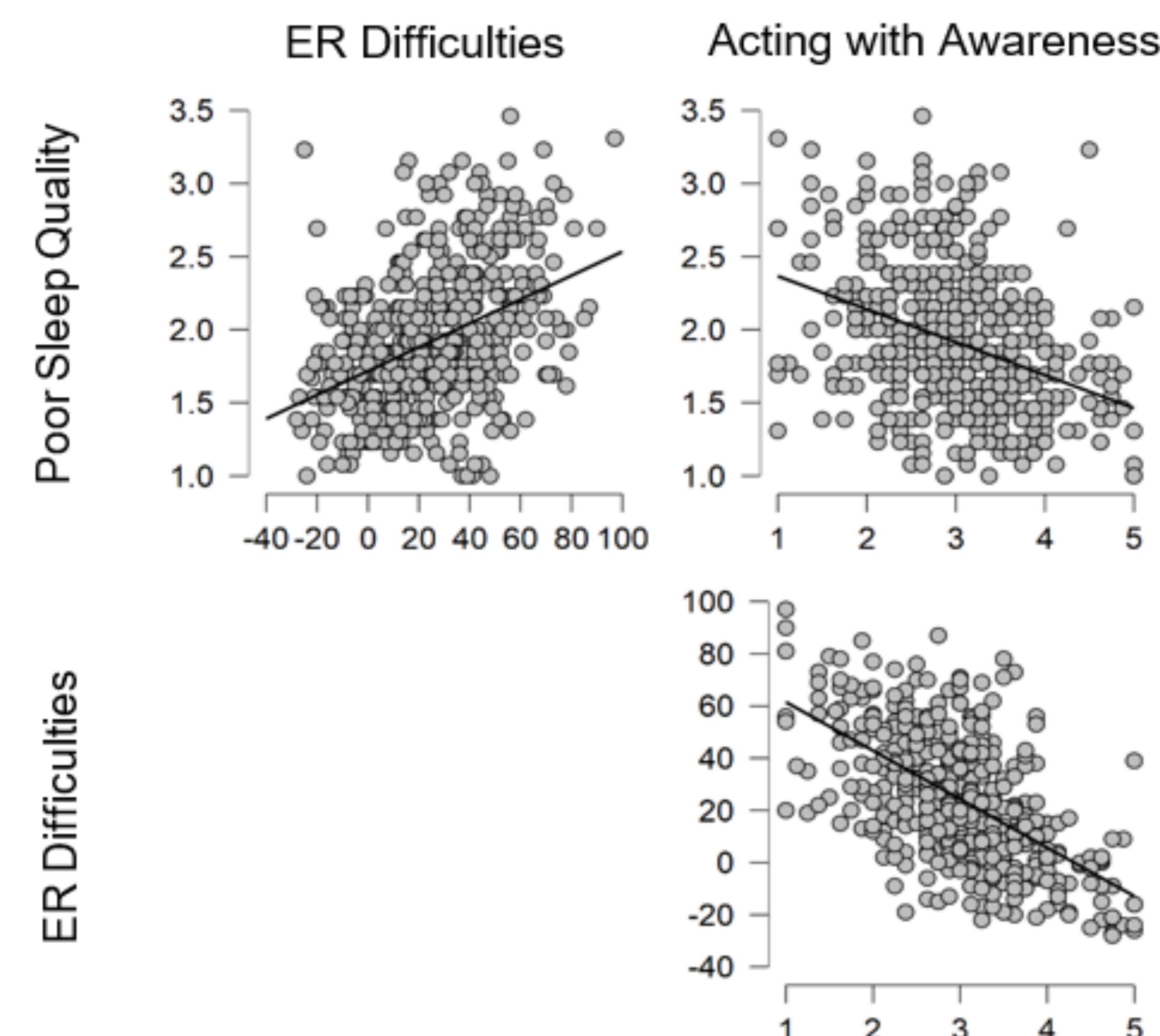
**Table 1. Bivariate correlations among key variables.**

	1	2
1. Poor Sleep Quality	—	
2. Emotion Regulation Difficulties	0.41***	—
3. FFMQ - Acting with Awareness	-0.36***	-0.59***

Note: FFMQ = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire \*\*\*  $p < .001$



**Figure 1.** Standardized estimates for the direct effect relationship between poor sleep quality and difficulty in emotion regulation as mediated by acting with awareness. The standardized regression coefficient between poor sleep quality and emotion regulation difficulty, controlling for acting with awareness, is in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



**Figure 2.** Scatterplots depicting key variables: poor sleep quality, difficulty in emotion regulation, and acting with awareness.

## Discussion/Conclusion

Findings demonstrate that poor sleep quality is positively correlated with difficulty in emotion regulation through less intentional awareness. This suggests that acting with awareness is likely to play the role in helping to explain the nature of the relationship between poor sleep quality and emotion regulation.

### Implications

- Mindfulness interventions should incorporate methods to improve the process behind effective emotion regulation.
- Support for the role of sleep allow for further emphasis on better quality and quantity of sleep to yield enhanced cognitive controls (e.g. information processing, impulse control).

### Limitations and Future research

- Limitations include relying on results from self-report measures without intervening through experimental methods. In addition, only one facet of mindfulness was analyzed, while the other four have potential for meaningful findings as well.
- Future research should focus on inducing specific mindfulness strategies that highlight the importance of better self-awareness during behavioral decision making.
- Examining differences in the use of emotion regulation strategies for those living with sleep disorders or general, consistent disturbances should also be considered in an objective (e.g. fMRI), rather than subjective (e.g. self-reported surveys) form of data collection.

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