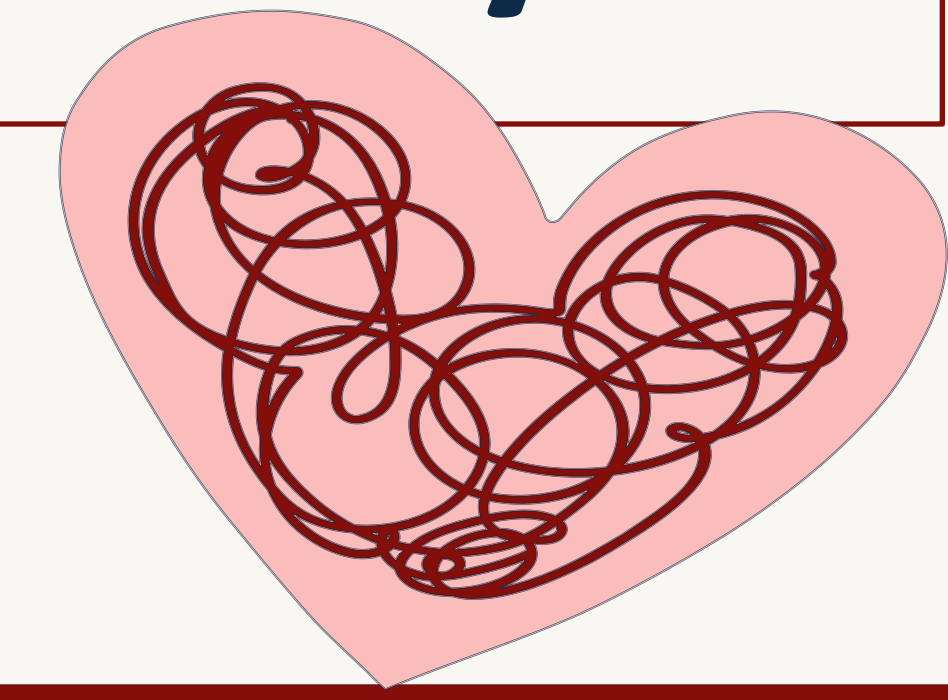# Cognitive Reappraisal, Health Content, and Anxiety

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Link to the research paper:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rvQfufNGr4bC5Cfc0m
bfsUAE5ORF30s1/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=112052815617
897255395&rtpof=true&sd=true

Introduction

Social Media and Health Anxiety
-Social media amplifies rare health stories, such as a 20-year-old boy with cancer, which increases health anxiety by making exceptional cases seem common.
-Steven Taylor (2004) links sensational health reports (e.g., botched surgeries) to hypochondriasis, a severe form of health anxiety.
Understanding Health Anxiety
-Defined as "inappropriate or excessive fears and worries about perceived health threats" (Bailer et al., 2015).
-Exists on a continuum:
Mild: Encourages appropriate medical care.
Severe: Causes distress, relationship/work difficulties, and overuse of medical services (Asmundson et al., 2010).
Cognitive Reappraisal
-Strategy to reduce negative emotions by reframing thoughts.
-Gross & John (2003): Linked reappraisal to more positive emotions.

Current Study & Hypothesis

Investigate whether exposure to health-related content online is linked to health anxiety.
See if cognitive reappraisal moderates this relationship, reducing the impact of health content on anxiety.

Hypothesis
Increased Exposure: Frequent exposure to health-related content will lead to higher health anxiety.
Cognitive Reappraisal: Individuals who frequently use cognitive reappraisal strategies will experience lower health anxiety compared to those with lower reappraisal abilities.
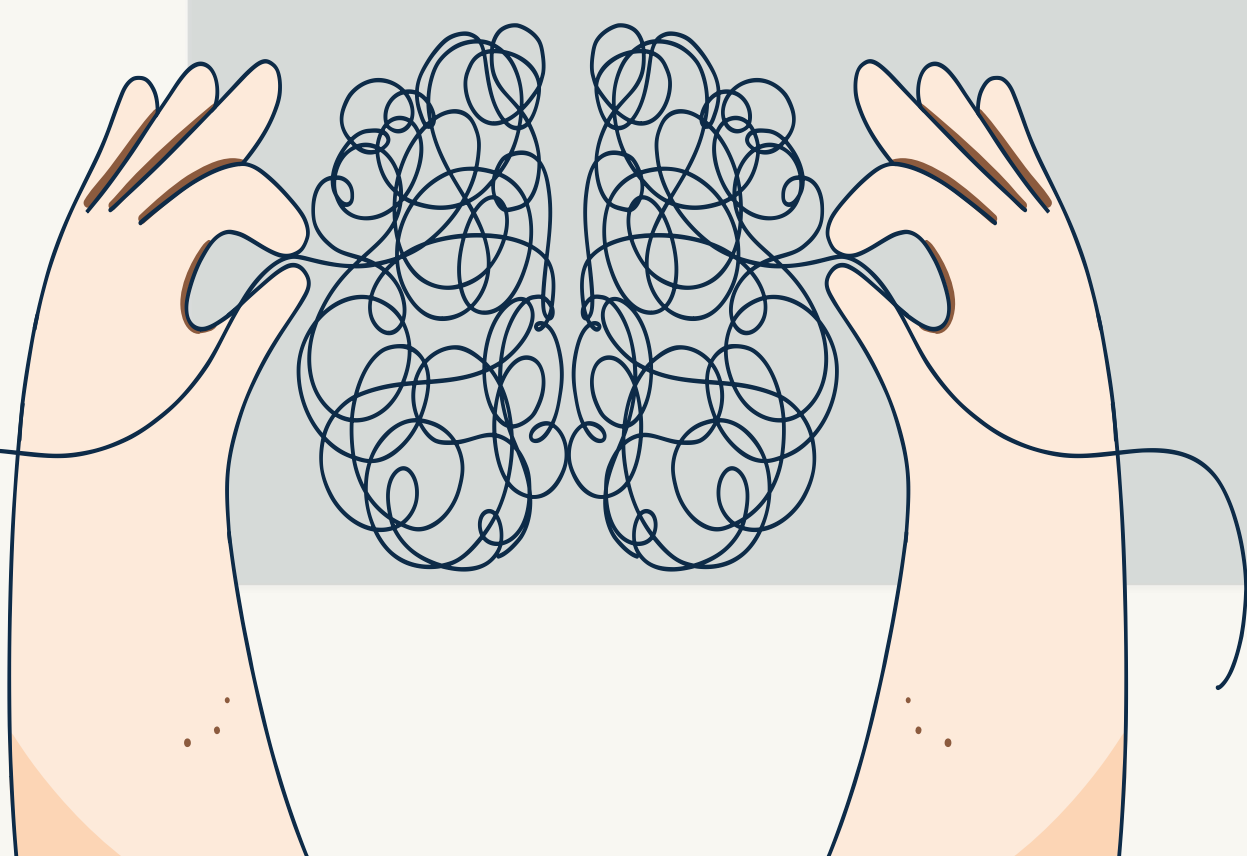
Methodology

Participants:
Sample: **111 U.S. residence** recruited through Prolific, aged 18+ (M = 36.80, SD = 9.55)
Gender: **52.3% female, 45.9% male**
Race: **36.9% Latinx, 35.1% White**
Sex: **69.4% heterosexual**

Measures:
Cognitive Reappraisal (ERQ): 6 items, 7-point Likert scale
Health Anxiety (SHAI): 6 items, 5-point Likert scale
Exposure to Health Content: Calculated by multiplying days per week and minutes per day spent looking over health-related content.

Statistical Analysis:
-Pearson correlation to understand the relationships between the continuous variables (exposure, reappraisal, and health anxiety)
- Moderation analysis using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2023) to examine how exposure to health-related content and reappraisal skills interact to influence health anxiety

Discussion & Implication

Result does not fully support the hypothesis
- Exposure to health-related content by itself does not directly increase health anxiety
- The effect of reappraisal was more complex than predicted.

For individuals with lower reappraisal skills, more exposure was associated with lower health anxiety, while for those with higher reappraisal skills, more exposure led to higher health anxiety

Cognitive reappraisal **does not always reduce anxiety** as expected and can amplify anxiety in certain situations
-**Supported by Brockman et al. (2016)**, who found cognitive reappraisal increased negative emotions in half their participants.

Contributes to our understanding of emotion regulation strategies
-Cognitive reappraisal should not always be viewed as an effective strategy to improve one's well-being; rather, its effectiveness depends on the situation and the individual
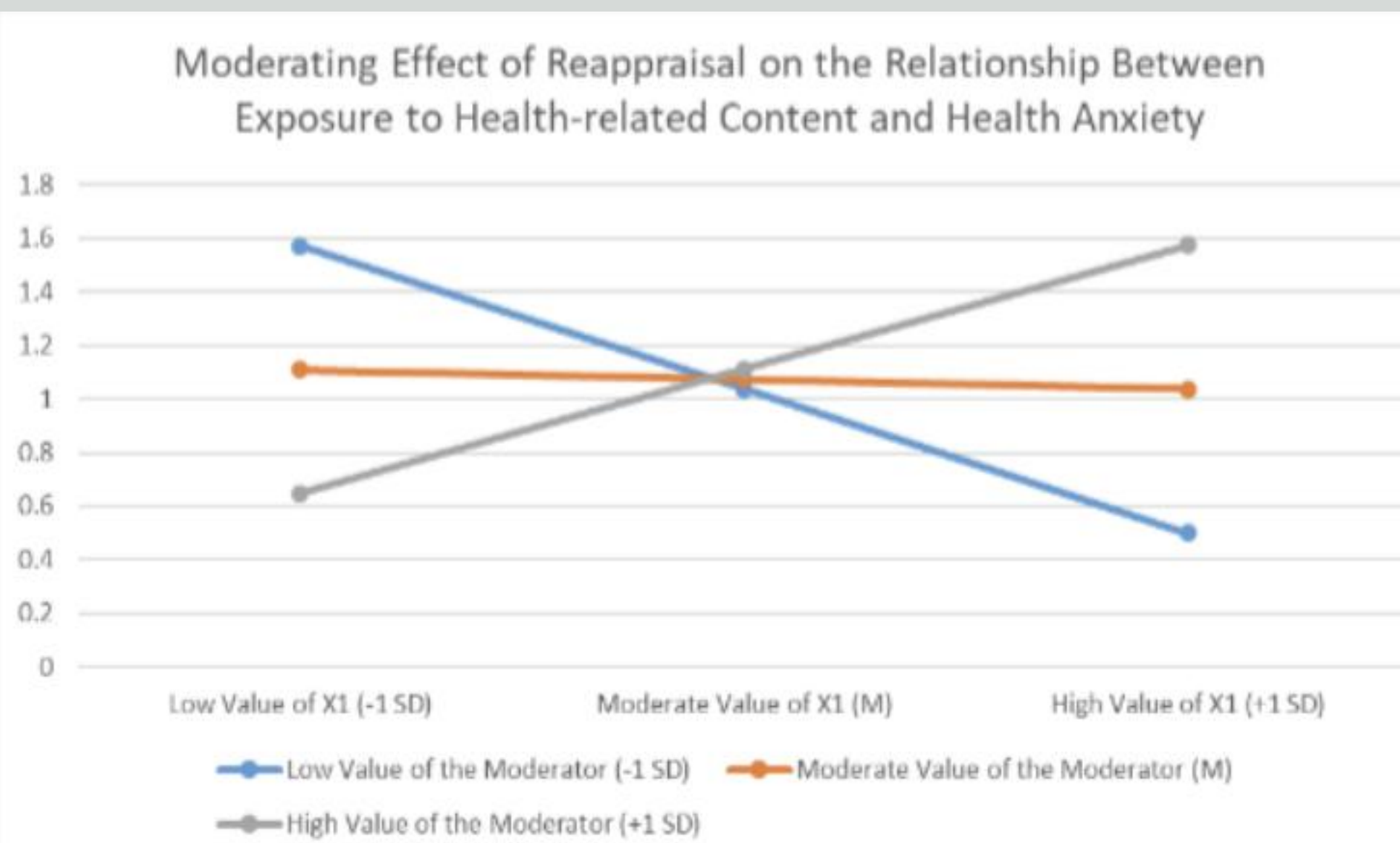
Results

Figure 1.

Sample Descriptive Statistics Table with All Continuous Variables

	shai_mean	reappraise_mean	Exposure
shai_mean	**1.07 (0.87)**		
reappraise_mean	-.007	**5.00 (1.13)**	
Exposure	-.062	-.020	**66.05(183.40)**

Note. Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) appear in bold along the diagonal.
Correlations between variables appear below the diagonal. *** p < .0001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, †
p < .10

Moderating Effect of Reappraisal on the Relationship Between Exposure to Health-related Content and Health Anxiety

No significant associations found for:
Exposure (b = -0.0002, SE = 0.0004, p = 0.6392)
Reappraisal (b = 0.0333, SE =0.0725, p = 0.6467)

Moderating Effect of Reappraisal:

Interaction between exposure and reappraisal (b = 0.0024, SE = 0.0008, p = 0.0059).
For **lower reappraisal skills, more exposure to health content linked to lower health anxiety** (b = -0.0029, SE = 0.0010, p = 0.0057).
For **higher reappraisal skills, more exposure linked to higher health anxiety** (b = 0.0025, SE = 0.0011, p = 0.0236).

Limitation & Future consideration

Relies on **self-reported responses,** which are not considered objective
Questions in the inventory **may not fully capture one's emotional experience and reflect the construct of reapprasial as intended**
Sample diversity is also limited, with most participants being White and Latinx

Explore if **personality traits** play a role (ex. neuroticism)
Consider the **effects of goals** (ex. what people are trying to achieve)
Examine the effectivness of reapprasial in different context