

# The Relationship Between Comfort Object Attachment and Emotional Regulation Among Young Adults

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## ABSTRACT

Comfort objects are personal items that provide individuals with a sense of emotional security, familiarity, and reassurance, particularly during times of stress or emotional discomfort. While these objects are most commonly associated with childhood, research suggests that such attachments may persist into young adulthood and continue to influence emotional functioning. In many cases, these objects act as symbolic sources of comfort, helping individuals manage feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or distress in everyday situations. The present study examines the relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 250 participants aged 18–25 years using standardized tools, namely the Object Attachment Security Measure (OASM) and the Perth Emotion Regulation Competency Inventory (PERCI). Statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation were employed to analyze the data. The findings indicated that participants exhibited moderate levels of both comfort object attachment and emotional regulation. Significant differences were observed across age groups, whereas gender differences were not found to be significant. Further analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation. This suggests that individuals who report stronger attachment to comfort objects may also demonstrate a greater ability to manage and regulate their emotional experiences effectively. Overall, the study highlights the continued psychological relevance of comfort objects beyond childhood and emphasizes their potential role as supportive mechanisms in emotional regulation among young adults. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of alternative coping strategies and their role in promoting emotional well-being.

**Keywords:** Comfort Object Attachment, Emotional Regulation, Young Adults, Psychological Well-being, Coping Mechanisms, Object Attachment, Emotional Adjustment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Psychology focuses on understanding human behaviour and mental processes, including how individuals think, feel, and respond to different life situations. One important aspect of psychological functioning is

emotional regulation, which refers to the ability to manage and control emotional responses effectively. Young adulthood is a stage marked by various life transitions such as academic demands, career planning, and changing interpersonal relationships. These experiences can create emotional challenges, making emotional regulation an essential skill during this period. Individuals adopt different coping strategies to deal with emotional distress. One such coping mechanism is the use of comfort objects. Comfort objects are personal belongings that provide a sense of safety, familiarity, and emotional reassurance. These objects may include items such as clothing, blankets, soft toys, or other meaningful possessions. Although comfort objects are often associated with childhood, many individuals continue to maintain attachments to such objects during later stages of life. However, limited research has explored how these attachments are related to emotional regulation among young adults. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

### 2.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory, proposed by John Bowlby, explains how emotional bonds formed with caregivers influence an individual's sense of security and emotional development. During times of stress, individuals seek comfort from attachment figures. When such figures are not available, individuals may rely on symbolic sources of comfort, such as meaningful personal objects, to experience emotional reassurance.

### 2.2 Transitional Object Theory

The concept of transitional objects, introduced by Donald Winnicott, explains how certain objects help individuals cope with separation and emotional distress. These objects provide comfort and familiarity, helping individuals manage difficult emotional experiences. While initially associated with childhood, such attachments may continue into adulthood as a form of emotional support.

### 2.3 Emotion Regulation Theory

Emotion regulation refers to the processes through which individuals manage their emotional experiences. According to Gross, individuals use various strategies to influence how they experience and express emotions. The presence of comfort objects may support emotional regulation by providing a sense of stability and reducing emotional distress.

## 3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 3.1 Review of Literature related to Comfort Object Attachment

**Passman, R. H. (2008)**, examined the role of comfort objects in emotional development and coping among children and adolescents. The study highlighted that attachment to transitional objects provides emotional security, especially during situations involving stress or separation. The findings suggested that such attachments help in reducing anxiety and promoting emotional stability, indicating that comfort objects function as important coping tools. (Passman, 2008)

**Winnicott, D. W. (1953)**, introduced the concept of transitional objects and studied their psychological significance in early development. The study explained that objects such as blankets or soft toys help individuals manage separation anxiety and provide a sense of continuity between internal and external reality. The findings indicated that these objects serve as emotional supports and may continue to hold psychological importance beyond childhood. (Winnicott, 1953)

**Keefer, L. A., Landau, M. J., & Sullivan, D. (2014)**, conducted an experimental study to examine the psychological role of object attachment in providing comfort during existential threat. The results showed

that individuals who were reminded of meaningful personal objects experienced reduced anxiety and increased feelings of security. The study concluded that object attachment can function as a symbolic source of emotional reassurance in stressful situations. (Keefer et al., 2014)

**Sherman, G. D., & Haidt, J. (2011)**, explored how sentimental objects influence emotional experiences and attachment processes. The findings indicated that individuals form strong emotional bonds with personal objects, which can evoke feelings of comfort, nostalgia, and security. The study suggested that such attachments play a role in emotional coping and self-regulation. (Sherman & Haidt, 2011)

### **3.2 Review of Literature related to Emotional Regulation**

**Gross, J. J. (1998)**, conducted a foundational study on emotional regulation processes and proposed a model explaining how individuals manage emotional experiences. The study identified strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression and found that adaptive strategies are associated with better psychological outcomes. The findings emphasized the importance of emotional regulation in maintaining mental well-being. (Gross, 1998)

**John, O. P., & Gross, J. J. (2004)**, examined individual differences in emotional regulation strategies and their impact on psychological functioning. The study found that individuals who frequently used cognitive reappraisal reported better emotional adjustment, while those who relied on suppression experienced higher levels of distress. The results highlighted the role of emotional regulation in shaping emotional and social outcomes. (John & Gross, 2004)

**Aldao, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Schweizer, S. (2010)**, conducted a meta-analysis to examine the relationship between emotional regulation strategies and psychopathology. The findings indicated that maladaptive strategies such as rumination and suppression were strongly associated with anxiety and depression, whereas adaptive strategies were linked to better emotional health. The study emphasized the significance of effective emotional regulation in psychological well-being. (Aldao et al., 2010)

**Hu, T., Zhang, D., Wang, J., Mistry, R., Ran, G., & Wang, X. (2014)**, investigated the relationship between emotional regulation and mental health outcomes. The results showed that individuals with higher emotional regulation abilities experienced lower stress and better psychological adjustment. The study concluded that emotional regulation plays a protective role in managing emotional challenges. (Hu et al., 2014)

## **4. RESEARCH GAP**

Previous studies have examined psychological concepts such as emotional regulation, coping strategies, and attachment processes, particularly among young adults. However, much of this research has focused on interpersonal relationships and internal emotional processes, while the role of personal objects as sources of emotional support has received comparatively less attention. Comfort objects are often associated with childhood development, and their relevance in later stages of life, especially during young adulthood, remains underexplored. Similarly, emotional regulation has been widely studied in relation to mental health outcomes, stress management, and psychological well-being. However, limited research has focused on how emotional regulation may be influenced by alternative coping mechanisms such as attachment to comfort objects. In addition, most existing studies have examined these variables separately rather than exploring their relationship. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults.

## 5. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Emotional regulation plays a crucial role in maintaining psychological well-being, especially during young adulthood, a stage characterized by various life transitions and emotional challenges. Individuals often adopt different coping strategies to manage stress and emotional discomfort, yet the role of comfort objects as a potential coping mechanism has received limited research attention. Understanding how comfort object attachment is related to emotional regulation may provide valuable insight into how individuals manage their emotional experiences using personal and accessible sources of comfort. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the psychological significance of comfort objects beyond childhood and examining their role in emotional functioning among young adults. Therefore, the investigator felt the need to conduct the present study entitled, “The Relationship between Comfort Object Attachment and Emotional Regulation among Young Adults.”

## 6. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

### 6.1 Objectives

1. To assess the level of comfort object attachment among young adults.
2. To assess the level of emotional regulation among young adults.
3. To find out whether there is a significant difference in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation with respect to:
  - a) Gender
  - b) Age
4. To examine the relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults.

### 6.2 Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults with respect to:
  - a) Gender
  - b) Age
2. There is a significant relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults.

## 7. METHODOLOGY

### 7.1 Research Method

In the present study, the researcher has employed the normative survey method to analyze the relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults.

### 7.2 Sample

The investigator used a random sampling technique for selecting the sample of 250 young adults aged between 18 and 25 years from various colleges and institutions.

### 7.3 Tools Used in the Study

The tools used for the present investigation are presented below:

1. Object Attachment Security Measure (OASM)
2. Perth Emotion Regulation Competency Inventory (PERCI)

### 7.4 Scoring Procedure

The Object Attachment Security Measure (OASM) is used to assess the level of emotional attachment

individuals have toward their comfort objects. The scale measures both secure and insecure dimensions of attachment. Responses are recorded on a Likert-type scale, and the total score is obtained by summing the responses to all items. Higher scores indicate a higher level of comfort object attachment. The Perth Emotion Regulation Competency Inventory (PERCI) is used to assess an individual’s ability to regulate emotional experiences. The scale evaluates both positive and negative aspects of emotional regulation. Responses are measured using a Likert-type scale, and the total score is calculated by summing all item responses. Higher scores indicate better emotional regulation ability. Both instruments are standardized tools widely used in psychological research to assess attachment-related behaviours and emotional regulation competencies.

**7.5 Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

The collected data were systematically processed and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to ensure accurate interpretation of the findings. The statistical methods employed for data analysis and hypothesis testing include measures of central tendency, independent samples t-test, Pearson correlation, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). These techniques were used to examine the relationship between the variables and to determine the significance of differences within the sample.

**8. TESTING OF OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES**

**Objective 1:** To assess the level of comfort object attachment among young adults.

**Table 1: Level of comfort object attachment among young adults**

Comfort Object Attachment and its dimensions	N	Maximum score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Mean
Secure Value	250	91	56.65	15.421	62.25%
Insecure Value	250	84	50.02	14.768	59.54%
Total Score	250	175	106.68	29.351	60.96%

The mean and standard deviation of the level of comfort object attachment among young adults are presented in Table 1. The results indicate that young adults exhibit a moderate level of comfort object attachment overall (M = 106.68, 60.96%). Among the dimensions, secure attachment (M = 56.65, 62.25%) and insecure attachment (M = 50.02, 59.54%) both reflect moderate levels. Comparatively, secure attachment shows a slightly higher mean percentage than insecure attachment, indicating a relatively greater tendency toward secure forms of attachment among the participants.

**Objective 2:** To assess the level of emotional regulation among young adults.

**Table 2: Level of emotional regulation among young adults**

Emotional Regulation and its dimensions	N	Maximum score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Mean
Negative emotional regulation	250	112	74.83	15.721	66.81%

<b>Positive emotional regulation</b>	250	112	69.84	18.201	62.35%
<b>General Emotion regulation</b>	250	224	144.66	30.945	51.18%

The mean and standard deviation of the level of emotional regulation among young adults are presented in Table 2. The results indicate that young adults exhibit a moderate level of emotional regulation overall (M = 144.66, 51.18%). Among the dimensions, negative emotional regulation (M = 74.83, 66.81%) and positive emotional regulation (M = 69.84, 62.35%) both reflect moderate levels. Comparatively, negative emotional regulation shows a slightly higher mean percentage than positive emotional regulation, indicating a relatively greater tendency toward negative emotional regulation among the participants.

**Hypothesis 1(a):** There is a significant differences in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation with respect to Gender

**Table 3: Significant differences in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation based on gender**

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	“t” value	Significance
<b>OASM secure value</b>	Female	127	57.63	15.264	1.019	Not Significant
	Male	123	55.64	15.579		
<b>OASM insecure value</b>	Female	127	50.23	14.674	0.222	Not Significant
	Male	123	49.81	14.921		
<b>General Emotion regulation</b>	Female	127	147.52	30.598	1.486	Not Significant
	Male	123	141.72	31.149		
<b>PERCI Negative Emotion regulation</b>	Female	127	76.91	15.196	2.147	0.05 Significant
	Male	123	72.67	16.024		
<b>PERCI Positive Emotion regulation</b>	Female	127	70.61	17.685	0.679	Not Significant
	Male	123	69.04	18.758		

From the above Table 3, it is inferred that the calculated ‘t’ values for the dimensions of comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults are compared with the table value (1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance. It is observed that there is no significant difference with respect to gender in OASM secure value (1.019), OASM insecure value (0.222), General Emotional Regulation (1.486), and

PERCI Positive Emotion Regulation (0.679), as the obtained ‘t’ values are less than the table value. However, there is a significant difference in PERCI Negative Emotion Regulation (2.147), as the obtained ‘t’ value is greater than the table value. Therefore, it is concluded that the formulated hypothesis, “There is a significant difference in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults with respect to gender” is partially accepted.

**Hypothesis 1(b):** There is a significant differences in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation with respect to Age

**Table 4: Significant differences in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation based on Age**

Variables	Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
<b>OASM secure value</b>	Between Groups	5660.618	2	2830.309	13.054	0.01 Significance
	Within Groups	53554.106	247	216.818		
	Total	59214.724	249			
<b>OASM insecure value</b>	Between Groups	3498.768	2	1749.384	8.505	0.01 Significance
	Within Groups	50805.088	247	205.689		
	Total	54303.856	249			
<b>General emotion regulation</b>	Between Groups	18379.689	2	9189.843	10.314	0.01 Significance
	Within Groups	220068.091	247	890.964		
	Total	238447.776	249			

From the above Table 4, it is inferred that the calculated ‘F’ values (13.054, 8.505, and 10.314) are greater than the table value at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is a significant difference among young adults across different age groups in terms of comfort object attachment (secure and insecure) and emotional regulation. Hence, the formulated hypothesis, “There is a significant difference in comfort object attachment and emotional regulation with respect to age,” is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults.

**Table 5: Showing Correlation Coefficient Values for comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
OASM Secure and General Emotion Regulation	0.631	0.01 Significance
OASM Insecure and General Emotion Regulation	0.642	0.01 Significance
OASM Secure and Negative Emotion Regulation	0.603	0.01 Significance
OASM Insecure and Negative Emotion Regulation	0.581	0.01 Significance
OASM Secure and Positive Emotion Regulation	0.552	0.01 Significance
OASM Insecure and Positive Emotion Regulation	0.590	0.01 Significance

From the above table, it is inferred that the values of correlation between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation (0.631, 0.642, 0.603, 0.581, 0.552 and 0.590) are higher than the table value at the 0.01 level of significance. The correlation between these variables is positive and significant. Therefore, it is found that there is a significant and positive relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation among young adults, and hence, the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

**9. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION**

- The study helps educational institutions understand the role of comfort object attachment in students’ emotional functioning.
- The findings highlight that attachment to personal objects may serve as a coping mechanism for managing emotional experiences.
- The results can assist teachers and counselors in better understanding students’ emotional regulation abilities and coping behaviours.
- The study encourages institutions to create supportive environments that acknowledge diverse emotional coping strategies among students.
- The findings can help counselling services identify students who may rely on alternative forms of emotional support during stress.
- The study supports the development of student wellness programs focusing on emotional regulation and healthy coping mechanisms.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educational institutions should promote awareness programs on emotional regulation and healthy coping strategies among students.
- Colleges should strengthen counselling and psychological support services to assist students in managing emotional challenges effectively.
- Workshops and seminars can be organized to improve emotional awareness and regulation skills among young adults.
- Institutions should create supportive and non-judgmental environments where students feel comfortable expressing their emotions.
- Faculty members and mentors can be trained to recognize signs of emotional distress and guide students toward appropriate support systems.

## 11. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future studies can include larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
- Researchers may examine additional psychological variables such as stress, anxiety, and self-esteem to gain deeper insights into emotional regulation.
- Comparative studies can be conducted across different cultural or social groups to understand variations in comfort object attachment.
- Future research may use qualitative methods such as interviews to explore the personal significance of comfort objects in emotional coping.
- Longitudinal studies can be conducted to examine how comfort object attachment and emotional regulation develop over time.

## 12. CONCLUSION

Understanding the factors that influence emotional functioning among young adults is essential, particularly in relation to comfort object attachment and emotional regulation. Emotional regulation plays a crucial role in managing everyday stress and maintaining psychological well-being, while comfort objects may act as accessible sources of emotional support. The present study reveals that there is a significant positive relationship between comfort object attachment and emotional regulation, indicating that individuals who form attachments to meaningful personal objects may be better able to manage their emotional experiences. These findings suggest that comfort objects can function as supportive tools in coping with emotional challenges.

Recognizing such coping mechanisms can help educators and counselors develop a more comprehensive understanding of students' emotional needs. By acknowledging the role of comfort objects, institutions can promote supportive environments that encourage emotional well-being and adaptive coping strategies. Overall, the study highlights the importance of considering alternative forms of emotional support in understanding psychological functioning among young adults.

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