

Research Paper

Relationship Between Emotion Regulation and Family Environment Among Young Adults: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

Emotional regulation represents a fundamental component of psychological well-being, impacting stress management, interpersonal relationships, and mental health. The family environment significantly contributes to the development of emotional regulation strategies among young adults. This study investigates the overall relationship between family environment and emotional regulation in young adults in India. Utilizing the Family Environment Scale (FES) and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), data was gathered from a randomly selected sample. Statistical analysis was performed to ascertain the general association between these two variables and to examine gender differences. The findings reveal that although there exists a positive association between family environment and emotional regulation, the relationship is weak and lacks statistical significance. This implies that family environment by itself may not serve as a strong predictor of emotional regulation in young adults. Nonetheless, significant gender differences were noted, with females exhibiting superior emotional regulation abilities compared to males. Conversely, no substantial gender differences were detected in the perception of family environment.

Keywords: *Emotion Regulation, Family Environment, Young Adults, Correlational Study*

Emotions affect nearly every aspect of our lives, including our relationships, decisions, and mental well-being. From childhood to adulthood, our ability to manage emotions is essential in determining how we respond to stress, create social connections, and maintain psychological resilience. Emotional regulation, to put it simply, is the ability to handle and modify emotional reactions in a manner that fosters positive relationships with the external environment (Thompson, 1994; Gross, 1998). This ability is not a natural characteristic; instead, it is cultivated and enhanced gradually through social interactions, especially in the family environment.

Families function as the primary social units where individuals first encounter emotions and learn how to handle them. Parents, siblings, and other relatives create an emotional environment that either supports or challenges a child's emotional regulation abilities. Research indicates that children who grow up in nurturing, emotionally intelligent homes are better prepared to cope with stress, communicate openly, and resolve interpersonal disputes

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effectively (Thompson and Meyer, 2007; McRae and Gross, 2020) Conversely, settings that obstruct emotional expression or employ punitive methods can result in emotional suppression, increased anxiety, and challenges in managing adult relationships (Menefee, Ledoux, and Johnston, 2022). The authoritative parenting approach, which merges warmth with discipline, is associated with better emotional outcomes for both children and young adults. Conversely, authoritarian parenting, recognized for enforcing rigid rules and emotional detachment, can lead to emotional suppression or difficulties in expressing emotions in later life (Schreiber, Grant, and Odlaug, 2012).

The significance of emotional regulation goes well beyond childhood and adolescence; it plays a vital role in mental health and overall well-being during adulthood. Individuals with well-developed emotional regulation abilities typically encounter lower stress levels, enhanced coping strategies, and more satisfying relationships. Conversely, inadequate emotional regulation has been associated with a heightened risk of anxiety, depression, and emotional instability (Menefee et al., 2022).

The shift from adolescence to adulthood marks a pivotal phase for emotional growth. As young adults achieve independence, the emotional patterns influenced by early family experiences continue to affect their interactions and decision-making processes.

resilience. This study seeks to emphasize the vital link between family dynamics and emotional growth, providing important insights for cultivating encouraging, emotionally aware environments that enhance development and well-being.

In the end, the ability to handle emotions is not merely about personal success; it's about fostering deeper human connections, facing challenges with confidence, and constructing a world where emotional health is esteemed at every level.

Rationale

Understanding the connection between family environment and emotional regulation is crucial for examining how early life experiences influence an individual's capability to handle emotions. The family acts as the initial social unit where individuals acquire emotional responses through parenting styles, communication methods, and overall family dynamics. A nurturing family environment promotes healthy emotional regulation, whereas families marked by conflict or emotional constraints may result in emotional suppression or dysregulation.

A significant reason for choosing this subject is the insufficient research in the Indian context, where collectivist family structures might uniquely affect emotional regulation. Examining this relationship provides important insights into whether familial support enhances emotional coping skills or if young adults develop these abilities independently over time. These results can assist mental health professionals, educators, and families in building better support systems to foster emotional resilience and wellness in young adults, contributing to a more profound understanding of family impact on emotional growth.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional regulation is an important psychological skill that aids individuals in managing their emotions efficiently. Although different personal and social elements affect this skill, family dynamics significantly contribute, particularly during early development and young

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adulthood. In India, where collectivist values and extended family structures are common, emotional regulation is shaped by hierarchical relationships, interdependence, and cultural norms.

Research highlights the family environment as the foundation for emotional regulation. Thompson (1994) defines it as the ability to modulate emotions using cognitive and behavioral strategies, while Gross (1998) emphasizes both conscious and unconscious mechanisms. Parental modeling and family interactions significantly influence regulation strategies (Thompson & Meyer, 2007). McRae and Gross (2020) further suggest that emotional regulation evolves through social interactions and cultural contexts.

Parenting styles impact emotional regulation significantly. Morris et al. (2007) found that nurturing parenting fosters resilience, while neglectful or authoritarian styles hinder development. Adverse childhood experiences also shape coping strategies in adulthood (Valdez et al., 2013). Poor regulation strategies contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and impulsivity (Menefee et al., 2022).

Sibling relationships also influence emotional regulation. Plamondon et al. (2021) found that sibling support protects against distress, whereas hostility exacerbates instability. Trust within the family fosters adaptive regulation, while strained relationships lead to maladaptive coping (Shekhawat et al., 2023).

Cultural influences play a crucial role. Gross (2015) discusses how cultural shifts and technological changes shape regulatory strategies. Gender differences exist, with women favoring emotion-focused coping and men preferring problem-solving approaches (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014).

Theoretical models explain these processes. Gross and John (2003) highlight how extraverts favor reappraisal, while neurotic individuals tend to suppress emotions. Gyurak et al. (2011) describe a dual-process model involving conscious and automatic regulation.

Overall, emotional regulation is shaped by family interactions, cultural factors, and developmental changes. Indian families provide both challenges and opportunities for emotional growth. Future research should explore joint family systems, intergenerational relationships, and gender-specific emotional challenges to develop culturally relevant interventions.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

To investigate the associative relationship between the Family Environment and the Emotion Regulation among young adults.

Hypothesis

- **H1-** there will be meaningful connection between family cohesion and the emotional regulation of young adults
- **H2-** there will be meaningful connection between family expressiveness and the emotional regulation in young adults.
- **H3-** there will be significant relationship between family conflict and emotion regulation in young adults

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- **H4-** there will be meaningful connection between family acceptance and caring and the emotional regulation in young adults
- **H5-** there will be meaningful connection between family independence and emotional regulation in young adults
- **H6-** there will be significant relationship between family active recreational orientation and emotion regulation in young adults
- **H7-** there will be significant relationship between family Organization and emotion regulation in young adults
- **H8-** there will be significant relationship between family control and emotion regulation in young adults

Variables

- Family Environment
- Emotional Regulation

Tools:

1-Family Environment Scale

The Family Environment Scale (FES) developed by Bhatia and Chadha (1993) is an adapted version of Moos' (1974) Family Environment Scale, designed to assess family dynamics through 69 items divided into three dimensions: Relationship, Personal Growth, and System Maintenance. These dimensions include eight subscales: Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, Acceptance and Caring, Independence, Active-Recreational Orientation, Organization, and Control, each evaluating different aspects of family interactions, emotional bonding, communication, independence, recreational involvement, structure, and discipline. The scale has been tested for reliability using the Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula, yielding an overall reliability coefficient of 0.95, with subscale reliabilities ranging from 0.48 to 0.92. Its validation process involved expert reviews, ensuring only items with at least 75% agreement were retained.

2-Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) developed by Gross and John (2003) is a widely used self-report tool designed to assess personal differences in emotion regulation strategies. It examines two primary techniques: Cognitive Reappraisal, which involves changing one's thoughts to affect emotional outcomes, and Expressive Suppression, which relates to controlling outward emotional expressions. The ERQ includes 10 items, assessed via a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). Six items evaluate Cognitive Reappraisal, while four items gauge Expressive Suppression.

Sample

- Sample Population- Young Adults between the age of 18 to 25 years.
- Sample Size- 150
- Sampling Technique – Random Sampling

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RESULT ANALYSIS

Table - 1

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
Cohesion	1	0.128
ERQ	0.128	1

Findings - The outcomes reveal a slight positive correlation between family cohesion and emotional regulation ($r = 0.121$). Nevertheless, the significance level ($p = 0.140$) implies that this correlation is not statistically significant.

Table - 2

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
Expressiveness	1	.022
ERQ	.022	1

Findings - The outcomes demonstrate a minimal positive correlation between family expressiveness and emotional regulation ($r = 0.022$). Nevertheless, the significance level ($p = 0.793$) states that, this correlation lacks statistical significance.

Table - 3

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
Conflict	1	.074
ERQ	.074	1

Findings - The relationship between family conflict and emotional regulation is weak and positive ($r = 0.079$). The significance value ($p = 0.334$) is not statistically significant. This suggests that family conflict does not have a significant effect on emotional regulation in this sample.

Table - 4

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
Acceptance & Caring	1	.103
ERQ	.103	1

The relationship between family acceptance and emotional regulation is weak and positive ($r = 0.103$). The significance value ($p = 0.210$) is likewise not statistically significant. This suggests that a more accepting family atmosphere does not strongly impact an individual's capacity to manage emotions.

Table - 5

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
Independence	1	.140
ERQ	.140	1

The correlation between independence and emotional regulation is weak and positive ($r = 0.140$). The significance value ($p = 0.087$) is not statistically significant. This states that a family's encouragement of independence has little to no significant impact on an individual's emotional regulation.

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Table - 6

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
ARO	1	.151
ERQ	.151	1

The correlation between family active recreational orientation and emotional regulation is weak and positive ($r = 0.151$). The significance value ($p = 0.065$) is slightly insignificant. This states that active recreational orientation might have a slight positive influence on emotional regulation, but the effect is not strong enough to be statistically significant.

Table - 7

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
Organization	1	.167*
ERQ	.167*	1

The correlation between family organization and emotional regulation is weak and positive ($r = 0.167$). The significance value ($p = 0.041$) is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This means that family organization has a small but significant positive relationship with emotional regulation.

Table - 8

VARIABLE	Cohesion	ERQ
Control	1	.096
ERQ	.096	1

The correlation between family control and emotional regulation is weak and positive ($r = 0.096$). The significance value ($p = 0.245$) is not statistically significant. This suggests that the level of control exerted by the family has little to no significant impact on an individual's emotional regulation.

DISCUSSION

An individual's emotional regulation has a major impact on their mental well-being, interpersonal relationships, and capability to manage stress. The family setting plays a crucial role in shaping emotional regulation, as it provides the foundation for social and emotional learning. Focusing on gender disparities in these aspects, this research aimed to explore the link between young adults' emotional regulation and their family environment in India. This study examined whether a structured and supportive family setting correlates positively with an individual's emotion regulation abilities by utilizing the Family Environment Scale (FES) and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). The findings suggest that while there is a weak positive correlation between family environment and emotional regulation, this association does not achieve statistical significance.

H1: Family Cohesion and Emotional Regulation

Table 1 reveals a weak and insignificant correlation, refuting the hypothesis that family cohesion significantly impacts emotional regulation. This contradicts Morris et al. (2007) and Shekhawat et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of emotional closeness in fostering regulation skills. It also challenges Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978), which suggest strong family connections enhance emotional

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stability. Other factors, such as individual temperament or societal influences, may play a more significant role, warranting further investigation.

H2: Family Expressiveness and Emotional Regulation

Table 2 indicates a weak and statistically insignificant correlation, contradicting Morris et al. (2007) and Valdez et al. (2013), who argued that emotionally expressive families enhance self-regulation. While Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggest that open emotional expression fosters regulation, these results imply that family expressiveness alone may not be a strong determinant. External societal factors or personal experiences could have a greater influence.

H3: Family Conflict and Emotional Regulation

Table 3 presents a weak and insignificant relationship, opposing Shekhawat et al. (2023) and Plamondon et al. (2021), who linked dysfunctional family dynamics to poor emotional regulation. Emotional Security Theory (Davies & Cummings, 1994) posits that family conflict undermines stability, yet these findings suggest that other factors may play a more dominant role.

H4: Family Acceptance and Emotional Regulation

Table 4 shows a weak correlation, contradicting Oliveira et al. (2020) and Thompson (2013), who emphasized that warmth and support within families foster emotional stability. This suggests that while acceptance is beneficial, it may not be a primary determinant of emotional regulation.

H5: Family Independence and Emotional Regulation

Table 5 indicates an insignificant relationship, challenging Parra et al. (2015) and Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory (1978), which highlight the role of supervised independence in emotional growth. This suggests external factors may contribute more significantly to emotional adaptability.

H6: Family Recreational Orientation and Emotional Regulation

Table 6 presents a weak correlation, opposing Whiteman et al. (2011), who emphasized shared activities' role in strengthening emotional bonds. While recreational activities may contribute to emotional regulation, individual interests and external social connections might have a stronger influence.

H7: Family Organization and Emotional Regulation

Table 7 shows a slight but significant correlation, differing from Thompson and Meyer (2007), who emphasized structured family environments in enhancing emotional regulation. While family organization may provide some support, external influences may have a more substantial impact.

H8: Family Control and Emotional Regulation

Table 8 indicates a weak and insignificant correlation, contradicting Plamondon et al. (2021) and Shekhawat et al. (2023), who linked strict parental control to hindered emotional regulation. These findings suggest that rigid family dynamics alone may not be the primary factor affecting emotional expression and coping skills.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between family environment and emotional regulation in young adults, considering various aspects such as cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance, independence, recreational orientation, organization, and control. The findings revealed a weak positive correlation between overall family environment and emotional regulation, suggesting that while family interactions contribute to emotional development, they may not be the most influential factor.

Among the subscales, only family organization demonstrated a minor yet significant connection with emotional regulation. This implies that being raised in a well-organized and structured family environment may offer stability, which consequently aids individuals in managing their emotions more efficiently. However, other aspects, like expressiveness, independence, and control, failed to exhibit significant correlations, contradicting previous studies that highlighted their significance in emotional growth. These findings suggest that emotional regulation is influenced by a range of external factors beyond the family, including peer interactions, educational environments, and personal experiences.

The outcomes correspond with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), suggesting that emotional regulation is not solely developed within the household but is influenced by social interactions beyond it. While parents and family members serve as the primary role models for expressing emotions, young adults continue to refine their regulation skills by watching and engaging in interactions with peers, teachers, and media. Young individuals may learn healthy coping mechanisms from outside sources if their families don't regularly exhibit them, which would support the idea that learning occurs in a variety of settings.

These findings imply that future research should look into additional elements that affect young people's capacity to regulate their emotions. The ways in which family dynamics, peer support, cultural influences, and individual personality features interact to affect emotional coping mechanisms could be examined in future research. To understand how the function of the family environment changes as young individuals become independent and encounter various social settings, longitudinal study might also be helpful. This study emphasizes the necessity of promoting emotional development outside of the home context from a practical standpoint.

Emotional regulation training should be integrated into educational institutions, businesses, and mental health programs to provide young adults with the skills they need to effectively manage their emotions. While a supportive family environment is essential for emotional development, external social and cultural stimuli are as crucial in developing emotional resilience.

In conclusion, although the family setting does affect emotional regulation, its overall effect seems to be limited. The research supports the idea that emotional regulation arises from ongoing learning and adjustment, with external social interactions being significant. Acknowledging the wider influence of social learning can help in creating effective therapies to enhance emotional health in young individuals.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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