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Research Paper

Exploring the Influence of Emotion Regulation on Adult's Perceived Stress & Life Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed at exploring the influence of emotion regulation on perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults. A quantitative study was administered with a sample of 170 belonging to age group of 25-39 years. Results revealed an inverse relation among perceived stress and life satisfaction and perceived stress was significantly predicted from both strategies of managing emotions, with suppression positively and reappraisal negatively predicting. Further, only cognitive reappraisal significantly positively predicted life satisfaction. Lastly, with regard to gender differences, only expressive suppression showed a notable gender difference. Using regulation strategies contributes to enhanced emotional awareness, learning ways of perceiving a stressful situation differently, and experiencing positive life outcomes.

Keywords: *Emotion Regulation, Perceived Stress, Life Satisfaction, Adults*

The period of adulthood is characterized by navigating the complications encountered which are accompanied by various pressures of life. Some of these challenges may arise from the individual facing difficulties in managing their emotions resulting in a state of being overburdened with upsetting emotions. Hence, it causes them to experience a low sense of contentment towards life and often perceive circumstances as stressful, thereby, facing extreme difficulties in various facets of life including work, health, relationships, and others (Sun & Nolan, 2018).

Emotion Regulation

Individual lives are profoundly impacted by emotions and regulating one's emotions serves as a crucial part of an individual's life as it fosters healthy psychological and overall well-being (Kashdan et al., 2015). The process of emotion regulation is based on managing and regulating one's emotions to respond adequately to diverse situations (Rolston & Lloyd-Richardson, 2017).

Perceived Stress

In the present time, due to major life transitions and increased difficulties, stress has become a part of an individual's daily life. The extent to which an individual's current circumstances

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are considered challenging, unmanageable, and unforeseen is understood as perceived stress (Cohen et al., 1983). It is simply understood as how a person evaluates the amount of stress that is being experienced and determined by their underlying emotional states or thought patterns, at any particular moment or over a specific duration of time.

Life Satisfaction

It is commonly considered a cognitive component explaining the subjective evaluation and judgment an individual makes of their life's quality (Diener, 1984). An individual's contentment towards life is understood as their capacity to acknowledge the fulfillment of their present scenarios, and experience contentment while working towards fulfilling desires and needs (Sousa & Lyubomirsky, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

The present study draws from numerous perspectives to comprehend the interplay between emotion regulation, perceived stress, and life satisfaction among adults. For the in-depth comprehension of emotion regulation, Gross (1998) proposed the use of the "Process Model for Emotion Regulation" emphasizing several efficient strategies, including "Cognitive Reappraisal" (reconsidering a person's perspective about a situation and modifying the corresponding emotional reactions leading to changes in its impact on oneself) and "Emotional Suppression" (subduing the external expressions concerning emotions by continuing to experience them from the inside) used to regulate emotions and enhance emotional awareness. Cohen (1983) put forth a theory about perceived stress explaining the existence of individual differences in the way people perceive and respond to stressful instances, thereby, it essentially determines the level of stress they experience and evaluate it as stressful depending on a variety of factors such as an adequate level of self-control or inadequate resources for coping effectively (Liu et al., 2020). From various theories of life satisfaction, top-down theory (overall life satisfaction impacts various satisfactions in different domains of life resulting from genetic or personality factors) and bottom-up theory (an individual's satisfaction in different areas of life when combined together resulting in an overall feeling of satisfaction with life) serve as the major theoretical basis (Headey, 2014).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study by Dey and Bhau (2023) demonstrated that increased perceived stress is associated with lower quality of life and life contentment among mental health professionals.

Mittal's (2020) study showed a significant impact of both regulation strategies with increased life satisfaction among housewives.

A study by Temircan (2023) revealed an inverse relation between emotion regulation and perceived stress.

Singh's (2021) study revealed that adults experienced greater satisfaction when using a reappraisal strategy and reduced satisfaction when using an expressive strategy.

Sun and Nolan's (2021) study findings demonstrated a negative association among reappraisal strategy and stress perception level, whereas suppression positively correlates with perceived stress.

Messineo and Tosto's (2023) study revealed cognitive reappraisal being associated with low levels and suppression being associated with increased levels of perceived stress.

The study by Yildirim & Alanazi (2018) demonstrated that life satisfaction was negatively associated with and predicted by perceived stress among students.

Rationale

In this research, the influence of emotion regulation on perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults will be explored. The literature review has revealed that significant research hasn't investigated the influence of the management of emotions on stress perception and life satisfaction, particularly in India. The majority of studies have been conducted on adolescents, university students, particular working professions, and the elderly, and existing research has not explored the combined impact among the three variables as mostly separate associations have been studied extensively. Moreover, an extensive array of studies haven't been conducted on the links shared by the regulation of emotions and stress perception. In conclusion, examining how emotion regulation impacts the perceptions adults make of stressful situations and satisfaction with their lives fills a notable gap in the literature and could have a substantial impact on the field of psychology and mental health research as well as practice.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the influence of emotion regulation on perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults.

Objectives

- To study the significant relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults.
- To study emotion regulation as a significant predictor of the level of perceived stress among adults.
- To study emotion regulation as a significant predictor of the level of life satisfaction among adults.
- To study the significant gender difference in the level of emotion regulation, perceived stress, and life satisfaction among adults.

Hypothesis

- H1. There will be a significant relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults.
- H2. Emotion regulation will be a significant predictor of the level of perceived stress among adults.
- H3. Emotion regulation will be a significant predictor of the level of life satisfaction among adults.
- H4. There will be a significant gender difference in the level of emotion regulation, perceived stress, and life satisfaction among adults.

Sample and its Selection

The sample for this study belongs to age group 25-39 years, with the sample size being 170. The participants for the present study were selected residing in various parts of India. Purposive sampling was utilized for the aforementioned purpose. The inclusion criteria

incorporated both male and female participants belonging to the age group between 25-39 years. Whereas, the exclusive criteria eliminated participants below and above 25-39 years of age and those with severe general medical conditions or psychological conditions.

Description of Tools Employed
- **Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ):** Gross and John (2003) developed this ten-item questionnaire to assess respondent's inclination for regulating emotions through cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression strategies. The respondents were instructed to select their responses from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's α reliability of ERQ ranges from 0.73 to 0.82 with high validity.
- **Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10):** Postulated by Cohen et al. (1983), PSS consists of a ten-item assessment of people's perception level for situations being stressful during the last month. The respondents were instructed to select their responses from 0 being never to 4 being very often. The Cronbach's α reliability of the PSS ranges from 0.84 to 0.86 with a satisfactory validity.
- **Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS):** Diener et al. (1985) developed this five-item scale for assessing the global cognitive evaluation for a person's life satisfaction. The respondents were instructed to select their responses from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale's Cronbach's α ranges from 0.79 to 0.89 with test-retest being 0.82 and a satisfactory validity.

Procedure
The current study was a quantitative one using a correlational research design and purposive sampling technique for data collection and analysis. The respondents were notified that their involvement was indeed completely voluntary with their confidentiality to be maintained. Following the completion of informed consent, the participants were provided with three questionnaires concerning measuring the three constructs. Results were statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS version 25 and Pearson's Correlation (r), Regression Analysis, and Independent Samples Student's t-test was applied.

RESULTS
Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Emotion Regulation, Perceived Stress, and Life Satisfaction among Adults

Variable	M	SD	N
Cognitive Reappraisal	27.34	7.809	170
Expressive Suppression	17.15	5.588	170
Perceived Stress	17.49	6.897	170
Life Satisfaction	21.84	6.763	170

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

Table 1 demonstrates the values for cognitive reappraisal (M= 27.34, SD = 7.809), expressive suppression (M = 17.15, SD = 5.588), perceived stress (M = 17.49, SD= 6.897), and life satisfaction (M = 21.84, SD = 6.763).

Table 2 Gender Difference among Emotion Regulation, Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction among Adults

Variable	Male (*n* = 82)		Female (*n* = 88)		*t*(168)	*p*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Cognitive Reappraisal	26.95	8.940	27.69	6.617	-.618	.537ns
Expressive Suppression	18.07	6.206	16.30	4.824	2.093	.038*
Perceived Stress	17.85	6.795	17.15	7.012	.666	.506ns
Life Satisfaction	21.26	7.481	22.39	6.008	-1.090	.277ns

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = standard deviation; ns = non-significant.
*p < .05.

Table 2 comprises 170 (82 males, 88 females) participants and demonstrates that only the expressive suppression strategy of emotion regulation shows a significant gender difference [t(168) = 2.093, p = .038] at a .05 level of significance with males utilizing it more as compared to females. The other variables stand as non-significant.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Between Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction among Adults

Variable	N	Perceived Stress	Life Satisfaction
Perceived Stress	170		-.219**
Life Satisfaction	170	-.219**	

Note. **p < .01.

Table 3 represents that there is a correlation of -.219 for a p-value of .004, showing significant negative relationship between the two variables at .01 level of significance.

Table 4 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Emotion Regulation Strategies Predicting Perceived Stress

Predictor Variable	*β*	*p*
(Constant)	23.733	.000**
Cognitive Reappraisal	-.402	.000**
Expressive Suppression	.164	.030*

Note. *β* = Beta
*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 4 represents that the values for cognitive reappraisal (β = -.402, p = .000) stand significant at a .01 level of significance with a negative direction of prediction and expressive suppression (β = .164, p = .030) stands significant at a .05 level of significance with a positive direction of prediction for criterion variable of perceived stress. Also, the combined r^2 variance stands at 14.8%.

Table 5 Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Emotion Regulation Strategies Predicting Life Satisfaction

Predictor Variable	*β*	*p*
(Constant)	12.054	.000**
Cognitive Reappraisal	.348	.000**
Expressive Suppression	.074	.325ns

Note. *β* = Beta; ns = non-significant
**p < .01.

Table 5 depicts that the values for cognitive reappraisal (β = .348, p = .000) stand significant at a .01 level of significance with a positive direction of prediction, however, expressive suppression indicates a non-significant prediction value. Also, the combined r^2 variance stands at 14.3%.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to explore the influence of emotion regulation on perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults. The descriptive statistics for three variables have been demonstrated in Table 1 illustrating on average, the participants tend to engage more in the reappraisal than the suppression strategy and also reported a moderate level of evaluating events as stressful and relatively a higher level of satisfaction with life.

In order to fulfill the main purpose of the study, numerous hypotheses were formulated and tested. H1 stated that there will be a significant relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults. Table 3 demonstrates that there is a negative association among both variables; hence, H1 is accepted at .01 level of significance, indicating greater perceived stress levels with reduced life satisfaction levels. At the same time, when an individual experiences low or high levels of life satisfaction, it corresponds to a high or low level of perceived stress. Similar findings have also been illustrated by various studies among different population sets (Yildirim & Alanazi, 2018; Dey & Bhau, 2023).

H2 stated that emotion regulation will be a significant predictor of the level of perceived stress among adults. Table 4 represents that cognitive reappraisal significantly predicts perceived stress in a negative direction of prediction, suggesting when one utilizes these skills; it inculcates them to reevaluate the negative situation, thereby, causing them to look at the situation from a new perspective and change how they feel about it and ultimately, reduces stress. Similarly, expressive suppression indicated a positively significant direction of prediction whereby, one fails to reevaluate the situation and assesses it as stressful and tends to bottle up and restrain their emotions, instead of expressing them freely. Hence, H2 is accepted. Also, the results are aligned with the findings of the various studies (Sun & Nolan, 2021; Messineo & Tosto, 2022).

H3 stated that emotion regulation will be a significant predictor of the level of life satisfaction among adults. Table 5 shows that cognitive reappraisal significantly predicted life satisfaction, with a positive direction of prediction; however, the value for expressive suppression indicated a non-significant prediction value. Hence, H3 is partially accepted. This suggests that individuals who have high utilization of cognitive reappraisal strategy of emotion regulation, tend to experience higher levels of life satisfaction as it allows them to cope with negative events, achieve their desired goals, extinguish unpleasant emotions, experience and exhibit more uplifting emotions; thereby, enhancing life satisfaction. The results are aligned with the findings of the various studies (Singh, 2021; Basyouni & Keshky, 2021).

H4 stated that there will be a significant gender difference in the level of emotion regulation, perceived stress, and life satisfaction among adults. Table 2 demonstrated that reappraisal showed a non-significant gender difference, whereas, suppression, showed a notable gender difference. Research evidence has also demonstrated similar findings for gender differences where men have a greater tendency to utilize suppression strategy in comparison to women (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). Moreover, both life satisfaction and perceived stress showed a

non-significant gender difference. Along similar lines, Raman's (2020) study illustrated corresponding findings in his research work. Therefore, H4 is partially accepted.

Limitations and Future Directions
The current work was indeed a genuine attempt to comprehend the concepts of emotion regulation, perceived stress, and life satisfaction. However, several shortcomings have been identified that seem to provide the groundwork for future investigations. First and foremost, the study focused only on adults belonging to the 25-39 age group, not considering children, adolescents, or older adults. Secondly, the questionnaires were all in English and arranged in a fixed manner which could have had an impact on the participant's understanding of the questions, and the first set of questions might have had an impact on the following questionnaires, which was not considered (Sun & Nolan, 2021). Additionally, the present study utilized the scale given by Gross and John (2003) which consists of only two out of numerous available emotion regulation strategies. The present study did not focus on establishing a cause-and-effect relationship. Hence, the future studies can focus on overcoming the aforementioned limitations and, subsequently, to develop more improved research.

Implications of the Study
The study has provided an enhanced insight into the three constructs being studied in-depth and has revealed numerous implications. Regulation of emotions can provide prevention against the adverse implications of stress, allowing people to keep a more optimistic attitude and enhance psychological well-being, as an inability to regulate emotions makes it difficult to maintain a healthy and satisfied life and increases one to recognize events as stressful. Using regulation strategies assists in a more holistic understanding of self and preparing an effective stress management plan for coping, looking at events differently, and experiencing positive life outcomes such as contentment with life.

BRIEF SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
The aim of the present study was to explore the influence of emotion regulation on perceived stress and life satisfaction among adults focusing on three variables for the above purpose. The sample for this study belongs to age group 25-39 years, with the sample size being 170. Participants were provided with three questionnaires concerning measuring the three constructs. Results revealed an inverse relation among perceived stress and life satisfaction and perceived stress was significantly predicted from both strategies of managing emotions, with suppression positively and reappraisal negatively predicting. Further, only cognitive reappraisal significantly positively predicted life satisfaction. Lastly, with regard to gender differences, only expressive suppression showed a notable gender difference. Therefore, it was concluded that among the four stated hypotheses, only hypotheses 1 and 2 were accepted, while hypotheses 3 and 4 were partially accepted.

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Conflict of Interest
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