

Research Paper

Emotional Regulation and Attachment Patterns Among Young Adults: An Indian Psychology Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Psychological health and interpersonal connections are greatly influenced by emotional control. People's perceptions, processing, and reactions to emotional experiences are influenced by their attachment styles. Few attempts have been made to understand these constructs' relationships within Indian psychological frameworks, which place an emphasis on inner balance and self-regulation, despite the fact that they have been thoroughly explored in Western psychology. The current study sought to investigate, from an Indian psychological standpoint, the connection between young people's emotional control issues and attachment insecurity. The research design used was quantitative correlational. The Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR-36) and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) were used to gather data from fifty young adults. A significant moderate positive correlation was found using Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis, $r(48) = .533, p < .001$ (two-tailed). The results show that among young people, higher degrees of emotional dysregulation are linked to higher levels of attachment insecurity.

Keywords: *Emotional regulation, Attachment patterns, Indian psychology, Young adults, Emotional dysregulation*

Emotions are physiological and psychological responses to internal and external stimuli that are universally experienced across individuals. An individual's emotions significantly influence their decision making, perception and behaviour. Emotions play a crucial role in facilitating individuals in adapting to their internal states and external environment. Consequently, regulating these emotions effectively becomes an important aspect of human life, as difficulties in managing them can lead to psychological distress and interpersonal dysfunction.

Emotion Regulation refers to the ability to feel, understand and respond according to the adaptive stimulus (Gross, 1998). Emotion regulation is not a single process; rather, it encompasses a variety of behavioural and cognitive strategies that assist people in controlling their emotions in various contexts. These mechanisms function at different phases, such as the interpretation of emotional inputs and the control of emotional responses, according to James J. Gross (1998). Maintaining psychological stability and reacting

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appropriately to external demands are made possible by effective regulation. Deficits in these processes, on the other hand, can result in emotional imbalance, elevated stress, and compromised interpersonal interaction, especially in circumstances that call for emotional regulation and flexibility. Emotion Regulation is essential for maintaining coherence with certain environmental demands and especially when one is involved in interpersonal or romantic relationship. Poor Emotion Regulation, especially in interpersonal relationships can lead to emotional lability, maladaptive responses, conflicts, and significant suffering. As Emotion Regulation is complex and varied, it requires systematic assessment (Gratz & Roemer, 2003). To evaluate these difficulties, researchers have developed standardized measures such as the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) (Gratz & Roemer, 2003). Emotion regulation issues affect people's interactivity with others in addition to their inner emotional experiences. Maintaining steady and consummate interpersonal connections is frequently difficult for individuals who struggle with emotional awareness, acceptance, and control (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). These challenges are directly linked to attachment patterns since emotional reactions are often exhibited in relational contexts. In order to provide a more thorough understanding of relational and psychological functioning, emotional regulation must be studied in conjunction with attachment processes.

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant relationship between emotional regulation difficulties and attachment insecurity among young adults.

Difficulties in Emotional Regulation (DERS)

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale was developed by Kimberly A. Gratz and Elizabeth Roemer to assess multiple facets of emotion regulation difficulties. This scale doesn't only consist of a single skill, instead there are multiple psychological dimensions. It includes emotional awareness, emotional acceptance, impulse control, goal-directed behaviour and effective regulation strategies. Deficits in these areas can directly affect an individual interpersonal functioning, especially when they are involved in a close or romantic relationship. This is where emotional regulation and attachment patterns connects. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the DERS are generally above .90, indicating that it has shown strong internal consistency (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The DERS's multidimensionality enables a thorough evaluation of emotional regulation issues across several functional domains. For example, impulse control issues might cause maladaptive behavioural reactions during distress, while emotional awareness deficiencies can make it difficult to recognize emotional states. In a similar vein, people may be unable to constructively manage their emotional experiences if they lack access to appropriate regulation techniques. As a result, the DERS is a useful tool for comprehending emotional functioning in relation to interpersonal and psychological outcomes since it not only assesses the existence of emotional dysregulation but also sheds light on particular domains where people struggle with regulation (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Attachment Patterns and Adult Relationships

According to Attachment theory, the prior relationships of an individual influences their later romantic or interpersonal relationships. This theory was proposed by John Bowlby, in which attachment was considered as the mechanism of evolutionary survival (Bowlby, 1969). Afterwards this theory was extended to adult romantic relationships in which attachment was divided into two main dimensions, anxiety and avoidance. To calculate these dimensions standardized tools were developed, one of the main tool is

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Experience in Close Relationships (ECR) (Hazan & Shaver, 1987b). This scale primarily measures two dimensions of adult attachment—attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Strong reliability has been demonstrated by the ECR-36, with alpha values for the avoidance and anxiety dimensions exceeding .90 (Brennan et al., 1998). Basically, this research signifies that attachment insecurity, especially anxiety and avoidance, is interconnected with emotional dysregulation. Thus, understanding the relation between emotional regulation and attachment patterns among young adults is important to understand their psychological well-being (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). The two dimensions measured by the ECR—attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance—reflect distinct patterns of emotional and relational functioning. Individuals high in attachment anxiety are prone to exhibit heightened sensitivity to non-acceptance and an increased need for reassurance, often leading to emotional overactivity. In contrast, individuals high in attachment avoidance are more likely to vanquish emotional expression and maintain emotional space in relationships. These patterns notably influence how individuals perceive and respond to emotional experiences, thereby affecting their capability to regulate emotions effectively. As a result, the ECR serves as a crucial instrument in understanding how attachment-related differences contribute to variations in emotional regulation among young adults (Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). According to Bowlby (1969), attachment processes serve as a system of emotional control that directs how people react to stress and interpersonal difficulties. Instead of functioning as a distinct concept, attachment influences how people handle suffering, look for help, or distance themselves from relationships through emotional regulation processes.

Research shows that insecure attachment patterns, like anxious and avoidant attachment, is related to maladaptive regulation strategies (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Individuals with attachment anxiety tend to use more hyperactivating strategies which increases the need of emotional intensity and reassurance (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Whereas individuals with attachment avoidance uses ineffective strategies in which they vanquish their emotions and avoid emotional intimacy. Emotional regulation as defined by Gross (1998), as the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions (Gross, J. J. (1998). An essential framework for comprehending how these emotional processes emerge in interpersonal interactions is provided by attachment theory. Early interactions with caregivers create internal working models that direct emotional reactions and expectations in subsequent relationships, according to John Bowlby (1969). While people with insecure attachment patterns, such as anxiety and avoidance, frequently use maladaptive regulation techniques, people with secure attachment are typically better at handling emotional situations. According to research, insecure attachment is linked to increased emotional reactivity or emotional repression, both of which exacerbate emotional regulation issues (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). As a result, attachment styles and emotional control are intimately related and have an impact on one another throughout developmental phases.

Indian Psychological Perspective

Research on emotional regulation and attachment has been rooted in the western psychology (Bowlby, 1969; Gross, 1998). However Indian psychology thought also provides a different and holistic framework to understand emotions and behaviour. According to Indian psychology, individual's behaviour is not only influenced by external stimuli but self-control and mental balance (Rao, Paranjpe, & Dalal, 2008). Emotional regulation through Indian psychology lens describes not to suppress emotions but to manage and understand

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them consciously. Here the concept of self-awareness is emphasized that describes to focus on one's own thoughts, feelings and observe in order to regulate them. So, when an individual reacts after understanding their emotional responses, the psychological balance is maintained.

In Indian psychology, personality is understood as three basic tendencies- balanced state, overreactive or emotionally reactive state, and dull or withdrawn state (Rao, K. R., & Paranjpe, A. C., 2016). When an individual is impulsive and emotionally overwhelmed, they tend to show imbalance. An individual can be seen as psychological well-being when the individual is emotionally stable, clear and composed. Likewise, attachment patterns can also be understood as the perspective of emotional balance. As individuals with increased emotional reactivity and withdrawal are seem to be anxious and avoidant. However, individuals with secure attachment, generally shows emotional clarity and stability (Rao, K. R., & Paranjpe, A. C., 2016). Therefore, integrating western models of emotion regulation and attachment with Indian psychological understanding can help in understanding relational functioning through culturally relevant way. Thus, the present study aims to examine the relationship between emotional regulation difficulties and attachment insecurity among young adults within an Indian psychological framework, contributing to a culturally grounded understanding of emotional and relational processes. There has been little empirical focus on investigating emotional regulation and attachment within Indian cultural and philosophical frameworks, despite the increasing amount of study on these topics in Western contexts. Examining whether emotional regulation issues are significantly linked to attachment insecurity among Indian young adults is crucial given the collectivistic orientation of Indian society and its emphasis on relational interdependence and inner psychological equilibrium. Examining this link within an indigenous perspective could aid in the development of culturally based psychological knowledge and interventions.

METHODOLOGY

The study aims to examine, from the point of view of Indian psychology, the connection between young adults' attachment styles and emotional regulation. The subjects, analysis, methodology, and data analysis used in this study are described in the section that follows:

Research design

The present study used a quantitative correlational purposive research design to examine the relationship between emotional regulation difficulties and attachment patterns among young adults. The design aimed to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables without manipulating them.

Variables

- **Independent variable**
 1. Attachment Style
- **Dependent variable**
 2. Emotional Regulation

Sample

A total of 50 young adults participated in this study, with ages ranging from 18 to 25 years. The sample included 25 males and 25 females. Individuals with serious psychiatric disorders or cognitive impairments were excluded from participation to ensure a healthy adult sample.

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Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique based on predefined inclusion criteria.

Instruments

Emotional regulation was assessed using the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) (Gratz & Roemer, 2004), a 36-item self-report questionnaire measuring six dimensions of emotion regulation difficulties: emotional awareness, clarity, impulse control, goal-directed behaviour, non-acceptance of emotions, and access to effective regulation strategies (Gratz & Roemer, 2003b). Attachment patterns were measured using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR-36) (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), which evaluates adult attachment across two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance.

Procedure

University students were voluntarily recruited as participants. Before participating, they provided written informed consent after being briefed on the study's purpose. Participants were asked to complete the DERS and ECR questionnaires separately. Each questionnaire took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Responses were collected unnamed, and confidentiality was ensured. Completed questionnaires were scored according to the standard instructions provided for DERS and ECR. Raw scores for each participant were recorded into Microsoft Excel for analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were computed for both DERS and ECR scores. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship difficulties and attachment dimensions (Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S., 2013).

RESULTS

The study's results are shown in this part, jointly with descriptive statistics of the DERS and ECR scores and the relationship between attachment styles and emotional regulation issues. Total DERS scores were used to assess emotional regulation difficulties.

All participants showed an average DERS score of 81.08 (SD = 20.35), indicating moderate difficulties in emotional regulation. The mean score was 113.38 (SD = 29.73), indicating overall attachment insecurity (combined anxiety and avoidance dimensions). Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for DERS and ECR

MEASURE	N	MEAN	SD
DERS	50	81.08	20.35
ECR	50	113.38	29.73

A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional regulation difficulties and attachment patterns. The results revealed a significant moderate positive correlation between DERS and ECR scores, $r(48) = .533$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). This suggests that higher levels of emotional regulation difficulties are associated with higher levels of attachment insecurity among young adults. Correlation details are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2: Correlation between DERS and ECR

	DERS	ECR
DERS	1	.533**
ECR	.533**	1

Note. $r = .533, p < .01$. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Overall, the findings suggest that young adults who experience greater difficulty to control their emotions also frequently display higher levels of avoidance and attachment anxiety. These findings support the study hypothesis that emotion regulation and attachment patterns are closely related in the adult population.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to understand the relationship between emotional regulation difficulties and attachment patterns among young adults. The findings indicate that higher emotional regulation difficulties are associated with greater attachment anxiety and avoidance. (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). These findings are in line with the previous studies, such as Mikulincer & Shaver (2007), indicate that emotional regulation problems are more persistent in the individuals with insecure attachment, therefore, unstable interpersonal relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). According to Indian psychological thought as Radhakrishnan and Rao et al. (2018) have mentioned the relevance of self- regulation and inner balance (Radhakrishnan, 2016). In the framework of Indian psychology, emotional regulation and attachment is not just the result of behaviour or cognition but also inner balance, self- reflection and self- awareness are deeply connected. Concepts like Atmavichar (self- reflection) and Swasthya manasik (mental wellness) suggests that to understand emotional difficulties and attachment issues, focusing on the individual's inner processes is important (Radhakrishnan, 2016). In Indian cultural context to understand emotion regulation and relational patterns, a different cultural lens is needed. In western theories individual emotions and interpersonal dynamics are primarily seen in the form of psychological mechanisms but cultural factors are not emphasized much. According to a popular model of Cultural psychology, Markus & Kitayama (1991), individual's inner emotional experiences and relational functioning both should be seen in the cultural context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

According to theory, attachment insecurity can exacerbate emotional dysregulation, especially in relationship circumstances, by acting as a vulnerability factor. While people with high attachment avoidance may rely on emotional suppression, individuals with high attachment anxiety may use hyperactivating techniques, which intensify emotional experiences. Adaptive emotional processing issues may be caused by both regulatory patterns. Thus, the current research supports the idea that attachment functions as an emotion-regulation system in interpersonal interactions.

Our findings, which demonstrated a substantial positive association between attachment insecurity and emotional regulation issues ($r = .533, p < .001$), suggest that individual psychological variables alone are insufficient to explain emotional and relational processes. Rather, they ought to be viewed in the light of culture. Social conventions, family dynamics, and collectivistic beliefs all have a significant impact on relationships and emotional expression in Indian society. These factors also have an impact on how young adults feel and control their emotions and attachment styles.

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Strong familial ties and collectivist orientations also have an impact on emotional regulation and attachment patterns in Indian society, which places a great priority on interpersonal interactions and emotional support (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, in order to understand emotional and relational consequences in a way that is grounded in culture, future research should consider cultural norms and family structures.

Emotion regulation and interpersonal functioning are not only individual traits, but these are also influenced by cultural context as well. Cross cultural research shows that individuals from different cultures have their different ways of regulating their emotions, such as collectivistic approach in India, relationships and social norms have strong influence (Sheerha & Kumbhare, 2021). In Indian psychology, emotions are not only perceived as individual feeling, instead it is understood in the form of modifications in mind or Vrittis (Chatterjee, 2024). When these Vrittis are uncontrollable, it forms imbalance and maladaptive reactions, which also influences attachment insecurity. Emotional regulation is possible through the balance of Chitta and Manas, and this develops with practice and self-awareness. The result obtained from our findings through DERS and ECR also supports this concept that if internal mental modifications are not regulated effectively, the consequences can impact interpersonal and romantic relationships (Selvamani & Mathew, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Using knowledge from Indian psychology, the current study investigated the connection between young adults' attachment styles and emotional regulation. The results showed a strong positive association between insecure attachment and emotional regulation issues, indicating that those who have trouble controlling their emotions are more likely to face difficulties in their romantic and interpersonal relationships. Indian psychology viewpoints reinforce the idea that self-awareness and regulation are essential to adaptive functioning by emphasizing the importance of Chitta (mind) and manas (internal mental adjustments) in preserving emotional balance (Chatterjee, 2024; Selvamani & Mathew, 2022). Additionally, cultural and family traditions common in collectivist cultures appear to influence emotional reactions and attachment styles, emphasizing the importance of including cultural context into psychological studies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In summary, the research highlights that proper emotional management is essential for promoting healthy attachment behaviours and overall relationship health in young adults, with Indian psychological theories offering a useful structure to comprehend these interactions.

Limitations

Despite the significant results, several of restrictions should be noted. First, the study used a relatively small sample size ($N = 50$), which may limit the extent to which the findings can be applied. Second, self-report questionnaires, which are prone to response biases such as social desirability or erroneous self-evaluation, were used for data collection (Gross, 1998). Third, it is challenging to determine the directionality of the association between attachment patterns and emotional regulation because the cross-sectional design does not permit any causal interpretations. Lastly, despite the conceptual inclusion of Indian psychological notions, these constructs were measured using Western-based measuring instruments, which may not fully reflect the complexities of Chitta and Manas in the Indian context (Chatterjee, 2024). Larger sample sizes, longitudinal designs, and culturally appropriate tools can be considered in future studies to generate more reliable findings. Furthermore, because participants may have similar educational and sociocultural backgrounds, the findings' representativeness might be limited by the use of a university-based sample. To improve

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generalizability, future studies should consider including people from various socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds.

Future Directions/ Implications

The current study offers several research directions while also highlighting important relationships between young people's attachment styles and emotional regulation. First, to enhance the generalizability of results among various Indian communities, future research should use larger and more diverse samples. Second, over time, longitudinal research designs can help in explaining the causal relationship between emotional regulation issues and attachment insecurity. Third, the ecological validity of research in this setting may be improved by incorporating culturally appropriate assessment instruments that better reflect Indian psychological notions like Chitta and Manas (Chatterjee, 2024). To promote better emotional and relational functioning, interventions based on Indian psychological practices, such as mindfulness, emotional awareness, and self-regulation techniques, could be created and tested in clinical and educational settings (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Selvamani & Mathew, 2022). The study's overall findings highlight the need for culturally aware methods for comprehending and improving young people's emotional control and connection in India.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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