

# The Impact of Parental Style in Emotional Regulation and Coping Flexibility Among Emerging Adults

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## Abstract

Parental style plays an important role in shaping the psychological development of individuals. The present study focuses on the impact of different parental style on emotional regulation and coping flexibility among emerging adults. The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), Coping Flexibility Scale (CFS), and Parental Style Questionnaire – Revised (PSQ-R) were used to measure these constructs among 300 emerging adults aged 18–25 years in Tamil Nadu, India. Linear regression and basic statistical analyses were used to examine the collected data. Basic statistical analysis indicated that the average reported parental style score was 116.57, the level of emotional regulation was 116.45, and the level of coping flexibility was 25.72. The findings further revealed a positive relationship between parental style and coping flexibility ( $r = .117$ ) and a moderate positive relationship between parental style and emotional regulation ( $r = .416$ ). From the results, it is concluded that parental style plays a meaningful role in influencing emotional regulation and coping flexibility among emerging adults, indicating that supportive and structured parenting practices may contribute to better emotional management and adaptive coping behaviours.

**Keywords:** Parental style, Emotional Regulation, Coping Flexibility, Emerging Adults.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Parenting plays a important role in shaping individuals' emotional, social, and psychological development. Parenting practices vary across cultures and family dynamics, and these differences are often influenced by social changes such as economic transitions, migration, and evolving family structures. The manner in which parents guide, discipline, and emotionally interact with their children significantly influences the development of children's values, beliefs, and behavioural patterns. Psychological literature commonly categorizes parenting into four major styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved, each reflecting different levels of parental control and responsiveness. Authoritarian parenting is characterized by strict discipline and limited child autonomy, whereas authoritative parenting combines firm guidance with emotional support and open communication. Permissive parenting is marked by warmth but minimal rules or structure, while uninvolved parenting reflects low parental engagement and limited supervision. These parenting styles can influence children's emotional development and coping abilities in different ways. One important psychological process influenced by early family circumstances is emotional

regulation, which refers to the ability to understand, manage, and express emotions in adaptive ways. Effective emotional regulation has been associated with improved mental health, better interpersonal relationships, and greater psychological well-being. Individuals regulate emotions using different strategies like cognitive reappraisal, distraction, rumination, suppression, and acceptance, and the effectiveness of these strategies often based on contextual and personal factors. Closely related to emotional regulation is coping flexibility, which refers to the ability to adjust coping strategies according to situational demands. Rather than depending on a single coping style, individuals who act coping flexibility are able to evaluate stressful situations and apply appropriate responses, thereby reducing stress and improving psychological adjustment. These emotional and coping processes become particularly important during emerging adulthood, a developmental stage typically ranging from the late teens to the late twenties. Emerging adulthood is defined by identity exploration, instability, increasing independence, and significant life transitions such as higher education, career development, and the formation of intimate relationships. In this period, individuals often continue to maintain strong emotional ties with their parents due to prolonged education and economic dependence, allowing parenting experiences to continue influencing emotional functioning and coping behaviour. Consequently, understanding how parenting styles relate to emotional regulation and coping flexibility during emerging adulthood may give valuable insights into psychological adjustment during this transitional stage. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between parenting style, emotional regulation, and coping flexibility among emerging adults.

## **Concept of parental style, emotional regulation and coping flexibility**

### **Definition of parental style**

parenting styles- ways in which parents interact with their children with most classifications varying on the dimensions of emotional warmth (warm vs. cold) and control (high in control vs. low in control). One of the most influential of these classifications is that of U.S. developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind (1927)

### **Definitions of emotional regulation**

- Emotional regulation is a dynamic and multifaceted process by which we experience and express our emotions (Thompson et al., 2008).
- It can be conscious, such as actively deciding to calm yourself down after a stressful meeting, or unconscious, such as automatically feeling relief after a deep breath (McRae & Gross, 2020).

### **Definition of coping flexibility**

Coping flexibility is generally defined as one's ability to modify one's coping strategies adaptively to meet the demands of different stressful situations (Kato, 2012).

## **2. Review of literature**

**Forthun (2020)** examined the relationship between parenting styles, emotional self-regulation, and identity development among emerging adults using data from the Multi-Site University Study of Identity and Culture (MUSIC). The study employed a cross-sectional online survey comprising 3,775 university students aged 18–29 years, the majority being female and White. A person-centered analytical approach was adopted, wherein hierarchical and k-means cluster analyses were used to identify parenting profiles based on perceived parental nurturance and psychological control. Four distinct parenting profiles emerged: Parental Nurturance, Parental Repression, Parental Equivocation, and Maternal Mitigation. Findings revealed that individuals perceiving high parental nurturance with low psychological control

demonstrated higher levels of identity commitment, exploration, and adaptive emotional regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal. The Maternal Mitigation profile showed comparable positive outcomes. In contrast, profiles characterized by high psychological control were associated with increased ruminative exploration, emotional suppression, and weaker identity commitment. The study highlights the critical role of nurturing and autonomy-supportive parenting in fostering healthy identity formation and emotional self-regulation during emerging adulthood.

**Eisenberg, Cumberland, and Spinrad (1998)** examine the socialization of emotion regulation through parental influence and its implications for psychological adjustment. Their study emphasized that parents play a crucial role in modelling and coaching emotional responses, thereby shaping individuals' capacity to regulate emotions effectively. Findings indicated that supportive and validating parental responses were associated with better emotional regulation and coping competence, while dismissive or punitive responses were linked to emotional suppression and maladaptive coping. The study also suggested that these emotional regulation patterns persist into young adulthood, affecting resilience, self-esteem, and mental well-being. This research underscores the long-term impact of early parental emotional socialization on adaptive coping mechanisms.

**Tsukasa Kato 2016**, conducted a study on Relationship between coping flexibility and the risk of depression in Indian adults in order to test the coping flexibility hypothesis, which posits that flexible coping produces adaptive outcomes, the relationship between coping flexibility and the risk of depression was examined in the context of Indian adults. Participants (150 men and 150 women) answered questionnaires measuring coping flexibility and depressive symptoms. The risk of depression was assessed using a Patient Health Questionnaire-9 score of 10 and a Center for Epidemiologic Studies' Depression Scale score of 16 as cut-off points. Logistic regression analyses of the score cut-off points revealed that higher levels of coping flexibility were associated with lower risks of depression, after controlling for the effects of gender, age, and marital status. Overall, the coping flexibility hypothesis was supported in this Indian adult sample. These findings might contribute to preventing recurrent depression and to attenuating depressive symptoms.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Aim:

To study the impact of parental style in emotional regulation and coping flexibility among emerging adults.

#### 3.2 Objectives:

- To examine the influence of different parental styles on emotional regulation abilities in emerging adults.
- To assess the relationship between parental styles and coping flexibility among individuals in emerging adulthood.
- To identify which parental styles are associated with healthier emotional regulation strategies in emerging adults.
- To explore how variations in parental upbringing contribute to adaptive or maladaptive coping responses during stressful situations.
- To analyze the combined effect of parental style on both emotional regulation and coping flexibility in emerging adults.
- To understand the role of perceived parental behavior in shaping emotional resilience during the transition to adulthood.

- To contribute empirical insights that may inform family-based interventions aimed at improving emotional and coping outcomes in emerging adults.

### 3.3 Hypothesis:

H1: Perceived parenting styles has a significantly influence emotional regulation or coping flexibility in emerging adults.

H2: Authoritarian and neglectful parental styles are negatively associated with emotional Regulation and coping flexibility among emerging adults.

## 4. Research Design:

The study follows a quantitative, non-experimental research design to explore the relationship between parental style, emotional regulation, and coping flexibility among emerging adults. A correlational approach is used to examine how different parenting styles are associated with levels of emotional regulation and coping flexibility. The independent variable in the study is perceived parental style, while emotional regulation and coping flexibility serve as the dependent variables.

### 4.1 Sampling Technique:

The study adopts a simple random sampling technique to select a sample of 300 participants aged between 18 and 29 years. Each individual within the identified population has an equal chance of being included in the study, which helps reduce selection bias. This method ensures representative sample for examining the relationship between parental style, emotional regulation, and coping flexibility among emerging adults.

### 4.2 Tool description:

- Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS): The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) is a standardized self-report instrument used to assess multiple aspects of emotional dysregulation, including emotional awareness, clarity, acceptance, impulse control, and access to effective regulation strategies. The scale consists of items rated on a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always), with higher total scores indicating greater difficulties in emotional regulation. The DERS has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically exceeding 0.90, indicating high reliability. Previous research has also established good construct and convergent validity, supporting its effectiveness in measuring emotional regulation difficulties across diverse populations.
- Coping Flexibility Scale (CFS): The Coping Flexibility Scale (CFS) is designed to measure an individual's capacity to modify coping strategies according to situational demands and stressors. Responses are recorded on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all applicable) to 4 (very applicable), with higher scores representing greater coping flexibility. The scale has shown acceptable to good reliability, with reported Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.70 to 0.85. Evidence for its validity has been supported through significant associations with psychological adjustment, stress management, and adaptive coping outcomes, indicating sound construct validity.
- Parental Style Questionnaire – Revised (PSQ-R): The Parental Style Questionnaire Revised (PSQ-R) assesses individuals' perceptions of parental behaviors and parenting styles across key dimensions such as warmth, control, and autonomy support. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting stronger endorsement of specific parenting style characteristics. The PSQ-R has demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with reliability coefficients generally reported above 0.80. Its validity has been supported through consist

nt relationships with emotional, behavioral, and psychological adjustment variables, confirming its usefulness in parenting style research.

**4.3 Statistical Analysis:**

The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the variables. Pearson’s correlation was applied to examine relationships between parental style, emotional regulation, and coping flexibility. Group differences were analysed using t-tests or one-way ANOVA, with the level of significance set at  $p < 0.05$

**4.4 Inclusive criteria:**

- Individuals who do not fall within the age range of emerging adulthood (i.e., below 18 years or above 29 years)
- Individuals with a diagnosed severe mental illness or neurological condition that may significantly affect emotional regulation or coping flexibility.

**4.5 Exclusive criteria:**

- Criteria Individuals below 18 years or above 29 years of age.
- Participants with a diagnosed severe psychiatric or neurological condition that may affect emotional regulation or coping responses.

**Result**

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the statistical analysis conducted to examine the relationship between parental style, emotional regulation, and coping flexibility among emerging adults. The results are presented through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, followed by an interpretation of the findings.

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation of parental style, emotional regulation, and coping flexibility among emerging adults**

| Variables            | Mean   | Standard deviation | N   |
|----------------------|--------|--------------------|-----|
| Parental style       | 116.57 | 12.459             | 300 |
| Coping flexibility   | 25.72  | 8.988              | 300 |
| Emotional regulation | 116.45 | 45.675             | 300 |

The above table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation of the variable. Parental style recorded a mean score of 116.57 with a standard deviation of 12.459 among 300 participants. Coping flexibility showed a mean score of 25.72 and a standard deviation of 8.988, while emotional regulation had a mean score of 116.45 with a standard deviation of 45.675.

**Table 2 Correlation analysis showing the relationship between parental style and coping flexibility**

| Variables                             | Pearson’s Correlation | Significance | Decision     |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Parental Style and Coping Flexibility | .117                  | $p < 0.05$   | Reject $H_0$ |

**\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

The above table 2 shows the scores of Pearson’s correlation between two variables indicate a positive relationship between parental style and coping flexibility ( $r = .117, p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that parenting practices may have a small influence on the development of coping strategies among emerging adults. Since the significance value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between parental style and coping flexibility is rejected.

**Table 3 Correlation analysis showing the relationship between parental style and emotional regulation**

| Variables            | Pearson’s Correlation | Significance | Decision     |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Parental Style       | .416                  | $p < 0.05$   | Reject $H_0$ |
| Emotional Regulation |                       |              |              |

**\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

The analysis also revealed a positive correlation between parental style and emotional regulation ( $r = .416$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates a moderate and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. In other words, individuals who experience supportive and structured parenting may demonstrate better emotional regulation abilities.

Based on this result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between parental style and emotional regulation is rejected.

## 5. Discussion

The present study was to examine the relationship between parental style, coping flexibility, and emotional regulation among emerging adults. The descriptive results showed that participants reported moderate levels of parental style and emotional regulation, whereas coping flexibility displayed comparatively lower mean scores. The variation observed in the data suggests that individuals differ in their coping strategies and emotional management abilities. Although the strength of the relationship was rather weak, the correlation analysis revealed a favourable relationship between parental style and coping flexibility. This result suggests that emerging adults' coping strategies for difficult situations may be influenced by their parenting experiences. Additionally, the study discovered a moderately positive relationship between emotional management and parental style. This implies that the development of improved emotional control and understanding among individuals may be facilitated by supportive parenting practices. Overall, the results demonstrated the significance of parental practices in promoting coping flexibility and emotional regulation during emerging adulthood. The rejection of the null hypotheses indicates that meaningful relationships exist between the variables analysed in this study.

## 6. Summary

The present study examined how perceived parental styles influence emotional regulation and coping flexibility among emerging adults aged 18–29 years in Tamil Nadu. Using standardized tools such as the DERS, CFS, and PSQ-R, data were collected from 300 participants and analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation methods. The findings indicated that participants reported moderate levels of parental style and emotional regulation, while coping flexibility was comparatively lower. Statistical analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between parental style and coping flexibility, although the strength of this relationship was relatively weak. In contrast, a stronger and moderate positive relationship was observed between parental style and emotional regulation. These results suggest that the way individuals perceive their parents’ behaviours especially in terms of warmth, control, and support—has a meaningful influence on how they manage emotions and adapt their coping strategies during stressful situations. Overall, the study highlights the continued importance of parenting even during emerging adulthood, a stage marked by increasing independence but ongoing emotional reliance on family.

## 7. Conclusion

This study concludes that parental style plays a significant role in shaping emotional regulation and coping flexibility among emerging adults. People who see their parents as supportive, structured, and emotionally responsive tend to show better emotional control and more effective ways of coping. The moderate association between parenting approaches and emotional regulation suggests a significant influence of parenting on an individual's comprehension and management of emotions. While the correlation between parental style and coping flexibility is less pronounced, it retains statistical significance, implying that parenting still plays a role in how individuals adapt their coping mechanisms to suit varying circumstances. Thus, the findings reinforce the idea that positive parenting practices particularly those characterized by warmth, guidance, and open communication can foster emotional resilience and psychological well-being during the transition to adulthood.

## 8. Limitation

- Data were collected through self-report measures, which may be influenced by personal bias, memory errors, or social desirability.
- The sample was restricted to emerging adults from Tamil Nadu, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or regional populations.

## 9. Recommendation

- Studies can include a more diverse and larger sample across different regions to improve generalizability.
- Parents should be educated about the importance of supportive and balanced parenting practices that encourage both autonomy and emotional connection.

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