

Original Article

Emotional Regulation and Happiness Among Youths: A Study About Gender Differences

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Abstract

The term emotional regulation denotes the individual's ability to understand, manage, and change one's emotional responses in a more congenial way depending upon the circumstances. It is an essential skill to sustain the mental well-being, relationships, and resilience. While the term happiness implies the expression of pleasantness one is undergoing. The happiness is determined by hedonistic and eudaimonic aspects. The youths are the individuals who fall in between the one who just crossed the puberty and one who just started adulthood. The present study intends to compare emotional regulation and happiness among male and female youths belonging to the age range of 16 to 19 years. A total of 120 samples were collected using a simple random sampling procedure and employing a descriptive as well as a comparative research design. The data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistical methods and a t-test. The findings of the study revealed that female youths hold significantly higher emotional regulation. Further, the male youths were found to have significantly higher levels of happiness compared to female youths.

Key Words: Emotional Regulation, Happiness, Youths, Gender differences

Introduction

Emotional regulation consists various processes that govern how and when emotional responses are initiated, perceived, and expressed. Mandal et al., (2022) stated that emotional regulation processes may alter the duration or intensity of an emotional response or modify the behavioural and physiological reactions that accompany it. Emotional regulation is generally recognized as a key psychological skill that contributes to health, well-being, academic achievement, and global quality of life. Contemporary research emphasizes the importance of establishing emotion-regulation frameworks that are inclusive of diverse media, cultural contexts, and age groups. Regulated and adaptive expression of emotion is associated with prosocial behaviour, social competence, and the development of socially valued skills. In contrast, maladaptive strategies such as emotional suppression could lead to reduced positive affect, poor life satisfaction, reduced vitality, and increased negative affect and depressive symptoms, whereas cognitive reappraisal is associated with heightened subjective well-being, better life satisfaction, and better personal and social functioning (Mandal et al., 2022).

Happiness, is positive emotion, which is a central construct in psychological well-being. It is the combination of subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and the balance of positive and negative affect. But the researchers Mandal et al., (2022) state that "happiness extends beyond momentary pleasure to include deeper components such as hedonia and eudaimonia, stability versus variability in affect, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life". Understanding happiness also involves studying how individuals evaluate their emotional experiences in relation to cultural influences, socioeconomic factors, environmental conditions, and media exposure. Happiness is seen as an outcome of goal-directed processes—where variables such as joy, satisfaction, and purpose are continuously monitored—highlights its dynamic nature and supports the idea that

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individuals can intentionally change their emotional outcomes.

An ample number of research studies reveal that emotional regulation plays a central role in shaping emotional experiences and, consequently, happiness. According to Zhu (2016) “the emotional regulation influences how individuals interpret challenges, respond to stress, and navigate everyday situations. For instance, meeting predefined goals or adhering to personal standards can enhance perceived autonomy and promote positive affect”. This flexibility supports exploration, curiosity, and resilience—qualities observed in healthy children who actively seek information, pursue new experiences, and remain engaged in learning. Achieving a goal may sometimes induce negative emotions due to perceived loss of direction, but it may also generate positive affordance signals that promote further exploration, discovery, and intrinsic motivation.

Emotional regulation holds particular relevance for youth, a developmental period characterized by rapid cognitive growth, heightened emotional intensity, and expanding social demands. Adolescents and young adults regularly encounter academic pressure, peer influences, identity formation tasks, shifting family dynamics, and pervasive digital media exposure—all of which significantly shape emotional experiences. Effective emotional regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, and problem-solving enable youth to manage stress, enhance positive affect, and foster greater happiness and life satisfaction. These adaptive strategies contribute to resilience, stronger peer and family relationships, improved academic performance, and better psychological adjustment. Conversely, maladaptive strategies—including suppression, avoidance, and rumination have direct association with heightened emotional instability, low self-esteem, and increased vulnerability to anxiety and depressive symptoms. Since adolescence represents a critical window for developing long-term emotional competencies, strengthening emotional regulation skills during this stage lays the foundation for sustained emotional well-being and happiness throughout the lifespan. Thus, emotional regulation occurs as a central determinant of youth happiness, influencing emotional adaptability, social functioning, and long-term quality of life.

Review And Literature

The studies conducted by Mittal (2020) revealed that the individuals who have cognitive reappraisal ability hold greater happiness and life satisfaction. In another later study, Ballester (2022) proved that emotional regulation is linked with hope and joy

among youths, which helps to handle academic stress more efficiently. Meanwhile, the expressive suppression could lead to reduced happiness (Devi, 2023). Vinter & Arro (2021) conducted a study on 165 female youths, which implied that the cognitive regulation abilities help to deal with academic burnouts. An earlier study by Verzeletti et al., (2016) on 633 teenagers emphasized the presence of cognitive reappraisal as well as expressive suppression to have better emotional regulation among youths aged between 14- 16 years.

The two earlier studies conducted by Gross and John (2003) and Gullone & Taffe (2012) stated that the female youths who adopt cognitive reappraisal experience positive mood and increased happiness whereas the male youths who use emotional suppression due to cultural aspects perceive lowered life satisfaction. In a study to know the gender differences in emotional expression, Chaplin and Aldao (2013) found boys to be more aggressive, while girls were happier and fearful.

The empirical findings show that emotional regulation influences happiness through several pathways: it reduces negative emotional intensity, enhances positive emotional experiences, improves stress coping, and strengthens social relationships. The longitudinal studies indicate that “individuals who are flexible and skillful in emotional regulation experience greater subjective well-being over time” (Aldao, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Aim: To compare the emotional regulation and happiness between male and female youths.

Objectives:

- To study the level of emotional regulation among male and female youths.
- To assess the level of happiness among male and female youths
- To compare the emotional regulation between male and female youths
- To compare the happiness between male and female youths.

Hypotheses:

- There is a significant difference in the emotional regulation between male and female youths.
- There is a significant difference in the happiness between male and female youths.

Sample: The sample consisting of 120 youths whose age group is ranged of 16 to 19 years. The sample size 120 further categorized into two groups; 60 females and 60 males.

Sampling Design: A simple random sampling method was adopted to conduct the study.

Research design: A descriptive and comparative research design was adopted for the study. **Tools Used for the Study:**

Emotional Regulation Questionnaire:

A 10-item scale of the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire designed by Gross and John (2003) to measure respondents' tendency to regulate their emotions in two ways: (1) Cognitive Reappraisal and (2) Expressive Suppression. Respondents answer each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The overall total score provides the extent of emotional regulation. The higher the score, greater will be the emotional regulation. The scale has Cronbach's alpha reliability scores of 0.82 for cognitive reappraisal and 0.76 for expressive suppression respectively and has good construct validity based on CFA i.e. 0.90 to 0.95.

The Oxford Happiness Scale:

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire is a 29-item scale developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills (2002) at Oxford University. It is a six-point rating scale consisting the responses such as Strongly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Moderately Agree, Strongly Agree. The scoring ranges from 1 to 6, respectively, for each response. The scale has both positive and negative items. The scoring is done by referring to the manual. Finally, the total score divided by the number of statements depicts the level of

Results And Discussion

Table 1: Shows the Mean, SD and t value of male and female youths on different dimensions of emotional regulation as well as on overall emotional regulation.

Variable	Male Youths (N=60)		Female Youths (N=60)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Cognitive Reappraisal	40.09	6.01	57.15	2.49	41.03***
Expressive Suppression	40.87	6.52	57.07	2.51	38.10***
Overall	39.86	6.26	57.10	2.50	39.56***

Significant at 0.001 level.

Table 1 shows the means, SD and t value of male and female youths on total and different dimensions of emotional regulation. On the cognitive reappraisal dimension, female youths were found to have higher levels of cognitive reappraisal than that of the male youths (male youths mean = 40.09 & SD = 6.01, female youths mean = 57.15 & SD = 2.49, $t = 41.03$, $p < 0.001$ level). Thus, it is evident from the results that the female youths own significantly higher levels of cognitive reappraisal compared their male counterparts. The earlier studies conducted by Gross & John (2003) and Nolen-Hoeksema (2012) reported significantly higher emotional regulation abilities among female youths.

Similarly, on the dimension emotional

happiness. The scale has an internal consistency score of 0.91 and has strong test-retest reliability score of .90. The scale holds good convergent validity level 0.60 to 0.70.

Procedure: The subject's willingness to participate in the project was ascertained, after which the questionnaire was sent to them via Google Form. They were asked to answer honestly and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. After their responses were recorded, they were scored as per the norms provided.

Inclusion criteria:

- The males and females of age range 16-19 years were included
- Only Indian samples were included in the study
- Individuals belonging to all social, cultural and religion background were considered.

Exclusion criteria:

- The males and females below 16 years and above 20 years of age were excluded.
- Other than Indian samples were excluded in the study.

Statistical Analyses:

Mean, SD, and t value was computed to find the significant difference in the emotional regulation and happiness among male and female youths.

suppression, female youths were found to have higher levels of emotional suppression than that of the male youths (male youths mean = 40.87 & SD = 6.52, female youths mean = 57.07 & SD = 2.51, $t = 38.10$, $p < 0.001$ level). Thus, the results emphasize that the female youths hold significantly higher levels of emotional suppression compared to male youths.

Lastly, under the overall emotional regulation dimension, also the female youths were also found to have higher levels of emotional suppression than that of the male youths (male youths mean = 39.86 & SD = 6.26, female youths mean = 57.10 & SD = 2.50, $t = 39.56$, $p < 0.001$ level). Thus, it is clear that the female youths have significantly higher levels of emotional regulation

compared to male youths. The factors like parenting styles, education, present living

environment, social media, socio-economic status may have contributed for the significant differences.

Table 2: Shows the Mean, SD and t value of male and female youths on happiness.

Variable	Male Youths (N=60)		Female Youths (N=60)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Happiness	55.67	9.14	42.11	5.01	20.02***

***Significant at 0.001 level.

Table 2 shows the means, SD and t value of male and female youths on happiness. The male youths were found to hold higher levels of happiness compared to female youths (male youths mean = 55.67 & SD = 9.14, female youths mean = 42.11 & SD = 5.01, $t = 20.02$, $p < 0.001$ level). Thus, it is evident from the results that male youths possess significantly higher levels of happiness compared to their female counterparts. The findings of the study are contrary to the findings of Kumari & Srivastava (2018), which emphasized higher levels of happiness among females. The parenting styles, gender stereotypes, socialization, personality factors, educational level, and socio-economic factors may have contributed for the higher levels of happiness among male youths.

Summary And Conclusions

The present study was conducted to reveal the gender differences in emotional regulation and happiness among male and female youths. Major findings of the study:

- The female youths have higher levels of cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression, and overall emotional regulation than that of the male youths.
- The male youths have higher levels of happiness than that of the female youths.

Conclusions:

The control over emotions as well as happiness are very essential elements of mental health. Hence, it is important to develop intervention strategies to enhance emotional regulation among males and also to build happiness among females. The policy makers, academic institutes, mental health service providers and community service providers shall focus on the programmes to uplift the mental health linked aspects among the present youth population.

Recommendations for further research

- Further extensive study can be conducted on emotional regulation and happiness using a large number of samples.
 - The study can be conducted to compare Indian samples with foreign samples.
 - The individuals belonging to different age groups can be compared.
- Many socio-demographic variables can be

considered in the future studies

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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