

Examining Emotion Regulation as a Predictor of Psychological Well-Being in Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Background: Emotion regulation is crucial for College students' mental health, especially those in romantic relationships. College students often experience emotional stress, which can have a negative effect on their mental health. **Objective:** This research aims to examine how the emotional regulation of College students in relationships affects mental health. **Research Methods:** The research used a quantitative design and correlational survey method. The sample consisted of 106 university College students currently engaged in a romantic relationship selected from various campuses across Indonesia. Data were collected using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). **Result :** It has been proven that emotion regulation has a positive impact on cognitive reappraisal and a negative impact on emotional suppression. Emotion regulation is responsible for 47.9% of variables in mental health. **Conclusions:** The following review emphasizes how important emotional regulation skills are for College students mental health in romantic relationships. It also sets the groundwork for useful solutions.

Keywords: College students, emotion regulation, mental health, relationship

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Pengaturan emosi sangat penting untuk kesehatan mental mahasiswa, terutama mereka yang berada dalam hubungan romantis. Mahasiswa sering mengalami stres emosional, yang dapat berdampak negatif pada kesehatan mental mereka. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana pengaturan emosi mahasiswa dalam hubungan memengaruhi kesehatan mental. **Metode Penelitian:** Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif dan metode survei korelasional. Sampel terdiri dari 106 mahasiswa yang saat ini terlibat dalam hubungan romantis yang dipilih dari berbagai kampus di seluruh Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan Kuesioner Pengaturan Emosi (ERQ) dan Kuesioner Kesehatan Umum (GHQ-28). **Hasil:** Telah terbukti bahwa pengaturan emosi memiliki dampak positif pada penilaian ulang kognitif dan dampak negatif pada penekanan emosi. Pengaturan emosi bertanggung jawab atas 47,9% variabel dalam kesehatan mental. **Kesimpulan:** Tinjauan berikut menekankan betapa pentingnya keterampilan pengaturan emosi bagi kesehatan mental mahasiswa dalam hubungan romantis. Tinjauan ini juga menetapkan dasar untuk solusi yang bermanfaat.

Kata Kunci: Hubungan interpersonal, kesehatan mental, mahasiswa, regulasi emosi

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Submitted: 3-11-2024
Accepted: 20-03-2025



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Health Psychology

Introduction

Emotion regulation is the ability of someone to control or alter their emotions so that they can adapt well in different situations. Emotion regulation impacts a person's psychological health and overall relationship stability. However, for university College students who are in love and under pressure to excel amidst the academic rigors of student life, managing one's emotions effectively becomes an increasingly important skill. Emotion regulation is essential in navigating the challenges of academic life and romantic relationships, significantly impacting College students' emotional well-being (Llorens Ruiz et al., 2020). Difficulties with emotion regulation can fuel increased stress, anxiety/depression symptoms that are detrimental to their mental health. Emotion regulation difficulties are often linked to a heightened risk of developing anxiety and depression, particularly in young adults facing high academic and social pressures (Trojsi et al., 2016). These difficulties can exacerbate existing mental health problems, especially in high-pressure environments such as college life. According to research by (Usán Supervía & Quílez Robres, 2021), emotion regulation plays a crucial part in how College students handle interpersonal stress, which affects both their academic performance and psychological health. Emotion dysregulation in College students may be categorized as a possible early indicator of other mental disorders including anxiety and depression (Aldao et al., 2010). This highlights the need to improve emotion regulation, which not only worsens mental health but also hinders College students' ability to cope with academic and interpersonal stress. A study by (Usán Supervía & Quílez Robres, 2021) found that emotional regulation plays an important role in how College students cope with academic stress and academic and relationship stress, which impacts their psychological well-being. This is why emotion regulation strategies are so important when it comes to mental health and relationship stability, especially in stressful situations that often occur in academic settings. Regulating emotions helps individuals manage interpersonal relationships more effectively, resulting in greater relationship stability and better conflict resolution (Hofmann et al., 2016).

Recent studies have examined the relative impacts of various emotion management techniques on mental health on multiple occasions (Chen & Liao, 2021). College students' interpersonal interactions improved and academic stress was effectively managed through cognitive reappraisal (Zhou et al., 2023). Effective emotion regulation contributes to academic success by reducing psychological distress associated with stress (Zimmerman, 2020), it is also associated with more complex interpersonal and psychological effects. According to (Addessi et al., 2013), emotion regulation affects the quality of interpersonal relationships, and effective strategies can increase relationship satisfaction and reduce conflict. The function of emotion regulation in cases of domestic abuse (IPV) and its connection to PTSD were examined by (Taccini et al., 2024). This research also highlighted that trauma survivors benefit from emotional support and adaptive coping strategies (Ehring & Quack, 2010). Research shows that people who struggle to regulate their emotions are at higher risk of developing severe PTSD after IPV. This highlights the important role of effective emotion regulation strategies in reducing psychological impact after IPV and other long-term traumatic experiences. Similarly, (Zhu & Deng, 2023) found that emotion regulation acts as a buffer against negative psychological effects in trauma survivors, and highlights the protective role of emotion regulation in mental health interventions. This helps people develop resilience, especially when faced with the psychological effects of long-term emotional stress (Yoseph Pedhu, 2023). This study integrates emotion regulation into therapies aimed at individuals who have suffered relationship trauma and shows that the capacity to properly regulate emotions acts as a protective factor against the detrimental effects of IPV.

Despite these results, the work currently in publication frequently concentrates on the connection between mental health and emotion control without thoroughly examining the dynamics in particular relationship contexts. Research on the impact of romantic relationship-related mood disorders on College students' mental health is limited, especially at the higher education level. According to (Makiela et al., 2024), College students are particularly vulnerable to psychological stress because they often face relationship problems as well as academic pressures that can exacerbate mental health problems. This is an important distinction because College students are a group of people who often enter into romantic relationships when faced with academic and social pressures. According to (Ritter et al., 2022), college students' mental health may be significantly impacted by the mix of romantic relationship difficulties and academic stress. Emotion management techniques in everyday contexts and their effects on people's mental health have been the subject of earlier studies.

College students often experience emotional and relational stress, which is normal and requires special attention during this transitional period. (Richards et al., 2003) suggests that interventions targeting

emotion regulation skills need to be tailored to the specific context of college life, such as romantic relationships or additional academic pressures.

In order to comprehend how emotion regulation affects the mental health of College students in romantic relationships, this study focuses on core emotion regulation techniques such as emotion suppression and cognitive reappraisal. As indicated by (Ritter et al., 2022), cognitive reappraisal has been consistently shown to improve mental health outcomes, particularly in high-stress academic environments. It sought to identify the specific strategies that had the greatest impact on College students' mental health. The research also aimed to measure the contribution of these strategies to changes in mental health status. This is because mental health is affected by many factors. Therefore, this study aims to ascertain the function of emotion regulation concurrently with accounting for other possible effects. This method seeks to shed light on more than just how emotion management directly affects mental health. This method seeks to explain more than just how emotion management directly affects mental health.

By offering a more thorough comprehension of the connection between emotion regulation and mental health in the setting of romantic relationships among College students, this study ultimately seeks to close the gaps in the literature. This study also hopes to help develop evidence-based methods to encourage emotion regulation practices. It is anticipated that correcting these disparities will lead to improved mental health outcomes as well as more stable and fulfilling romantic relationships among College students.

Material and Method

Participants

Participants in this study were active college students currently in romantic relationships, aged between 18 and 25 years. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus (Palinkas et al., 2015). Recruitment was conducted via social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram, which are popular among college students (Oudat & Bakas, 2023). A total of 106 participants from various universities across Indonesia were selected, representing diverse geographic and educational backgrounds. All participants were provided with information regarding the study's objectives, methods, and privacy measures before participating (Patil et al., 2023). Participants gave their consent by signing a digital consent form, ensuring ethical compliance for research involving sensitive topics such as mental health (Bannier et al., 2021). Online data collection provided anonymity, supported voluntary participation, and safeguarded participant confidentiality (Etikan, 2016). This study employed a quantitative, correlational survey design, enabling researchers to observe the association between emotion regulation (independent variable) and mental health (dependent variable) without altering these variables (Rammensee et al., 2023). Data were collected through Google Forms, chosen for its flexibility and accessibility for participants (Tuny, 2023). The survey included sections to gather demographic information and responses regarding participants' emotion regulation and mental health.

Procedure

This study employed a quantitative, correlational survey design, enabling researchers to observe the association between emotion regulation (independent variable) and mental health (dependent variable) without altering these variables (Rammensee et al., 2023). Data were collected through Google Forms, chosen for its flexibility and accessibility for participants (Tuny, 2023). The survey included sections to gather demographic information and responses regarding participants' emotion regulation and mental health.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted online using questionnaires, specifically the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). The ERQ assessed emotion regulation strategies, including cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression (García et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the GHQ-28 measured mental health across four dimensions: physical symptoms, anxiety or insomnia, social dysfunction, and depression (Ames-Guerrero et al., 2020; Patil et al., 2023). Participants rated statements using a Likert scale, providing quantitative measures of emotion regulation and mental health. Data collection was conducted over five days, from October 5 to 10, 2024, to minimize potential time-related biases.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the JASP software, well-regarded in psychological research for its user-friendly interface (Shou & Smithson, 2019). Descriptive statistics summarized participant demographics and calculated the average scores for key variables. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the linear relationship between emotion regulation and mental health (Al-Saffar & Areiqat, 2016). Linear regression analysis was also performed, with a significance level set at 0.05, to predict the influence of emotion regulation on mental health (Adhikari, 2022; Helland et al., 2022).

Result

Researchers successfully reached university College students who are in relationships from various regions in Indonesia by using online methods. Social media platforms were utilized to distribute the research questionnaire. This study involved 106 respondents who were selected through purposive sampling, considering specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. During the study, the College students had to be active and currently in a romantic relationship. Data were collected through questionnaires voluntarily completed by the respondents. The participants varied in terms of age, gender, and educational status from various universities in Indonesia.

Table 1 Characteristics of Research Subjects by Age Group

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18	14	13,2
19	49	46,2
20	28	26,4
21	8	7,5
22	3	2,8
23	3	2,8
24	1	0,9

The table above shows that the majority of respondents are in the 19-year age group, representing 46.2% of the total respondents; the 20-year age group, representing 26.4%; and the 24-year age group, which has the lowest number of respondents at 0.9%, indicating that most respondents in this study are College students in the early stages of young adulthood.

Table 2 Characteristics of Subjects by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Female	66	62,3
Male	40	37,7

Most of the respondents were female, accounting for 62.3%, while males comprised only 37.7%. This may indicate that female participation in research on romantic relationships is higher than male participation.

Table 3 Subjects by Characteristics of Educational Status

Education Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's Degree	97	91,5
Diploma	9	8,5

The majority of people involved in this research were pursuing a bachelor's degree, making up 91.5% of the total. Only a small portion of the respondents were diploma College students, accounting for 8.5%. This shows that this study mainly involved College students at the undergraduate level.

Table 4 Characteristics of Subjects by Relationship Status

Relationship Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Dating	85	80,2
Engaged	10	9,4
Long-Distance Relationship (LDR)	11	10,4

The majority of respondents, amounting to 80.2%, were in a dating relationship, while 9.4% were engaged, and 10.4% of respondents reported that they were in a long-distance relationship (LDR). This indicates that most of the College students involved in this study are in the early to mid-stages of their romantic relationships

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics

	NO	RE	KM
Valid	106	106	106
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	53.500	69.292	52.302
Std. Deviation	30.744	9.053	9.751
Minimum	1.000	48.000	34.000
Maximum	106.000	94.000	87.000

Descriptive statistics are used to provide an overview of the measured variables and the demographics of the research respondents. The mean value for emotion regulation among the 106 respondents who participated in this study was 53.500, with a standard deviation of 30.744, indicating substantial variability in emotion regulation abilities among participants. The minimum value achieved was 1.000, and the maximum value was 106.000. Meanwhile, mental health had a mean value of 69.292 with a standard deviation of 9.053, indicating that most participants had relatively stable levels of mental health. The minimum value for mental health was 48.000, and the maximum value was 94.000. This data shows that the variability in mental health is not as large as the variability in emotion regulation.

Table 6 Model Summary - MH

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE
M ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	9.751
M ₁	0.692	0.479	0.474	7.073

According to the model summary results, College students' mental health and emotion control are strongly positively correlated, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.692. With a coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.479, emotion regulation accounts for 47.9% of the variation in mental health, with other factors not included in the model accounting for the remaining 52.1%. The model's ability to describe the relationship between emotion regulation and mental health is demonstrated by the adjusted R² of 0.474, which shows that the adjusted R² value, taking into account the number of predictors in the model, is not substantially different from R².

Table 7 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
M ₀	(Intercept)	52.302	0.947		55.221	< .001
M ₁	(Intercept)	0.653	5.328		0.123	0.903
	RM	0.745	0.076	0.692	9.776	< .001

Using linear regression analysis, the impact of emotion control on College students' mental health was evaluated. According to the findings, the emotion regulation variable's regression coefficient was 0.745, meaning that for every unit gain in emotion regulation, mental health would rise by 0.745 units. With a p-value of less than 0.001 and a t-value of 9.776 this result was statistically significant. There is a significant correlation between emotion control and mental health, as indicated by the regression coefficient of 0.745 with $p < 0.001$. While the standardized coefficients give an indication of the relative strength of the link between variables, the unstandardized coefficients demonstrate the absolute influence of emotion control on mental health.

Table 8 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M ₁	Regression	4781.309	1	4781.309	95.570	< .001
	Residual	5203.031	104	50.029		
	Total	9984.340	105			

Note. M₁ includes RM

The overall significance of the regression model was tested using an ANOVA analysis. A p-value of less than 0.001 and an F-value of 95.570 indicated that the model was statistically significant. The

residual, or variation not described by the model, had a sum of squares of 5203.031, whereas the regression's sum of squares was 4781.309, reflecting the variation explained by emotion regulation. This suggests that a sizable amount of the variation in College students' mental health can be explained by the regression model. The high F-value indicates that the influence of emotion control on mental health is significantly larger than the variation that the model is unable to account for.

Discussion

The information provided makes it abundantly evident that emotion regulation is essential to College students' mental health, highlighting how critical it is to successfully control emotions in order to preserve psychological wellness. This study highlights the significant role emotion regulation on the mental health of College students in relationships. Regression analysis revealed that College students who employed emotion regulation strategies like cognitive reappraisal enjoyed better mental health. The use of cognitive reappraisal has been consistently associated with improved emotional well-being, particularly in managing stress in academic and relational contexts (Scherer, 2023). On the other hand, those who relied on emotional suppression faced increased symptoms of anxiety and depression. These findings align with (Xu et al., 2023), who emphasized the detrimental effects of neglecting emotional strategies on mental health.

The results add empirical support to the theory that healthy emotional management not only boosts general mental well-being but also plays a key role in fostering relationship stability among College students. In academic settings, college students who excel at managing their emotions tend to handle academic pressures and relationship challenges more effectively, which contributes to greater psychological well-being. This relationship is supported by the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), which suggests that emotional regulation skills enable students to experience positive emotions that broaden their thought-action repertoires and build enduring personal resources, including resilience and social support. Additionally, emotion regulation is a core component of Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Theory (Spielberger, 2013), which posits that the ability to regulate emotions reduces anxiety and stress, both of which negatively impact academic performance and mental health.

Interestingly, the study also found that female College students participated more than their male counterparts, suggesting that women may be more open to discussing relationships and mental health. This aligns with earlier research showing that women are generally more willing to explore and manage their emotions in interpersonal contexts.

However, this study has several limitations. One of them is the use of a purposive sample, which may make the results more difficult to generalize to a broader student population. In addition, the online survey method may have caused bias in participation, especially among College students who are more active online. This can be addressed in future research by expanding the sampling method to be more random and diverse, as well as taking into account College students who may be less engaged in online platforms.

Furthermore, this study primarily focuses on two emotion regulation techniques—cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression—whereas other techniques, including emotion acceptance or channeling, can also be crucial for preserving College students' mental health. Other emotion control techniques could be investigated in future studies, along with the ways in which relationship context—such as the degree of intimacy, length of the relationship, or conflict—may affect the selection of emotion regulation techniques and their effects on mental health.

Therefore, it is anticipated that the results of this study will aid in the creation of more potent therapies that will assist College students in better controlling their emotions within the framework of relationships, thereby enhancing their general mental health.

Conclusion

This study investigates the relationship between emotion regulation and mental health among college students in romantic relationships, a demographic often facing unique emotional and academic pressures. The findings reveal that effective emotion regulation, particularly through cognitive reappraisal, is associated with improved mental health, while reliance on emotional suppression tends to increase symptoms of anxiety and depression. These results emphasize the crucial role that emotion regulation skills play as protective factors for psychological well-being in high-stress environments, such as academic settings and interpersonal relationships. Specifically, students who can adaptively manage their emotions

are better equipped to handle the demands of both academic life and romantic relationships, leading to enhanced mental resilience and relationship satisfaction.

The broader implications of this research suggest that targeted interventions aimed at enhancing emotion regulation strategies could serve as valuable tools to support mental health and relational stability in college populations. Programs that focus on teaching cognitive reappraisal techniques, for instance, may help students navigate relationship challenges more effectively, thus reducing the risk of negative mental health outcomes. Additionally, university support services could benefit from incorporating emotional regulation training into wellness programs to foster a supportive environment for students' emotional and mental development.

Future research should explore other emotion regulation techniques, such as emotional acceptance and mindfulness, and consider their specific impacts on mental health in different relationship contexts. Examining variables such as relationship duration, conflict levels, and social support could also provide deeper insights into how relationship dynamics interact with mental health. In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of emotion regulation in promoting mental health and relationship quality among college students. Recognizing and cultivating these skills within educational and personal contexts holds significant promise for enhancing the psychological well-being of this vulnerable population.

Author contribution statement

Dheananda Putri Alfarizi led the conceptualization of the study and methodology development. Michelle Octaviani Henlianto was responsible for data curation, formal analysis, and statistical computations. Willy Aryo Wibowo contributed to the writing of the original draft and handled the review and editing process. Sabillah Izzaturrahmah assisted in study design, data collection, and manuscript preparation. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript, ensuring accuracy and integrity of the research. This collaborative effort aligns with ethical practices in authorship transparency, ensuring that each author's contribution is clearly acknowledged.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us complete this research. Special thanks to the Department of Psychology at State University of Surabaya for their continuous support and resources. We also extend our appreciation to all the participants who voluntarily participated in this study and provided valuable insights. This research would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time and effort from everyone involved. Lastly, we thank our academic advisors for their guidance and feedback throughout this research.

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