

## Abstract

Many researches have confirmed that listeners feel distressed in the process of dyadic affect regulation. Batson (1997) found that listeners can 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 empathic capacity, self-esteem, and efficiency in emotion regulation affect listeners' two distinctive orientations of distress. Differentiation of the two orientations of distress was proposed. It is demonstrated that empathic capacity is a general factor which contributes to listeners' general sensitivity to distress. Self-esteem and emotion regulation are discovered to be the specific factors that associate with self-oriented distress, possibly through associative networks and inability in analyzing emotions respectively.

**Keywords:** self-oriented distress, other-oriented distress, empathic capacity, self-esteem, emotion regulation, alexithymia