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The Role of Emotion Regulation & Resilience on the Stress Levels of Women

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Abstract

Stress is a significant psychological concern among women, shaped by sociocultural, biological, and psychological factors. Emotion regulation and resilience are commonly viewed as protective mechanisms against stress; however, their roles within the Indian context require further examination. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between emotion regulation, resilience, and perceived stress among Indian women aged 18–40 years.

Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 104 women through standardized self-report measures: the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10). Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression analyses were employed to examine associations and predictive relationships among variables.

Results indicated a weak positive correlation between emotion regulation and stress ($r = 0.064$) and a weak negative correlation between resilience and stress ($r = -0.019$). Regression analyses revealed that neither emotion regulation nor resilience significantly predicted stress levels, accounting for negligible variance. These findings contrast with existing literature and suggest that stress among women may be influenced more by contextual and situational factors than by individual psychological traits alone.

The study highlights the importance of distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive emotion regulation strategies and considering resilience as a moderating rather than a direct predictive factor. The findings emphasize the need for culturally sensitive, multidimensional approaches to women's mental health and stress management in the Indian context.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is an inevitable part of human life, influencing emotional, cognitive, and physical health across diverse populations. However, the ability to manage and respond to stress varies significantly among individuals, shaped by psychological constructs such as emotion regulation and resilience. In particular, understanding how these two factors interplay to influence stress levels among women is critical, given the unique societal, biological, and psychological pressures they face. Women across the world, and especially in India, encounter stressors arising from multiple roles, societal expectations, economic participation, and family responsibilities, making it crucial to examine the mechanisms that can either buffer or exacerbate stress.

Emotion regulation—the process by which individuals influence the emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them—plays a significant role in managing stress responses. Similarly, resilience, defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, enables individuals to withstand and adapt positively to adversities. Both constructs are vital in determining how women experience, perceive, and cope with stressors in their daily lives.

This research seeks to explore the role of emotion regulation and resilience in shaping the stress levels of women. It aims to dissect each variable in detail, examine their interactions, and situate the findings within the broader Indian sociocultural context. Furthermore, by anchoring the study within established psychological theories such as Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation and the Resilience Theory, this research aspires to contribute to the growing literature on women's mental health and stress management.

Understanding these dynamics is particularly important in India, where women are often at the crossroads of traditional expectations and modern aspirations. The findings of this study are intended to inform interventions, policy-making, and support systems that can better address women's mental health needs in both urban and rural settings.

Emotion Regulation

The processes by which people control their emotions—how they feel, when they happen, and how they express themselves—are referred to as emotion regulation. Emotion regulation is a crucial component of psychological functioning that impacts mental health, interpersonal relationships, and general well-being. Through models like the Process Model of Emotion Regulation, which outlines the stages where emotions can be modulated—situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation— researchers like James Gross (1998) have made significant conceptual advancements in the field of emotion regulation. Antecedent-focused and response-focused regulation are the two main tactics highlighted by Gross's Process Model. Response-focused tactics, like suppression, take place after emotions havefully triggered, whereas antecedent-focused tactics, like cognitive reappraisal, involve altering one's perspective on a situation before emotions have

Emotion regulation is deeply intertwined with stress responses. Inability to effectively regulate emotions can lead to heightened physiological arousal and prolonged stress reactions, while adaptive emotion regulation can buffer against the negative impacts of stress. According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), an individual's appraisal of a stressful situation and the subsequent coping strategies employed, including emotional regulation, determine the overall stress experience.

In the context of women, emotion regulation plays a particularly crucial role. Women are often socialized to be more emotionally expressive, yet they may also face societal expectations to regulate negative emotions such as anger or frustration. This dual demand creates a complex emotional landscape that requires sophisticated regulation strategies. Research indicates that women tend to use both adaptive strategies (such as seeking social support) and maladaptive strategies (such as rumination) more frequently than men, influencing their vulnerability to stress-related disorders.

Moreover, hormonal influences, particularly fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone, have been shown to affect emotional processing and regulation in women, adding a biological layer to the psychological mechanisms. In India, cultural factors such as the emphasis on familial obligations, marriage, and caregiving further shape emotional expectations and regulation patterns among women. The collectivist orientation of Indian society often demands emotional restraint and prioritization of group harmony over individual emotional expression, impacting how women learn and practice emotion regulation.

The interplay between culture, biology, and psychology makes emotion regulation a vital area of study when examining stress among women, particularly in a diverse and dynamic context like India.

Resilience

Resilience refers to the psychological ability to adapt successfully in the face of adversity, trauma, or significant sources of stress. It allows individuals to "bounce back" from challenges and maintain psychological well-being. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone (APA, 2014).

Resilience is often associated with lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders. Individuals with high resilience can manage emotional experiences more effectively, leading to greater life satisfaction and positive psychological outcomes. Studies (Masten, 2001) describe resilience as "ordinary magic," emphasizing that resilience is common and arises through ordinary adaptive processes rather than rare or extraordinary means.

Models of Resilience-

Several models explain how resilience operates:

Compensatory Model: Suggests that resilience factors counteract the negative effects of risk factors.

Protective Factors Model: Indicates that resilience reduces the impact of risk factors on outcomes like stress.

Challenge Model: Proposes that exposure to moderate levels of stress or adversity can build resilience over time.

Factors Influencing Resilience

Some key factors that influence resilience include:

Individual Attributes: Self-efficacy, optimism, emotional regulation skills. Support Systems: Strong relationships with family, friends, and community.

Cultural Factors: In India, strong cultural values around family, spirituality, and community have been found to enhance resilience (Somasundaram & Sivayokan, 2013).

Women often face unique stressors such as gender discrimination, balancing multiple roles, and societal expectations. Research shows that resilient women use strong social networks, adaptive coping strategies, and cultural identity as buffers against stress (Southwick et al., 2014).

Particularly in India, women in both rural and urban settings have demonstrated significant resilience despite systemic challenges like gender-based violence, lower socio-economic status, and restricted educational opportunities. Indian women's resilience is often rooted in collectivist values, spirituality, and communal support (Kumar,2020). Higher resilience is strongly associated with lower perceived stress levels. Resilient individuals are better able to interpret stressful situations positively and engage in problem-focused coping, thereby reducing the physiological and emotional impact of stress (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Importance for Research

Understanding resilience is critical when studying stress among women. Enhancing resilience could serve as a key intervention point for stress management programs, especially in culturally diverse settings like India.

Emotion regulation and resilience are closely interconnected psychological constructs. Emotion regulation refers to the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in a flexible and adaptive

way, while resilience is the capacity to recover from adversity. Effective emotion regulation skills often serve as a foundation for building resilience. Individuals who can regulate their emotions are better able to maintain balance during stressful experiences, preventing overwhelming emotional reactions that could hinder coping. According to Gross's Process Model (1998), successful emotion regulation strategies like cognitive reappraisal — reinterpreting a stressful situation to reduce its emotional impact — directly contribute to strengthening resilience.

Research has consistently shown that individuals with higher emotional regulation abilities demonstrate greater resilience when faced with life challenges (Troy & Mauss, 2011). They can maintain optimism, sustain social relationships, and find meaning even during crises. In the Indian context, cultural teachings from yoga and mindfulness traditions emphasize emotional balance, indirectly fostering resilience (Kumar, 2016).

Thus, emotion regulation can be seen as a key skill that enhances the development of resilience, enabling individuals, particularly women, to navigate stress more effectively.

Resilience acts as a protective factor against stress. Individuals who exhibit higher resilience tend to perceive stressful situations as less threatening and are better equipped to employ coping strategies that mitigate the harmful effects of stress. According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), stress is a result of the interaction between an individual and their environment. Resilient individuals are more likely to appraise potentially stressful situations as challenges rather than threats, leading to healthier emotional and physiological responses.

Empirical studies show that high resilience is associated with lower cortisol (stress hormone) levels, decreased anxiety, and improved mental health outcomes (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Resilience also encourages persistence, adaptability, and problem-solving skills, all of which reduce the intensity and duration of stress reactions.

In India, resilience has been increasingly recognized as crucial in coping with socio-economic challenges, gender-related adversities, and workplace pressures. Traditional Indian philosophies, including teachings from the Bhagavad Gita, emphasize inner strength, equanimity, and perseverance — qualities central to resilience (Nair, 2010).

Resilience mediates the relationship between stressful experiences and psychological outcomes, making it a vital factor in stress management, especially among women facing gender-specific challenges.

Focus on Women Population

The role of emotion regulation and resilience in managing stress becomes even more critical when studying women specifically. Women often face unique stressors arising from sociocultural expectations, gender roles, workplace discrimination, caregiving responsibilities, and biological factors such as hormonal changes. These factors can contribute to higher reported levels of stress among women compared to men (Matud, 2004).

Biologically, women are more likely to experience affective disorders such as anxiety and depression, which are closely linked to difficulties in stress management (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). This heightened vulnerability underscores the importance of psychological mechanisms like emotion regulation and resilience in promoting women's mental health.

Moreover, societal expectations often dictate emotional expression norms for women, sometimes encouraging emotional sensitivity while discouraging assertive coping styles. This cultural conditioning can impact the way women regulate emotions, either empowering or hindering their stress management

abilities.

Recent studies in India have shown that women who possess strong resilience and adaptive emotion regulation strategies tend to exhibit lower stress levels despite facing societal and personal challenges. For example, research by Sinha and Jha (2016) on Indian working women highlighted that resilience moderated the relationship between work-related stress and mental health outcomes.

Therefore, focusing on women provides an essential lens for understanding how emotion regulation and resilience interact to influence stress, given the distinct social, psychological, and biological experiences of women. By identifying these unique needs, interventions can be tailored to support women in different life stages — from adolescence to late adulthood — ensuring holistic stress management strategies.

Theories

Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation (1998) is one of the most important frameworks for comprehending emotion regulation. According to this model, there are two main ways that people can control their emotions at various phases of the emotional process: Cognitive reappraisal is the process of altering one's perspective in order to change the emotional impact of a situation. Expressive Suppression: Preventing the external manifestation of internal emotions. According to Gross's model, maladaptive techniques like suppression frequently result in increased psychological distress, whereas adaptive techniques like cognitive reappraisal are linked to improved psychological health outcomes, such as reduced stress and increased resilience.

Another important theory is the Extended Process Model (Gross, 2015), which highlights three key steps: identification of emotions, selection of a regulation strategy, and the implementation of that strategy. This model emphasizes that flexibility and awareness are crucial to successful emotion regulation.

Resilience research is based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. According to this model, stress is a result of interactions between a person and their surroundings. In order to effectively handle stressful situations, resilient people view them as challenges rather than threats and employ problem-focused coping mechanisms. Additionally, resilience is a process of disruption, reintegration, and growth, according to Richardson's Metatheory of Resilience and Resiliency (2002). This theory states that people can either reintegrate with dysfunction or resilience after going through adversity. Stronger resilience is the outcome of successful reintegration, which enhances emotional well-being.

The Tend-and-Befriend Theory proposed by Shelley Taylor (2000) provides a gender-specific lens on stress responses. Unlike the traditional "fight-or-flight" model, women are more likely to engage in nurturing behaviors (tending) and seeking social alliances (befriending) under stress. These behaviors are linked to the release of oxytocin, promoting calming and affiliative actions.

This theory supports the idea that emotion regulation and resilience-building processes may manifest differently in women compared to men, emphasizing the importance of social support as a protective factor against stress.

Given the intricate interplay of biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors, the present study aims to deepen our understanding of how emotion regulation and resilience relate to stress among women. By focusing on a sample of Indian women, this research intends to explore whether these internal psychological strengths significantly influence perceived stress levels. The study seeks not only to fill gaps in the current literature but also to offer practical insights that could inform future interventions,

promote emotional well-being, and empower women to manage stress more effectively in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the findings aim to support the development of culturally sensitive mental health programs and enhance awareness around gender-specific stressors. In doing so, this study aspires to contribute to a broader discourse on women's mental health and inspire proactive, evidence-based strategies to foster resilience and emotional strength in diverse female populations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pulatova (2025) examined Optimism and emotional stability are closely linked psychological constructs that vary across different stages of a woman's life. The study identified biological factors, such as hormonal changes, alongside social and psychological influences like life experiences and societal expectations, as key contributors to shifts in optimism and emotional regulation. Pulatova emphasized that coping mechanisms developed over time also significantly impact emotional stability. The findings suggest that emotional and psychological development across a woman's lifespan is a dynamic process shaped by both internal and external factors, highlighting the importance of age-specific interventions to promote mental well-being.

Midha (2025) explored how resilience acts as a key buffer against occupational and personal stress in working Indian women. The study emphasized that resilience not only reduces stress and burnout but also enhances career satisfaction and personal empowerment. Findings showed that women with higher resilience reported better emotional health and were less likely to experience workplace discrimination stress. The study also stressed the significance of organizational interventions such as resilience training and mentorship programs to foster emotional strength among women employees. Practical applications suggest that companies should focus on creating supportive work environments that build resilience, ultimately promoting sustainable career growth among women.

Razak, et al. (2025) examined different conceptualizations of resilience and how they relate to emotion regulation strategies. Their findings showed that individuals practicing adaptive strategies like cognitive reappraisal exhibited higher levels of trait, outcome-based, and transient resilience. In contrast, suppression strategies correlated with lower resilience and heightened vulnerability to emotional stress. This study demonstrated that resilience is not a static trait but a dynamic capability influenced by emotional coping methods. The authors suggested that mental health interventions focusing on promoting flexible emotion regulation could significantly enhance resilience, aiding stress management and overall psychological well-being.

Dong et al. (2024) examined the mediating roles of perceived social support and resilience in the relationship between coping styles and psychological well-being. Their findings indicate that students who adopt positive coping styles tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being, largely through enhanced perceptions of social support and stronger resilience. Perceived social support and resilience not only directly contribute to better mental health outcomes but also act as important protective factors that mitigate the negative effects of stress. These results suggest that interventions aimed at fostering supportive environments and building resilience could effectively improve psychological well-being in college settings.

Chen et al. (2024) explored the relationship between physical activity and school adjustment among high school students, emphasizing the chain-mediating roles of psychological resilience and self-control. Drawing on developmental task theory, conservation of resources theory, and the strength model of self-control, their findings revealed that physical activity not only directly influenced school adjustment but

also indirectly enhanced it through three distinct pathways: the separate mediating effects of psychological resilience and self-control, and a combined chain mediation of both factors. The study, conducted with over 2,000 students in Jiangsu Province, highlighted that engaging in regular physical activity builds psychological resilience and strengthens self-control, both of which are essential for better adaptation in school environments. These results underscore the value of promoting physical activity as a practical strategy to foster psychological resources critical for adolescents' academic and social success.

Kılıç, et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between nurses' compassion levels and emotional intelligence during the COVID-19 pandemic in city hospitals. Their findings showed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and compassion levels among nurses. Nurses with higher emotional intelligence were better able to understand and manage their emotions, which enhanced their capacity for compassionate care even under the intense pressures of the pandemic. The study highlighted that emotional regulation abilities were key to maintaining both personal well-being and professional performance during stressful times. These results suggest that improving emotional intelligence through targeted training could strengthen resilience and reduce stress among healthcare professionals, especially in crisis conditions.

Vahiba and Durga (2023) investigated perceived stress and resilience among early- married homemakers and working women in India. The study found no significant difference between the two groups, indicating that neither role directly predicted better stress management or higher resilience. The findings suggest that factors beyond employment status, such as personal coping styles and social support, may play a more critical role in women's emotional well-being.

Nayman et al. (2022) investigated the impact of cognitive emotion regulation strategies on mood and cortisol levels in women diagnosed with Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD). The study found that women with PMDD who employed adaptive strategies like mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal experienced improved mood and reduced cortisol levels across their menstrual cycles. Conversely, those engaging in repetitive negative thinking exhibited heightened mood disturbances and stress hormone levels. These findings underscore the importance of promoting adaptive emotion regulation techniques to enhance resilience and mitigate stress in women with PMDD.

Tobe et al. (2022) conducted a randomized controlled trial in Japan to assess the efficacy of a resilience-enhancement program for mothers, focusing on emotion regulation. The intervention, consisting of four bi-weekly sessions, led to significant improvements in participants' resilience, self-esteem, anger control, and positive attribution toward their children's misbehavior. These outcomes suggest that structured programs emphasizing emotion regulation can effectively bolster resilience and reduce stress among mothers, potentially preventing adverse parenting behaviors.

Vatan and Askarian (2022) examined the relationship between resilience, cognitive emotion regulation, and obsessive rumination in women with breast cancer. Findings indicated that higher resilience and adaptive emotion regulation strategies were associated with lower levels of obsessive rumination. The result showed that there is meaningful relationship between negation resilience and cognitive emotion regulation and obsessive rumination of woman with breast cancer.

Cuadrado et al. (2022) investigated gender-based variations in anxiety and regulatory emotional self-efficacy. The findings indicated that, in comparison to men, women reported higher levels of anxiety and lower self-efficacy in controlling negative emotions. The results highlight the necessity of gender-sensitive interventions to improve resilience and emotion regulation, especially for women in times of

crisis. The study emphasizes the need to give women receiving mental health treatments related to the COVID-19 pandemic extra consideration, as well as the potential disparity in the burden that the pandemic may place on men and women and the different social roles that are typically assigned to them. It is feasible to deduce from the gender differences found how social roles and stereotypes affect men's behavior and mental health.

Kalaitzaki et al. (2021) explored the interplay between emotion regulation strategies, social stress, and gender in predicting life satisfaction among emerging adults. The study revealed that cognitive reappraisal was positively associated with life satisfaction across genders, particularly under high stress levels. In contrast, expressive suppression was linked to lower life satisfaction, especially among women. These findings highlight the critical role of adaptive emotion regulation strategies in enhancing resilience and well-being, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive interventions to manage stress effectively.

Muñoz-Rivas et al. (2021) investigated the severity of post-traumatic stress disorder and emotion regulation profiles in female intimate partner violence (IPV) victims. Three emotion regulation profiles were found in the study: emotionally overwhelmed, avoidance/non-poor, and emotionally regulated. The results showed that the group experiencing emotional overwhelm had more symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and general dysregulation. In order to improve mental health outcomes for victims of intimate partner violence, the study highlights the significance of addressing emotional dysregulation in interventions.

Gutentag et al. (2020) examined how motivational intensity in emotion regulation influences psychological well-being. Their research demonstrated that individuals with higher motivation to regulate emotions engaged more in emotion-regulatory behaviors, leading to better emotional experiences and psychological health. This study suggests that fostering a strong motivation to manage emotions can enhance resilience and reduce stress, particularly in challenging situations.

Jalali et al. (2020) looked into the relationship between depressed university students' perceived stress and resilience and emotion regulation. The study used the Connor- Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) to survey 150 students from Payame Noor University of Tehran using a descriptive-correlational design. Regression analysis showed that the best predictor of perceived stress was emotion regulation, which was followed by resilience. 24% of the variation in perceived stress levels was explained by these two factors taken together. The results highlight how important emotional regulation abilities are for stress management, especially for depressed students. According to the study, more investigation is required to determine how these psychological resources affect stress management over time and to create preventative measures.

Smith et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between emotion regulation, resilience, and stress among female college students. The study found that students who frequently used cognitive reappraisal exhibited higher resilience and lower perceived stress levels. Conversely, those relying on suppression reported increased stress and diminished resilience. These findings underscore the importance of promoting adaptive emotion regulation strategies to enhance resilience and manage stress effectively in young women.

Nikmanesh and Khosravi (2020) investigated the impact of training emotion regulation techniques on resilience and psychological well-being among nurses in Zahedan. The study involved eight 90-minute sessions over two months, followed by a post-test one month after the training. Results indicated that the training significantly increased both resilience and psychological well-being among participants. The

authors recommend implementing intervention programs based on emotion regulation techniques to enhance resilience and well-being in nursing professionals.

Toohill et al. (2020) investigated resilience, perceived stress, burnout, and levels of support among trainees of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG). Findings revealed that although trainees demonstrated moderate resilience, they reported high levels of personal and workplace stress, burnout, and symptoms of depression. Additionally, a significant number of trainees expressed dissatisfaction with the support received from both the college and their direct supervisors. These results underscore the pressing need for enhanced trainee support systems and improvements in working conditions to foster resilience and promote mental well-being within this demanding specialty.

Liu et al. (2019) examined the mediating role of emotion regulation strategies, specifically suppression and reappraisal, along with self-efficacy and resilience, in the relationship between childhood maltreatment and perceived stress in young adults. The study found that, particularly among females, both suppression and reappraisal mediated the relationship between emotional neglect and perceived stress. Additionally, trait resilience mediated the relationships between various forms of parental maltreatment and perceived stress. These findings suggest that interventions targeting emotion regulation and resilience could mitigate stress associated with childhood maltreatment in women.

Sarrionandia et al. (2018) conducted a cross-country study to examine the associations between emotional intelligence, resilience, and perceived stress among undergraduate students in the United States and the Basque Country. The study found that emotional intelligence negatively predicted perceived stress through the mediating effect of resilience in both groups. This suggests that enhancing emotional intelligence and resilience could reduce perceived stress among university students.

Aldao et al. (2017) investigated the role of emotion regulation flexibility in psychological resilience among women. The study found that individuals who could flexibly employ different emotion regulation strategies based on the context exhibited higher resilience and lower stress levels. In this review, they propose a translational framework for the study of ER flexibility that is relevant to normative and clinical populations. This research highlights the significance of developing flexible emotion regulation skills to enhance resilience and cope with stress effectively.

METHODOLOGY

Aim- To study the role of emotion regulation and resilience on the stress levels of women.

Objective-

To find out relationship between emotion regulation and stress levels in women To find out relationship between resilience and stress levels in women

Hypothesis

H1- There is a significant relationship between emotion regulation and stress levels in women.

H2- There is a significant relationship between resilience and stress levels in women. H3- Emotion regulation and resilience will significantly predict stress levels in women. **Sample**

Size of sample- A sample of 104 women from age 18-40 years of age was taken.

Variables

Independent Variables- Emotional regulation and Resilience Dependent Variable- Stress Levels

DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOLS

Gross and John (2003) created the 10-item Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, a self-report tool that assesses two important emotional regulation techniques: expressive suppression (4 items) and cognitive reappraisal (6 items). A seven-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 7 denoting "strongly agree," is used to record responses. Justification: The ERQ was selected because it has a strong conceptual basis in the process model of emotion regulation and can differentiate between maladaptive and adaptive regulation techniques. Validity and Reliability: The ERQ has shown good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha for suppression and reappraisal ranging from 0.68 to 0.76 and 0.75 to 0.82, respectively. It is appropriate for both clinical and non-clinical populations because it has demonstrated strong convergent and discriminant validity across a variety of samples.

The Brief Resilience Scale, developed by Smith et al. (2008), comprises 6 items that specifically assess the ability to bounce back or recover from stress. Participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Rationale: The BRS was selected for its focus on resilience as a recovery factor, which aligns with the study's aim to examine adaptive coping mechanisms in stressful situations. Its brevity and clarity also enhance participant compliance and ease of administration. Reliability and Validity: The BRS has shown excellent internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.80 to 0.91 across studies. It has been validated against other resilience and stress measures, showing strong convergent validity and good test-retest reliability.

Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein created the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale in 1983 to gauge how much people feel that their lives have been chaotic, out of control, and burdened over the past month. A 5-point Likert scale, with 0 denoting never and 4 denoting very often, is used to rate the items. Justification: Because the PSS-10 is a widely recognized global indicator of perceived stress, it was used. One of the main elements of the research framework, the subjective assessment of stress, is captured by it. Validity and Reliability: Cronbach's alpha for the PSS-10 normally ranges from 0.78 to 0.91, indicating strong internal consistency. It has been thoroughly validated in both clinical and general populations, and it possesses strong construct and predictive validity.

RESULTS

Correlation Analysis

To explore the relationships between emotional regulation, resilience, and stress levels, Pearson's product-moment correlation was computed. Emotional regulation and resilience were the independent variables, while stress level served as the dependent variable. The results of the correlation analysis are presented below.

The correlation between emotional regulation and stress levels was found to be positive and weak ($r = 0.064$), suggesting that individuals with higher emotional regulation scores tend to report slightly higher stress levels, although this association is minimal. This is a counterintuitive finding, as prior literature generally links improved emotional regulation with reduced stress. However, this positive yet weak correlation may be influenced by other confounding variables such as the type of emotion regulation strategy employed (e.g., suppression vs. reappraisal).

In contrast, the correlation between resilience and stress levels was found to be negative and very weak ($r = -0.019$), indicating that individuals with higher resilience scores tend to experience slightly lower stress levels. While this direction is theoretically consistent with expectations—resilience serving as a buffer against stress—the relationship is not statistically or practically significant in strength.

These correlations are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Pearson Correlation Between Predictors and Stress Levels

Predictor	Outcome	Correlation (r)
Emotional Regulation	Stress Level	0.064
Resilience	Stress Level	-0.019

Regression Analysis

To further investigate the predictive value of emotional regulation and resilience on stress levels, two simple linear regression analyses were conducted.

Regression 1: Emotional Regulation Predicting Stress Levels

The regression model examining emotional regulation as a predictor of stress levels yielded the following results:

- R = 0.064, indicating a very weak correlation between the predictor and outcome variable.
- R^2 = 0.004, meaning only 0.4% of the variance in stress levels can be explained by emotional regulation.
- The adjusted R^2 was negative (-0.006), suggesting that the model performs worse than a simple mean prediction.

This regression model was not statistically significant, indicating that emotional regulation is not a meaningful predictor of stress levels in this sample.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.01859879
R Square	0.00034592
Adjusted R Square	-0.0094546

Standard Error	3.55086818
Observations	104

Regression 2: Resilience Predicting Stress Levels

The second regression model examined resilience as a predictor of stress levels. The results were similarly weak:

R = 0.019, indicating a negligible relationship.

R^2 = 0.0003, showing that only 0.03% of the variance in stress levels is accounted for by resilience.

The adjusted R^2 = -0.009, again showing the model has no predictive value beyond chance.

The regression model was not statistically significant, reinforcing the conclusion that resilience alone does not predict stress levels in this sample.

Table 2 Simple Linear Regression Results Predicting Stress Levels

Predictor	Outcome	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Emotional Regulation	Stress Level	0.064	0.004	-0.006
Resilience	Stress Level	0.019	0.0003	-0.009

ANOVA					
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	1	0.44502976	0.44502976	0.03529555	0.85135094

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	23.3561666	2.28080296	10.2403263	2.3921E-17	18.83220479	27.8801285	18.83220479	27.8801285
X Variable 1	-0.0233517	0.124296462	-0.1878711	0.85135094	-0.269893157	0.223189731	-0.26989316	0.223189731

Residual	102	1286.08382	12.6086649
Total	103	1286.52885	

INTERPRETATION

While existing literature often highlights emotional regulation and resilience as crucial protective factors against stress, the present study did not find strong empirical support for these associations within the current sample. Regression analysis showed that neither emotional regulation nor resilience significantly predicted stress levels. Specifically, the R^2 values were extremely low (0.0041 for emotional regulation and 0.0003 for resilience), indicating minimal explanatory power of these variables on stress. The correlations between these variables and stress were similarly weak, further supporting this conclusion.

There are several plausible explanations for these findings:

Strategy Type Matters: The emotional regulation measure used in the study likely combined different types of strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal (generally adaptive) and expressive suppression (often maladaptive). Without distinguishing between these, the overall effect of emotional regulation may appear negligible or even contradictory.

Resilience as a Moderator, Not a Predictor: Resilience may not exert a direct influence on stress levels but could instead moderate the impact of environmental stressors. For instance, individuals with higher resilience may experience lower perceived stress when faced with adversity, but this buffering effect may not be evident in standard correlation or regression analyses.

Sample-Specific Factors: The demographic composition and life context of the sample (e.g., mostly students or early-career individuals) could influence the prominence of stressors unrelated to emotional regulation or resilience. External factors such as academic deadlines, peer pressure, or job insecurity may overshadow internal coping mechanisms.

Contextual Influences: It's also possible that chronic stressors in the environment were not adequately captured by the self-report tools, leading to underestimation of the role internal traits like resilience and emotion regulation play.

These findings challenge a simplistic view of psychological resilience and regulation as universally protective and instead support a more nuanced understanding that considers interaction effects, contextual pressures, and specific strategy use.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the role of emotion regulation and resilience in predicting perceived stress levels among women. Drawing on established psychological frameworks such as Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the study anticipated significant correlations and predictive power from these two constructs. However, the findings revealed that neither emotion regulation nor resilience significantly predicted

stress levels in the sample of Indian women aged 18 to 40. This outcome, while initially surprising, opens up several important avenues for interpretation and critical analysis.

The Pearson correlation results demonstrated a weak positive relationship between emotion regulation and stress ($r = 0.064$) and a weak negative relationship between resilience and stress ($r = -0.019$). These findings deviate from much of the existing literature, which typically identifies strong negative correlations between adaptive emotion regulation or resilience and perceived stress (Troy & Mauss, 2011; Connor & Davidson, 2003).

One possible explanation lies in the complexity of the emotion regulation construct itself. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) used in this study captures two contrasting strategies: cognitive reappraisal (generally adaptive) and expressive suppression (often maladaptive). If participants leaned more toward suppression—perhaps due to cultural or social norms that discourage overt emotional expression—this could account for the unexpected positive correlation with stress. Suppression has been consistently linked to increased psychological distress and physiological arousal (Gross & John, 2003), which may explain this outcome. Future research should disaggregate these two dimensions in analysis rather than using a composite score.

The regression analyses showed negligible predictive power: emotional regulation accounted for just 0.4% of the variance in stress levels ($R^2 = 0.004$), and resilience accounted for an even smaller portion ($R^2 = 0.0003$). These results indicate that these variables, at least when considered in isolation, are not strong predictors of perceived stress in the current sample.

There are several important implications here. First, this suggests that internal traits like emotion regulation and resilience may not directly translate into lower stress levels unless mediated by or interacting with external factors. Contextual influences—such as academic pressure, financial strain, relationship issues, and health concerns—could have played a more dominant role in determining stress levels among the women sampled. For example, even a highly resilient woman may still experience elevated stress if she is overwhelmed by structural or environmental stressors beyond her control.

Moreover, resilience might act more effectively as a moderator than as a predictor—buffering the effects of stressors rather than influencing stress levels directly. In such a model, resilience would interact with external stressors to reduce their psychological impact rather than independently reducing stress. This insight aligns with previous research highlighting the contextual and interactive nature of resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

It is also essential to consider the characteristics of the sample. The participants were women aged 18 to 40, possibly including a large proportion of students and early-career professionals. These groups often face acute but transitional life stressors—examinations, career uncertainty, identity formation—that might not be easily mitigated by stable psychological traits like resilience or emotion regulation. Furthermore, the pressures experienced during early adulthood may require different coping mechanisms than those captured by standard resilience or emotion regulation scales.

Additionally, cultural factors must be taken into account. In the Indian context, gender norms often encourage women to suppress negative emotions or maintain emotional harmony in relationships. This societal pressure can shape the ways women learn to regulate their emotions and may render some strategies (like suppression) more prevalent, even if maladaptive. Therefore, traditional emotion regulation scales developed in Western contexts might not fully capture the culturally nuanced ways Indian women manage emotions.

Comparing with Existing Literature

Previous studies such as those by Smith et al. (2020) and Razak et al. (2025) reported significant relationships between emotion regulation, resilience, and stress—particularly emphasizing the positive impact of cognitive reappraisal and the protective role of trait resilience. The discrepancy with the current study suggests that broader psychosocial and cultural variables may mediate these relationships in specific populations.

Moreover, some research points to emotion regulation flexibility—the ability to adaptively switch between strategies depending on context—as being more critical than the frequent use of any single strategy (Aldao et al., 2017). This idea is particularly relevant for diverse and dynamic sociocultural settings like India, where women often navigate competing demands from traditional family roles and modern occupational expectations. Future research could assess this flexibility rather than rely on fixed-frequency self-report measures.

Although the study did not find statistically significant predictions, the results still have important implications for designing interventions. First, it reinforces the need for multi- dimensional stress management programs that go beyond internal traits and incorporate social, environmental, and systemic factors. Training programs should not only enhance personal coping skills but also address external sources of stress—workplace discrimination, gender inequality, financial instability, etc.

Second, the study underscores the importance of tailored psychological interventions. Emotion regulation training, for instance, should distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive strategies and be culturally contextualized. Similarly, resilience-building programs might benefit from incorporating community-based and spiritual practices that resonate with Indian women's lived experiences, such as mindfulness, yoga, or collective prayer groups.

Third, it raises questions about measurement tools used in cross-cultural research. There is a clear need to either develop or adapt instruments that are sensitive to the cultural context in which they are applied. The Western-derived ERQ and BRS, although validated across various populations, may not capture the nuanced expressions of emotion regulation and resilience found in Indian settings.

To conclude, the findings challenge some of the prevailing assumptions about the protective roles of emotion regulation and resilience in managing stress. While these psychological traits are undoubtedly valuable, their impact appears to be shaped—and at times overshadowed—by broader social, cultural, and situational factors. The weak predictive values obtained in this study remind us of the complexity of stress as a psychological construct and the necessity for a systems-based perspective that considers interactions between personal, interpersonal, and structural influences.

In advancing the field, researchers must move beyond linear, trait-based models and embrace integrative approaches that acknowledge contextual variability, strategy flexibility, and cultural specificity. This will not only enhance the scientific understanding of stress regulation but also inform the development of more effective, equitable, and relevant interventions for women in diverse societies like India.

SUMMERY OF KEY FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that neither emotional regulation nor resilience significantly predicted stress levels. The correlation between emotional regulation and stress was positive but very weak ($r = 0.064$), while the correlation between resilience and stress was negative but even weaker ($r = -0.019$). Regression analyses reinforced these results, showing minimal R- squared values (0.4% for emotional regulation and 0.03% for resilience), and negative adjusted R-squared scores, indicating that the models

had no practical predictive power.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

To build on the current findings and overcome existing limitations, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Differentiating Emotion Regulation Strategies: Future studies should analyse specific emotion regulation strategies independently, especially cognitive reappraisal vs. expressive suppression, to better understand their distinct impact on stress.
2. Inclusion of Moderating Variables: Research should include potential moderating factors such as social support, personality traits, and coping styles to uncover indirect relationships between internal strengths and stress outcomes.
3. Use of Mixed Methods: Employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods could enrich understanding by capturing personal narratives, cultural nuances, and lived experiences of stress and resilience.
4. Longitudinal Approach: Future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to track how emotional regulation and resilience influence stress over time, particularly across life transitions such as motherhood, career changes, or aging.
5. Diverse and Representative Samples: Expanding the sample to include women from varied age groups, geographical locations (rural and urban), and socio-cultural backgrounds will enhance the generalizability and applicability of the findings.
6. Intervention-Based Studies: Designing and testing resilience and emotion regulation training programs could provide actionable strategies to reduce stress. These interventions should be culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique needs of Indian women.

By addressing these areas, future research can develop more precise and impactful models of psychological well-being that reflect the complex realities of women's lives, particularly within diverse cultural contexts like India.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the role of emotion regulation and resilience in predicting stress levels among Indian women aged 18 to 40. Grounded in established psychological theories such as Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation and the Resilience Theory, the research aimed to uncover whether these internal psychological strengths significantly influence perceived stress. However, the results did not support the proposed hypotheses. Both emotion regulation and resilience showed weak and statistically non-significant correlations with stress, and regression analyses indicated minimal predictive power.

These findings challenge widely accepted assumptions about the direct influence of individual psychological traits on stress and underscore the complex, multifactorial nature of stress experiences. Rather than dismissing the importance of emotion regulation and resilience, the study suggests that their effects may be indirect, context-dependent, or moderated by other variables such as social support, personality traits, or cultural expectations. The study also highlights the importance of understanding the specific types of emotion regulation strategies used, as well as recognizing resilience not just as a trait but as a dynamic process shaped by lived experiences.

Moreover, the findings emphasize the need for culturally relevant and holistic stress

intervention programs that account for both internal strengths and external stressors. It also calls for more nuanced, longitudinal, and mixed-method research that explores how emotion regulation and resilience evolve across different life stages and under varying life conditions. In sum, this thesis contributes to the growing body of literature that seeks to understand women's mental health within the Indian sociocultural context. While the direct predictive power of emotion regulation and resilience on stress may be limited in this sample, these constructs still hold immense value—especially when embedded within broader, intersectional frameworks that reflect the realities of women's lives. This study opens the door for future research and interventions that are inclusive, context-sensitive, and responsive to the diverse needs of women.