

Emotional Maturity among Undergraduate Students: A Comparative Study of Gender

Dr. Nasreen Taj

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Maharani's Arts College for Women, Mysore,
Karnataka, India

Abstract

Emotional maturity is a significant psychological attribute that influences emotional regulation, social adjustment, independence, and adaptability. The present study examined the level of emotional maturity among undergraduate students and investigated gender differences in emotional maturity. A quantitative, descriptive-comparative research design was employed. The sample comprised 200 undergraduate students aged 18–21 years, including 100 male and 100 female students, selected through convenience sampling from government and private degree colleges in Karnataka, India. Data were collected using a researcher-developed sociodemographic information sheet and the Emotional Maturity Scale developed by Roma Pal. The scale assesses five dimensions of emotional maturity: emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, independence, and flexibility and adaptability. Descriptive statistics and an independent-samples *t* test were used for data analysis. The results indicated that 43.5% of participants demonstrated a moderate level of emotional maturity, 35.0% were classified as immature, 14.0% as mature, and 7.5% as extremely immature. Male students ($M = 125.33$, $SD = 16.79$) and female students ($M = 124.26$, $SD = 16.93$) showed comparable emotional maturity scores. The gender difference was not statistically significant, $t(198) = 0.44$, $p = .65$. The findings suggest that emotional maturity among undergraduate students may be influenced by factors beyond gender and highlight the potential importance of counseling and developmental programs in higher education institutions.

Keywords: emotional maturity, undergraduate students, gender differences, higher education, psychological adjustment

Introduction

Emotional maturity is an important dimension of psychological functioning that enables individuals to regulate emotional responses, maintain psychological balance, adapt to changing circumstances, establish effective interpersonal relationships, and make independent decisions. Young adulthood is a particularly important developmental period because undergraduate students experience increasing academic demands, changing interpersonal relationships, career-related uncertainty, and greater personal responsibility.

Emotional maturity has received considerable attention in educational and psychological research because it may influence students' adjustment and functioning within academic environments. Sharma (2012) reported an association between emotional maturity and college adjustment, suggesting that students with lower emotional maturity may experience greater emotional, social, and academic

difficulties. Therefore, understanding emotional maturity among undergraduate students may have implications for student counseling, psychological support, and educational development.

Previous studies examining gender differences in emotional maturity have produced mixed findings. D'Souza et al. (2021) reported no significant difference in emotional maturity between male and female degree college students. Similarly, Wani and Masih (2015) examined emotional maturity across gender and educational levels, highlighting gender as a relevant variable in emotional maturity research. Gopal and Mahadevaswamy (2025) also reported no significant gender difference among undergraduate students.

In contrast, other studies have reported gender-related differences in emotional maturity. Dhuriya and Parikh (2023) found significant differences in emotional maturity among college students in relation to gender and residential background. Likewise, Gunde and Parit (2015) reported that gender and academic faculty were associated with emotional maturity among college students. These inconsistent findings suggest that emotional maturity may be influenced by multiple contextual, developmental, social, and educational factors rather than gender alone.

The present study was conducted among undergraduate students enrolled in government and private degree colleges in Karnataka, India. The study assessed the distribution of emotional maturity and examined whether male and female undergraduate students differed significantly in their overall emotional maturity.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to:

1. Assess the level of emotional maturity among undergraduate students.
2. Examine gender differences in emotional maturity among undergraduate students.

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested:

H₀: There is no statistically significant difference in emotional maturity between male and female undergraduate students.

Method

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design. This design was appropriate because the study assessed existing levels of emotional maturity and compared naturally occurring groups without manipulating the independent variable.

Participants

The sample consisted of 200 undergraduate students aged between 18 and 21 years. Participants were selected from government and private degree colleges in Karnataka, India. The sample comprised 100 students from government colleges and 100 students from private colleges. Within each institutional category, 50 male and 50 female students were included, resulting in a total of 100 male and 100 female participants.

Convenience sampling was used because participants were selected based on their accessibility and availability. Students were included if they were aged 18–21 years, enrolled in an undergraduate degree program, studying in a government or private degree college, and willing to participate voluntarily.

Measures

Sociodemographic Information Sheet

A researcher-developed sociodemographic information sheet was used to collect relevant participant characteristics, including age, gender, type of college, course of study, and year of study.

Emotional Maturity Scale

Emotional maturity was assessed using the Emotional Maturity Scale developed by Roma Pal. The instrument consists of 40 items rated on a five-point response scale. The scale assesses five dimensions: emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, independence, and flexibility and adaptability.

Total scores range from 40 to 200. According to the scoring procedure used in the study, higher scores indicate lower emotional maturity, whereas lower scores indicate higher emotional maturity. The source study reported a split-half reliability coefficient of .84 for the original instrument and a coefficient of .81 based on a pilot sample of 50 students. The study reported the use of the Roma Pal Emotional Maturity Scale as the principal measure of emotional maturity.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the principals of the selected government and private degree colleges before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential. Informed consent was obtained before the administration of the research instruments.

The sociodemographic information sheet and Emotional Maturity Scale were administered in classroom settings. Participants were instructed to respond independently and honestly. The completed questionnaires were collected, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without penalty. The collected information was used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to describe the distribution and level of emotional maturity. An independent-samples *t* test was used to examine gender differences in emotional maturity.

Results

Distribution of Emotional Maturity Levels

Table 1

Distribution of Undergraduate Students According to Levels of Emotional Maturity

Level of emotional maturity	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely immature	15	7.5
Immature	70	35.0
Moderate	87	43.5
Mature	28	14.0
Total	200	100.0

As shown in Table 1, the largest proportion of students ($n = 87$, 43.5%) demonstrated a moderate level of emotional maturity. Seventy students (35.0%) were classified as immature, whereas 28 students (14.0%) were classified as mature. Fifteen students (7.5%) were classified as extremely immature. Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of participants were categorized as having moderate or immature emotional maturity. Specifically, 78.5% of the sample fell within these two categories. This pattern suggests that emotional development remains an important area of concern among undergraduate students and may warrant greater attention within higher education settings.

Gender Differences in Emotional Maturity

Table 2

Comparison of Emotional Maturity Scores Between Male and Female Undergraduate Students

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Male students	100	125.33	16.79	0.44	.65
Female students	100	124.26	16.93	—	—

Note. $df = 198$. The difference was not statistically significant, $p > .05$.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to examine gender differences in emotional maturity. Male students obtained a mean score of 125.33 ($SD = 16.79$), whereas female students obtained a mean score of 124.26 ($SD = 16.93$). The difference between the two group means was minimal.

The analysis indicated that the difference in emotional maturity between male and female students was not statistically significant, $t(198) = 0.44$, $p = .65$. Because the p value exceeded the conventional significance level of .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

These findings indicate that male and female undergraduate students in the present sample demonstrated comparable levels of emotional maturity. The results suggest that gender, considered independently, was not significantly associated with differences in overall emotional maturity among the participating students.

Discussion

The present study examined emotional maturity among undergraduate students and investigated whether emotional maturity differed according to gender. The findings indicated that the largest proportion of participants demonstrated a moderate level of emotional maturity, followed by students categorized as immature. Only a relatively small proportion of students were classified as mature.

The predominance of moderate and immature levels suggests that emotional development remains an important issue during undergraduate education. Undergraduate students are required to manage academic demands, interpersonal relationships, personal responsibilities, and future career concerns. Effective emotional regulation, social adjustment, independence, and adaptability may therefore contribute to students' psychological and educational functioning. Previous research has similarly emphasized the relationship between emotional maturity and college adjustment (Sharma, 2012).

The gender comparison showed that male and female students had very similar mean scores. The independent-samples t test indicated no statistically significant difference between the groups, $t(198) = 0.44$, $p = .65$. Therefore, the results support the null hypothesis that male and female undergraduate students do not differ significantly in overall emotional maturity.

This finding is consistent with the results reported by D'Souza et al. (2021) and Gopal and Mahadevaswamy (2025), who also found no statistically significant gender difference in emotional maturity among college and undergraduate students. Such findings may indicate that male and female students experience similar educational and developmental conditions that contribute to comparable levels of emotional maturity.

However, the present findings differ from studies reporting significant gender differences in emotional maturity (Dhuriya & Parikh, 2023; Gunde & Parit, 2015). The inconsistency across studies suggests that emotional maturity may be shaped by multiple factors, including social environment, educational experiences, family background, developmental opportunities, and cultural context. Consequently, gender alone may not consistently predict emotional maturity across different student populations.

Implications

The findings have several implications for higher education institutions. Because a substantial proportion of students demonstrated moderate or lower levels of emotional maturity, colleges may consider implementing interventions that support emotional and psychological development. Potential initiatives include:

- Counseling and psychological support services.
- Programs addressing emotional regulation and stress management.
- Workshops designed to strengthen interpersonal competence and social adjustment.
- Activities promoting independent decision-making and adaptive coping.
- Student development programs addressing flexibility and psychological resilience.

Such initiatives may contribute to improved emotional functioning and broader student adjustment.

Limitations

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the results. Second, the sample was drawn from selected degree colleges in Karnataka, India. Third, emotional maturity was assessed using a self-report instrument, which may be influenced by response bias. Fourth, the study focused primarily on overall emotional maturity and gender differences. Future research should examine the individual dimensions of emotional maturity in greater detail and investigate additional variables that may influence emotional development.

Conclusion

The present study assessed emotional maturity among 200 undergraduate students and examined gender differences in emotional maturity. Most students demonstrated moderate or immature levels of emotional maturity, suggesting that emotional development and psychological support remain important concerns within higher education.

Male and female students demonstrated comparable emotional maturity scores, and the difference between the groups was not statistically significant, $t(198) = 0.44$, $p = .65$. The findings therefore support the conclusion that gender was not significantly associated with overall emotional maturity in the present sample.

The study highlights the importance of strengthening counseling, emotional development, and psychological support programs within undergraduate institutions. Future studies using larger and more

representative samples may provide a broader understanding of the factors associated with emotional maturity among young adults.

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