



# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS FROM CONFLICT RIDDEN FAMILIES

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## Abstract

This study explores the association between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults raised in conflict-ridden families, emphasizing the influence of adverse family dynamics on emotional and mental health outcomes. Emotional dysregulation, which involves difficulties in recognizing, managing, and responding appropriately to emotions, is often linked to higher levels of distress, particularly among individuals exposed to ongoing family conflict, instability, and ineffective communication. In this study, data were gathered from young adults using standardized tools to measure emotional dysregulation and psychological distress, including indicators such as anxiety, depression, and stress. The results demonstrated a significant positive relationship between the two variables, suggesting that greater difficulties in emotion regulation are associated with increased psychological distress. Furthermore, the findings underscore the amplifying effect of conflict-ridden family environments on these challenges. Overall, the study highlights the need to focus on improving emotion regulation skills in interventions and adds to the understanding of how family conflict can have lasting effects on the mental health of young adults.

**Keywords:** Emotional dysregulation, Psychological distress, Young adults, Conflict-ridden families, Family conflict, Anxiety, Depression, Stress, Emotional regulation, Mental health, Adverse family environment, Coping mechanisms

## INTRODUCTION

Human psychological development is deeply shaped by the nature of early relationships within the family. The family serves as the first environment where individuals begin to understand emotions, develop trust, and learn how to interact with others. Through everyday interactions with caregivers, children gradually form an understanding of themselves and their relationships. When the family environment is supportive and stable, it generally encourages emotional security and healthy coping skills. In contrast, families characterized by instability or tension may negatively influence emotional growth and leave lasting psychological effects. Researchers have long highlighted the importance of early family relationships in shaping emotional and social functioning throughout life (Ainsworth, 1978).

Families that experience ongoing conflict, hostility, or emotional neglect can interfere with normal developmental processes. When children are repeatedly exposed to unresolved parental disputes, aggression, or emotional distance, they may begin to feel insecure or confused about their family environment. Such situations can weaken their sense of safety and stability within the home. Over time, continuous exposure to family conflict may increase the likelihood of emotional and behavioral problems, including anxiety, depressive feelings, and social withdrawal (Cummings & Davies, 2010). These early experiences may also shape how individuals perceive relationships and respond to emotional difficulties later in life.

Another key component of psychological well-being is emotion regulation. Emotion regulation refers to the ways individuals understand, manage, and respond to their emotional experiences (Gross, 1998). Effective emotion regulation helps individuals cope with stressful situations, maintain emotional balance, and adjust to life challenges. On the other hand, emotion dysregulation occurs when individuals find it difficult to control, interpret, or express their emotions appropriately. Research indicates that individuals raised in unstable or conflict-filled family environments are more likely to experience difficulties in developing healthy emotional regulation strategies (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Young adulthood is a significant developmental phase during which the effects of early family experiences often become more noticeable. At this stage, individuals encounter important life changes such as greater independence, identity exploration, and the development of close relationships. Despite these new experiences, young adults often rely on emotional patterns and attachment beliefs formed during childhood. When these patterns are shaped by insecurity or family conflict, individuals may struggle with emotional management, maintaining relationships, and coping with stress, which can contribute to higher levels of psychological distress (Arnett, 2000).

Psychological distress, including symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and emotional strain, has frequently been linked to insecure attachment and difficulties with emotion regulation. Individuals who have trouble regulating their emotions or who hold negative expectations about relationships may be more vulnerable to

experiencing emotional difficulties. Previous studies suggest that these factors are closely connected, as attachment styles influence the way individuals regulate their emotions, which ultimately affects their overall psychological well-being (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Family disputes refer to ongoing disagreements, tensions, or conflicts that occur between family members, particularly between parents or primary caregivers. Such disputes may involve frequent arguments, hostility, lack of communication, or emotional withdrawal within the household. When these conflicts remain unresolved and occur repeatedly, they can create an environment of instability and emotional stress for children and other family members. Exposure to persistent family disputes may lead individuals to feel insecure, anxious, or uncertain about relationships, which can negatively influence their emotional development and overall psychological well-being. Over time, growing up in a conflict-ridden family environment may shape how individuals manage emotions, perceive relationships, and cope with stressful situations in later life.

### **EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATIONAL**

Emotional dysregulation refers to persistent difficulty in managing emotional experiences in a balanced and adaptive way. Emotions play an essential role in human life because they influence behavior, shape communication with others, and help individuals respond to challenges in their environment. However, when emotional reactions become excessively strong, poorly controlled, or expressed in ways that disrupt everyday functioning, they may lead to significant psychological and social problems. Emotional dysregulation therefore involves difficulties in identifying emotions, regulating their intensity, and responding to them in socially appropriate and constructive ways (Gross, 1998). Individuals who experience emotional dysregulation often feel overwhelmed by their feelings and may struggle to calm themselves once emotional arousal occurs.

The study of emotion regulation has been greatly shaped by the work of James Gross, who introduced the process model of emotion regulation. According to this model, emotions can be managed at different stages of the emotional experience. These stages include choosing situations that may influence emotions, modifying situations to reduce their emotional impact, directing attention toward or away from emotional cues, cognitively reinterpreting situations, and regulating emotional responses after they arise. Emotional dysregulation may occur when individuals find it difficult to use these regulatory processes effectively or when they rely heavily on maladaptive strategies such as avoidance, suppression, or rumination (Gross, 1998; Gross & Thompson, 2007). When these regulatory processes do not function properly, emotional responses may become prolonged, intense, or difficult to control.

The ability to regulate emotions begins to develop early in life and is strongly influenced by early caregiving experiences. During infancy and childhood, caregivers play a crucial role in helping children cope with distress and understand their emotional experiences. Through comforting actions, emotional guidance, and consistent responses to children's needs, caregivers support the development of emotional self-regulation. Over time,

children gradually internalize these supportive interactions and begin to regulate their own emotions independently. However, when caregiving is inconsistent, neglectful, or emotionally unavailable, children may have difficulty developing these important emotional skills, increasing the risk of emotional dysregulation later in life (Thompson, 1994).

Family environments therefore play a vital role in shaping emotional regulation abilities. Supportive and stable families that encourage open emotional expression provide children with opportunities to understand and manage their feelings. In such settings, children often feel safe expressing distress and seeking support when needed. In contrast, families characterized by hostility, instability, or ongoing conflict may disrupt emotional development. Repeated exposure to parental conflict can create an atmosphere of tension and unpredictability, making it difficult for children to feel emotionally secure. As a result, children raised in such environments may become more emotionally reactive and may struggle to regulate their emotions effectively (Cummings & Davies, 2010).

Emotional dysregulation is often reflected in several related characteristics. One common feature is increased emotional sensitivity, where individuals experience emotional reactions more intensely than others. Even relatively minor stressors may trigger strong feelings such as anger, anxiety, or sadness. Another aspect involves difficulty controlling emotional reactions once they arise. Individuals may find it hard to calm themselves during distressing situations, which can lead to prolonged emotional responses. In addition, emotional dysregulation may involve impulsive behaviors that occur during moments of intense emotional arousal, where individuals act quickly without fully considering the consequences (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Another important aspect of emotional dysregulation involves problems with emotional awareness and understanding. Some individuals may find it difficult to identify or distinguish between their emotional states. This lack of emotional clarity can create confusion about what they are feeling and why certain emotions occur in particular situations. Without a clear understanding of their emotional experiences, individuals may depend on maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance, suppression, or denial. Over time, these patterns can contribute to persistent emotional distress and difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Research has consistently shown that emotional dysregulation is strongly linked to various forms of psychological distress. Individuals who have difficulty managing their emotions are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety, depression, anger-related issues, and other psychological difficulties. When emotional responses remain unregulated, stressful situations may appear more overwhelming and harder to manage. This can create cycles in which negative emotions intensify and persist, further contributing to psychological strain and emotional instability (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010).

Emotional dysregulation is also closely connected to early attachment experiences. According to attachment theory, relationships with caregivers form the foundation for the development of emotional regulation skills. Secure attachment relationships provide children with consistent emotional support and reassurance, which helps them learn healthy ways to cope with distress. In contrast, insecure attachment patterns may contribute to difficulties in managing emotions. For example, individuals with anxious attachment may experience stronger emotional reactions and fear of rejection, while those with avoidant attachment may attempt to cope by suppressing emotions or distancing themselves from emotional experiences (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Another factor that can contribute to emotional dysregulation is long-term exposure to stressful environments. Individuals who grow up in conditions marked by chronic stress may repeatedly experience emotional activation without learning effective coping strategies. Over time, such experiences may increase emotional sensitivity and make it more difficult to maintain emotional balance. Heightened stress reactivity can therefore lead to frequent emotional fluctuations and difficulty recovering from distressing experiences (Compas et al., 2017).

Emotional dysregulation can also affect interpersonal relationships. Individuals who struggle to manage their emotions may find it difficult to communicate their feelings clearly or respond calmly during conflicts. Strong emotional reactions may lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, or withdrawal from relationships. In some cases, individuals may avoid emotional closeness altogether in an effort to protect themselves from distress. These relational challenges can limit access to social support and may contribute to feelings of isolation or loneliness.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS**

Psychological distress is commonly described as a state of emotional discomfort in which individuals experience feelings such as anxiety, sadness, frustration, or helplessness. It reflects an internal response to stressful or overwhelming situations and is often linked to difficulties in managing emotional or environmental demands. While psychological distress does not necessarily indicate a diagnosed mental disorder, persistent or severe distress can increase the risk of developing conditions such as anxiety or depression. For this reason, researchers often consider psychological distress a general indicator of mental health challenges, reflecting the extent to which individuals experience negative emotional states and psychological strain.

From a psychological perspective, distress is largely shaped by how individuals interpret and respond to stressful events. Theories of stress suggest that distress arises when people believe that the challenges they face exceed their ability to cope with them. Various situations, including family disagreements, interpersonal conflicts, academic pressure, or major life changes, can trigger emotional stress. When such stressors continue for a long period or occur in environments where emotional support is limited, individuals may begin to experience ongoing psychological distress.

Psychological distress generally involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. Emotionally, individuals may feel ongoing sadness, anxiety, frustration, or hopelessness. On a cognitive level, distress can manifest through persistent worry, negative thinking patterns, difficulty concentrating, or decreased confidence in one's abilities. Behaviorally, people experiencing distress may withdraw from social interactions, develop irregular sleep or eating patterns, or struggle to stay motivated in their daily activities. These components often interact with one another, creating a cycle in which emotional discomfort influences thoughts and behaviors, which then further intensify feelings of distress.

An important characteristic of psychological distress is that it exists on a continuum rather than as a fixed condition. Individuals may experience different levels of distress depending on their personal circumstances, coping skills, and the availability of social support. Mild distress may occur temporarily in response to everyday challenges, whereas more severe distress may arise in situations involving long-term stress, trauma, or persistent interpersonal conflict. Viewing distress as a continuum helps researchers understand mental health difficulties even when they do not meet the criteria for a clinical disorder.

Family environments play a significant role in shaping emotional well-being and the likelihood of experiencing psychological distress. The family is typically the first context in which individuals develop emotional security, coping patterns, and expectations about relationships. When family relationships are supportive and stable, individuals are more likely to develop resilience and effective coping strategies. However, family environments characterized by hostility, instability, or repeated conflict can become major sources of stress. Continuous exposure to parental disagreements, criticism, or emotional neglect may create feelings of insecurity and tension, increasing the risk of psychological distress among children and adolescents.

The effects of family conflict are particularly significant during childhood and adolescence, when individuals are still developing emotional regulation skills and depend heavily on caregivers for support. When children frequently witness arguments or hostility between parents, they may feel confused, fearful, or uncertain about the stability of their environment. These experiences can contribute to internal emotional difficulties such as anxiety, sadness, and persistent worry. If the stressful family environment continues over time, these emotional reactions may develop into more enduring forms of psychological distress.

Psychological distress is also influenced by relationships outside the family context. Interactions with peers, teachers, and romantic partners can greatly affect emotional well-being. Supportive and positive relationships can act as protective factors that help individuals cope with stressful situations. In contrast, experiences such as rejection, bullying, or interpersonal conflicts may increase emotional difficulties and contribute to higher levels of distress. Individuals who lack strong social support networks may therefore find it harder to deal with stress effectively.

Another factor closely linked to psychological distress is the ability to regulate emotions. Emotional regulation refers to the capacity to manage emotional experiences and respond to challenging situations in constructive ways. Individuals who have difficulty regulating their emotions may struggle to control negative feelings or recover from stressful events. As a result, emotional reactions may last longer and become more intense, increasing vulnerability to stress-related problems such as anxiety or depressive symptoms.

Early attachment experiences also play a crucial role in influencing susceptibility to psychological distress. Attachment perspectives suggest that early relationships with caregivers shape the development of emotional security and coping behaviors. Individuals who develop secure attachments often feel comfortable seeking support when facing stress, which can help reduce emotional strain. In contrast, those with insecure attachment patterns may experience greater emotional insecurity and difficulty managing interpersonal stress, making them more vulnerable to distress later in life.

Psychological distress may also result from broader social and environmental pressures. Challenges such as financial difficulties, academic demands, societal expectations, or exposure to traumatic events can all contribute to emotional strain. When individuals face multiple stressors simultaneously, the combined impact may exceed their coping capacity and lead to increased distress. Over time, the accumulation of these stressors can significantly influence mental health outcomes across different stages of life.

## **INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE VARIABLES**

The connection between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress is especially noticeable among young adults who have grown up in families where conflicts are frequent. Living in an environment where arguments, hostility, or emotional instability are common can interfere with the development of healthy emotional regulation. When individuals grow up without consistent emotional support, they may not learn effective ways to manage their emotions. As a result, they may become more prone to intense emotional reactions and may struggle to cope with stressful situations.

Emotional dysregulation can increase the chances of experiencing psychological distress because individuals may find it difficult to manage negative emotions such as anger, sadness, or anxiety. When these emotions become overwhelming or difficult to control, they can lead to ongoing emotional discomfort and contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression. For young adults from conflict-ridden families, these difficulties may originate from childhood experiences where expressing emotions was discouraged, ignored, or often led to further conflict within the home.

The emotional patterns formed during childhood can continue to influence individuals during young adulthood. Those who have been exposed to repeated family conflict may develop greater emotional sensitivity and may react more strongly to stressful interpersonal situations. When they encounter challenges such as academic stress, relationship difficulties, or major life changes, regulating their emotional responses may become more difficult. This can result in persistent feelings of worry, tension, or sadness, which contribute to higher levels of psychological distress.

Studies also suggest that emotional dysregulation may serve as a link between family conflict and psychological distress. In other words, growing up in a conflict-filled environment may lead to difficulties in managing emotions, which then increases the risk of experiencing emotional and psychological problems. Young adults who have not developed effective coping strategies may therefore experience higher levels of distress compared to those who have learned healthier ways of dealing with their emotions.

Overall, the relationship between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress highlights how strongly early family experiences can influence emotional well-being. For young adults who have grown up in families marked by conflict, difficulties in managing emotions may play an important role in increasing psychological distress and affecting their ability to deal with everyday challenges. Understanding this relationship is important for developing supportive interventions that focus on improving emotional regulation and promoting better psychological adjustment.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is important because it focuses on understanding the link between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults who come from conflict-ridden family backgrounds. Family disputes and unstable home environments can leave lasting effects on an individual's emotional development, yet these influences are often overlooked. By examining this relationship, the study aims to show how difficulties in managing emotions may contribute to increased psychological distress in individuals exposed to continuous family conflict. The findings may also help create greater awareness about the psychological effects of family environments and offer useful insights for counselors, psychologists, and educators who work with young adults facing emotional and mental health challenges.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Maurya (2026)** explores the various psychological, social, academic, and behavioral difficulties experienced by adolescents who grow up in families affected by violence and separation. Using established developmental theories and existing research, the paper discusses how continuous exposure to domestic conflict and family instability can influence adolescents' emotional regulation, identity development, relationships with others, and overall well-being in the long term. The study adopts a multidimensional perspective by integrating ecological systems theory, attachment theory, and stress–coping models to better understand these experiences. It also highlights the need for effective interventions, supportive policies, and further research in this area.

**Lorenza (2025)** examined how complex relational trauma, such as neglect or maltreatment within important family relationships, can negatively affect the development of emotional abilities. The study focused on the role of attachment as a mediator between parenting styles and emotional functioning, suggesting that dysfunctional caregiving may lead to insecure attachment patterns, which increase the likelihood of alexithymic traits and difficulties in emotion regulation. The research involved 464 young adults aged 19–27 who completed several measures, including MOPS for parenting styles, ECR for attachment styles, TAS-20 for alexithymia, and DERS for emotional dysregulation. The findings showed that parental behaviors such as indifference, abuse, and overcontrol from both mothers and fathers had a direct effect on emotional dysregulation. In addition, attachment anxiety mediated the relationship between negative parenting and emotional dysregulation, while both attachment anxiety and avoidance also influenced emotional dysregulation indirectly through alexithymia. Overall, the results highlight the mediating role of attachment and alexithymia and emphasize the importance of both maternal and paternal influences in the development of emotional regulation difficulties.

**Scharf (2025)** examined how adolescents living in conflict zones manage their emotions while dealing with ongoing stress caused by exposure to political violence. The study aimed to understand how different emotion regulation styles and parenting behaviors influence adolescents' psychological adjustment in such environments. Data were collected from 59 Israeli families at three different stages: during a relatively calm period, during a phase of military escalation, and six weeks after the escalation. The research focused on three emotion regulation styles—integrative, controlled, and dysregulated. The findings showed that emotional dysregulation was associated with lower resilience and sense of mastery, while a controlled regulation style was linked with greater psychological distress, and these effects continued even after the immediate threat had reduced. Integrative regulation showed only limited benefits during periods of heightened conflict. Additionally, supportive maternal behaviors were found to encourage greater emotional expression, help-seeking behavior, and better psychosocial well-being among adolescents. Overall, the results suggest that adolescents' adjustment to chronic threat involves both personal coping strategies and family support,

highlighting the importance of addressing emotional needs of both adolescents and parents in conflict-affected settings.

**Natalie (2025)** explored the role of emotion regulation in adolescents and how it is influenced by the quality of mother–daughter relationships. The study focused on whether difficulties in emotion regulation explain the link between relationship conflict and psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and disordered eating. A sample of 106 adolescent girls aged 11–21 in the United States completed self-report measures on relationship quality, emotion regulation, and psychological distress. The findings showed that higher levels of conflict in mother–daughter relationships were associated with greater emotion regulation difficulties, which in turn predicted higher psychological distress. However, relationship closeness alone did not significantly predict psychological outcomes once conflict was considered. These results suggest that reducing conflict in mother–daughter relationships may play an important role in improving adolescents’ emotional regulation and mental well-being.

**Kaviya et al (2026)** highlights childhood exposure to intimate partner violence as an important form of maltreatment that can lead to long-term psychosocial difficulties. While earlier studies have mostly focused on women or mixed-gender samples, the experiences of young adult men have received much less attention. The study also notes that in indigenous settings such as the Badaga community of South India, strong patriarchal values and expectations of masculinity often discourage men from speaking about these experiences, which contributes to their stories being largely overlooked in research.

**Chen et al (2025)** examined how parental marital conflict influences children’s behavioral difficulties, strict parental discipline, and peer attachment. Data were collected from 754 primary school children twice a year using the Parent–Child Conflict Scale, Parent–Child Conflict Resolution Strategy Scale, Peer Attachment Scale, and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. The findings showed that higher levels of parental marital conflict were associated with increased internalizing and externalizing problems among children. Additionally, strict discipline and peer attachment acted as mediating factors, playing different roles in the relationship between parental marital conflict and children’s behavioral and emotional difficulties.

**Mayberry et al. (2026)** conducted a phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of African American daughters who grew up without fathers and how this shaped their development, relationships, identity, and resilience. Using in-depth interviews, the study identified key themes related to father–daughter relationships, emotional and psychological effects, identity formation, social relationships, life decisions, and resilience. The findings suggested that father absence often created emotional and developmental challenges for the participants. However, with supportive networks and conscious personal efforts, many women developed resilience, determination, and a strong motivation to succeed. The study offers useful insights for professionals such as educators, social workers, and counselors, while also giving these women a space to share their experiences openly.

**Laura et al. (2025)** examined the impact of childhood emotional abuse on later psychological functioning, particularly focusing on how individuals interpret social acceptance and rejection. Childhood emotional abuse has been linked to a wide range of psychological difficulties, and rejection sensitivity is often considered an important factor connecting emotional abuse with depression. However, the study questioned the idea that rejection sensitivity is a single, stable trait and instead explored the cognitive processes involved in how people explain social outcomes. Participants answered personal questions and were then asked to imagine being either socially accepted or rejected based on their responses. The findings suggested that individuals who experienced higher levels of emotional abuse were more likely to attribute social rejection to internal causes while attributing social acceptance to external factors, highlighting how emotional abuse can shape negative patterns of thinking and interpersonal perceptions.

**Thomas Vail (2025)** explored the lived experiences of individuals who were raised by parents or grandparents with substance abuse issues in the Midwest region of the United States. Using a phenomenological approach, the study gathered data through interviews with 8–15 adults aged 25–45 who had grown up in such family environments. Guided by family systems theory, the research examined how substance abuse within the family affected parenting patterns and the behavioral health of the children. The findings suggested that growing up in these conditions can shape adult outcomes in different ways—while some individuals develop resilience and adaptive behaviors, others may struggle with unhealthy coping mechanisms due to the instability and challenges experienced during childhood.

**Sarpong et al. (2024)** conducted a study to understand how students' own marital status and their parents' marital situations influence their views on romantic relationships, sexual identity, and future marriage. The research was based on attachment theory and social learning theory, which suggest that both personal experiences and observations of family relationships play an important role in shaping how young adults understand and approach relationships. A descriptive survey method was used, and data were collected from college students through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study included 350 participants selected through stratified, purposive, and random sampling techniques. Statistical analyses such as independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA were conducted using SPSS 16.0 to test the hypotheses. The findings showed that students whose parents had experienced divorce or high marital conflict were more open to non-traditional relationship choices and diverse sexual identities. On the other hand, students from stable two-parent families were more likely to hold traditional views about romantic relationships and marriage. Overall, the study highlights how family background can significantly influence young adults' expectations about relationships and identity development, and it suggests the importance of considering these factors in student counselling, relationship education, and policy development in higher education.

**Chad N Loes (2025)** examined the connection between family conflict and a harmful behavior known as digital self-harm, where individuals anonymously post negative or hurtful content about themselves online. While earlier research has linked family conflict with self-harming behaviors, this study focused specifically on whether such conflict increases the likelihood of adolescents engaging in digital self-harm. The research was based on Agnew's General Strain Theory, which explains how stressful or negative experiences can lead to harmful coping behaviors. The study used data from 9,819 adolescents who participated in the 2019 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey. Logistic regression analysis was conducted to understand the relationship between family conflict and digital self-harm while controlling for other possible influencing factors. The findings showed that adolescents who experienced higher levels of family conflict were more likely to engage in digital self-harm. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that depressive symptoms played an important mediating role in this relationship, meaning that family conflict may contribute to depression, which in turn increases the likelihood of digital self-harm. The study highlights the need to address family conflict and adolescents' mental health in order to reduce such harmful behaviors.

**Abeer Abbas et al. (2026)** conducted a study to examine the level of anxiety among university students. Previous research has shown that anxiety among college students in the United States has been increasing, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, the researchers focused on students in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, particularly in the United Arab Emirates, at a university with a large international student population. Data were collected through an online survey, and psychology students received 0.2 extra credit for participating. The results showed that the average score on the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale indicated a moderate level of anxiety among the students ( $M = 17.5$ ). The mean score on the Functional Idiographic Assessment Template (FIAT) Interpersonal Questionnaire was 75. Additionally, the Relationship Structures Questionnaire showed average scores of 2.62 for attachment-related anxiety and 2.48 for attachment-related avoidance. Overall, the findings highlight that anxiety is a noticeable concern among university students and emphasize the need to better understand how anxiety is connected with interpersonal relationships and attachment-related factors.

**Garcia and Martinez (2022)** examined how family conflict affects psychological distress among adolescents and young adults. The study looked at how regularly witnessing parental arguments and growing up in a tense or hostile family environment can influence emotional well-being. A quantitative research approach was used, and information was gathered from students through self-report questionnaires that measured their perception of family conflict along with levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The results showed that participants who experienced greater levels of conflict at home also reported higher psychological distress. These findings suggest that continuous family tension may create emotional insecurity and increase the risk of mental health difficulties among young people.

**Kim and Park (2023)** studied the connection between emotion dysregulation and psychological distress among college students. The purpose of the research was to understand whether difficulties in handling and controlling emotions contribute to problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Data were collected using established psychological scales that assessed both emotional regulation and psychological distress. The findings revealed a clear positive relationship between the two variables. Students who had more trouble managing their emotions tended to report higher levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms. The study highlights the importance of developing healthy emotional regulation skills for maintaining good psychological health.

**Singh and Sharma (2023)** explored how the family environment influences attachment styles and emotional development in young adults. The researchers used a cross-sectional survey design and collected data from university students through questionnaires that assessed their perceptions of family conflict and their attachment patterns. The results showed that individuals raised in supportive and stable family settings were more likely to develop secure attachment styles. On the other hand, those who experienced frequent family disagreements or emotional neglect were more likely to develop insecure attachment styles, which were linked with emotional difficulties and higher psychological distress. The study demonstrates how family relationships can shape emotional and interpersonal development.

**Hassan and Malik (2024)** investigated the link between attachment insecurity, emotion dysregulation, and psychological distress among university students. The researchers used standardized psychological scales to measure attachment patterns, difficulties in emotion regulation, and overall mental health. Through correlation and regression analyses, the study found that insecure attachment styles were strongly associated with higher levels of emotional regulation problems and psychological distress. Students who struggled more with regulating their emotions also reported increased stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. The findings indicate that insecure attachment may contribute significantly to emotional challenges and mental health issues among young adults.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1. Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship emotion dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden families, and to understand how early relational experiences influence emotional regulation and psychological well-being.

### 2. Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the relationship between emotion dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults.
- To explore gender differences in psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden families.
- To examine gender differences in emotion dysregulation among young adults.

### Hypothesis

#### 1.Null Hypotheses(H)

- H01: There will be no significant relationship between emotion dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults.
- H02: There will be no significant gender difference in psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden families.
- H03: There will be no significant gender difference in emotion dysregulation among young adults.

#### Alternative Hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub>)

- H1: Emotion dysregulation will be significantly associated with psychological distress among young adults.
- H2: There will be a significant gender difference in psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden families.
- H3: There will be a significant gender difference in emotion dysregulation among young adults.

**3. Research Design-**The present study employed a quantitative correlational research design. This design was selected to examine the relationships emotion dysregulation, and psychological distress without manipulating any variables. The correlational design allowed the researcher to identify patterns of association and predictive relationships among psychological constructs using statistical analysis.

**4. Sample Description-**The sample consisted of young adults aged 18–25 years who reported exposure to conflict-ridden family environments. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling techniques using online and academic networks. The total sample included (70-80) comprising both male and female participants. Individuals voluntarily participated after providing informed consent. The sample represented young adults currently navigating developmental transitions while carrying experiences of family conflict.

## **6. Inclusion Criteria**

- Participants aged between 18 and 25 years.
- Individuals who reported growing up in families characterized by frequent conflict or interpersonal tension.
- Ability to comprehend and respond to questionnaire items in the required language.

## **7. Exclusion Criteria**

- Individuals below 18 years of age, unwilling to providing consent.
- Participants with incomplete or inconsistent questionnaire responses.
- Participants currently undergoing severe psychiatric treatment

## **Tools Description**

### **1. Emotion Dysregulation-Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)**

Emotion dysregulation was measured using the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) developed by Gratz and Roemer (2004). The DERS assesses individuals' typical levels of difficulty in regulating emotional experiences. The scale evaluates six domains of emotion regulation:

- Non-acceptance of emotional responses
- Difficulties engaging in goal-directed behavior
- Impulse control difficulties

- Lack of emotional awareness. Participants respond using a Likert-scale format indicating how frequently statements apply to them. Higher scores reflect greater emotion regulation difficulties. The DERS has demonstrated high reliability and strong construct validity in both clinical and non-clinical samples.

### 3. Psychological Distress

#### Depression Anxiety Stress Scale–DASS

Psychological distress was assessed using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). The DASS is a short-form self-report instrument used to measure negative emotional states experienced over the past week. The scale consists of three subscales:

- Depression–low mood, hopelessness, and lack of motivation
- Anxiety–physiological arousal and fear response
- Stress–tension, irritability, and difficulty relaxing

Participants rate items on a four-point Likert scale reflecting severity or frequency of symptoms. Higher scores indicate greater psychological distress. The DASS-10 is widely validated and demonstrates excellent internal consistency.

### 4. Family Conflict Background (Screening Variable)

#### Children’s Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC)

Family conflict background was assessed using the Children’s Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC) developed by Grych, Seid, and Fincham (1992). The CPIC measures individuals’ perceptions of conflict between parents during upbringing.

The scale evaluates multiple dimensions of interparental conflict, including

- Frequency and intensity of conflict
- Conflict resolution patterns
- Perceived threat
- Self-blame and emotional impact

In the present study, the CPIC was used as a screening measure to identify participants who experienced conflict-ridden family environments. Individuals scoring above the specified threshold were included in the final sample.

The CPIC has demonstrated good reliability and validity in assessing perceived family conflict and its psychological impact.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analysis

The present study aimed to examine the relationships emotion dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden families. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were screened and prepared for analysis. Due to the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data and violation of normality assumptions, a nonparametric statistical approach was adopted.

Spearman's rank-order correlation (Spearman's rho) was conducted to determine the direction and strength of relationships among the study variables. The total sample consisted of 78 participants (N = 78).

### Descriptive Overview of Variables

Higher scores on:

- Emotion Dysregulation (DERS) indicate greater difficulty in regulating emotions.
- Psychological Distress (DASS-10) indicate higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms.

### Correlation Analysis

Spearman's rank-order correlations were computed to examine the associations among emotion dysregulation and psychological distress.-

1. Shows the correlation between Psychological Distress and Emotional Dysregulation.

Variables	N	Spearman Correlation(r)	Sig(2 tailed)
Psychological Distress	78	1.000	.000
Emotional Dysregulation	78	.520	-

A moderate positive and statistically significant correlation was found between emotion dysregulation and psychological distress,

$$r(76) = .52, p < .001.$$

This indicates that individuals who experience greater difficulties in regulating their emotions tend to report significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. The effect size of this relationship is considered moderate to large, suggesting a meaningful association between emotion regulation difficulties and psychological distress in the present sample.

**Summary of Correlational Findings**

Overall, the results indicate that:

- Emotion dysregulation is significantly associated with psychological distress.

Spearman’s Correlations Among Study Variables (N = 78)

Variables	1	2	3
Emotional Dysregulation	-		
Psychological Distress	.52**	.21	-

**Hypothesis 1**

Emotion dysregulation will be significantly associated with psychological distress.

- Result:  $r = .52, p < .001$
- Conclusion: Hypothesis 1 was supported.

## GENDER INDIFFERENCE

## Psychological Distress

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Psychological distress	Male	39	27.15	8.88	-2.38	.020
	Female	39	31.26	6.10		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden families. The results indicated that female participants ( $M = 31.25$ ,  $SD = 6.09$ ) reported higher levels of psychological distress compared to male participants ( $M = 27.15$ ,  $SD = 8.87$ ).

The mean difference between the groups was  $-4.10$ , with a 95% confidence interval ranging from  $-7.54$  to  $-0.66$ , **indicating that female participants experienced significantly higher psychological distress compared to male participants.**

These findings suggest that gender plays a significant role in psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden families, with females reporting greater distress levels than males. Thus the hypothesis was supported.

## Emotional Dysregulation

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Emotional Dysregulation	Male	39	47.15	9.16	-0.61	.546
	Female	39	48.26	6.71		

The results indicated that males ( $M = 47.15$ ,  $SD = 9.16$ ) and females ( $M = 48.26$ ,  $SD = 6.71$ ) did not significantly differ in emotional dysregulation. The independent samples t-test showed that the difference was not statistically significant,  $t(76) = -0.61$ ,  $p = .546$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained, **indicating that gender does not significantly influence emotional dysregulation levels in the present sample.**

## Results of Supported Hypotheses

The present study examined the relationship between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults from conflict-ridden family environments. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress, supporting the proposed hypothesis. This indicates that participants who reported greater difficulty in managing their emotions were also more likely to experience higher levels of psychological distress. Emotional regulation plays an important role in maintaining psychological well-being because it helps individuals understand and respond to their emotions in healthy ways. When individuals struggle to regulate their emotions, they may feel overwhelmed by strong feelings such as anxiety, sadness, anger, or frustration, which can gradually contribute to increased psychological distress.

Emotional dysregulation refers to difficulties in understanding, controlling, and responding to emotional experiences effectively. Individuals who experience these difficulties may react more intensely to stressful situations and may find it hard to calm themselves once they become emotionally upset. As a result, emotional reactions may last longer and become more difficult to manage. Over time, these repeated emotional struggles can lead to persistent feelings of stress, worry, and emotional strain, which are important aspects of psychological distress.

The findings also suggest that young adults who have difficulties regulating their emotions may find it harder to cope with everyday challenges and stressful life events. When emotional responses are not effectively managed, individuals may feel overwhelmed or unable to handle pressures related to academics, relationships, or personal responsibilities. This can gradually increase their vulnerability to psychological distress.

In addition to examining the relationship between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress, the study also explored gender differences in these variables. The results indicated a significant difference between male and female participants in terms of psychological distress, with females reporting higher levels of distress compared to males. This finding supports the hypothesis that psychological distress may vary across gender groups.

One possible explanation for this difference is that females may be more likely to experience and express emotional difficulties openly. They may also be more prone to engaging in rumination, which involves repeatedly thinking about negative emotions or stressful experiences. Such patterns can intensify emotional responses and contribute to higher levels of psychological distress. Overall, the findings highlight the important role of emotional regulation in psychological well-being and suggest that difficulties in managing emotions can significantly increase the risk of psychological distress among young adults.

## DISCUSSION

The main aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress among young adults who have grown up in conflict-ridden families. The study also explored whether there were gender differences in psychological distress. The findings provide insight into how difficulties in managing emotions may influence the mental well-being of individuals who have been exposed to stressful family environments.

One of the major findings of the study was the significant relationship between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress. The results indicated that individuals who reported greater difficulty in managing their emotions also experienced higher levels of psychological distress. This finding supports earlier research which suggests that the ability to regulate emotions plays an important role in maintaining psychological health. When individuals are able to manage their emotions effectively, they are better equipped to cope with stressful situations and everyday challenges. However, when emotional regulation is poor, emotions may become overwhelming and contribute to feelings of anxiety, stress, and sadness.

Emotional dysregulation refers to difficulties in understanding, controlling, and responding to emotional experiences in a balanced way. Individuals who experience emotional dysregulation may react strongly to stressful situations and may find it difficult to calm themselves once they become upset. They may also struggle to identify their emotions clearly or may respond impulsively during moments of strong emotional arousal. Over time, these difficulties can lead to frequent emotional disturbances and increased vulnerability to psychological distress.

The family environment may play an important role in explaining this relationship. Young adults who grow up in families where conflict, arguments, or tension occur frequently may experience a stressful emotional atmosphere during childhood. In such environments, children may not always receive the emotional guidance necessary to develop healthy ways of managing their emotions. Instead, they may be repeatedly exposed to negative emotional expressions such as anger, blame, or withdrawal. These experiences can influence how individuals learn to respond to their own emotions, which may later contribute to difficulties in emotional regulation and higher levels of psychological distress.

The study also examined gender differences in psychological distress. The results showed that female participants reported higher levels of psychological distress compared to male participants. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that women often report greater emotional distress, including symptoms related to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Several factors may help explain this difference. Research has suggested that females are more likely to engage in rumination, which involves repeatedly thinking about negative emotions or stressful experiences. This pattern of thinking can intensify emotional reactions and make it more difficult to move on from stressful situations. In contrast, males may be more likely to cope with stress by distracting themselves or focusing on practical solutions, which may reduce prolonged emotional distress.

Social influences may also contribute to these gender differences. In many societies, females may feel more comfortable expressing their emotions and discussing emotional difficulties. As a result, they may be more likely to acknowledge and report psychological distress in research studies. In addition, young adult women may face multiple expectations related to academic performance, social relationships, and family responsibilities, which can increase emotional pressure during this stage of life.

Overall, the findings of the present study highlight the important role of emotional regulation in psychological well-being. The significant relationship between emotional dysregulation and psychological distress suggests that difficulties in managing emotions can increase the likelihood of experiencing mental health challenges. These results also emphasize the importance of helping young adults develop healthy emotional coping strategies, particularly for those who have grown up in conflict-ridden family environments. Strengthening emotional regulation skills may help individuals manage stress more effectively and improve their overall psychological well-being.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study highlight the important role of emotion dysregulation and family conflict in influencing psychological distress among young adults who have grown up in conflict-ridden families. The results showed that individuals who experience greater difficulty in managing their emotions are more likely to report higher levels of psychological distress, including feelings of stress, anxiety, and sadness. Frequent exposure to family conflict was also found to contribute to emotional difficulties, suggesting that growing up in an environment marked by tension, arguments, or instability can have long-term effects on emotional well-being. Such environments may limit opportunities for individuals to develop healthy ways of understanding and regulating their emotions, which can increase their vulnerability to psychological distress during young adulthood.

The study also examined gender differences in psychological distress and found that female participants reported higher levels of distress compared to males. This suggests that young adult women in conflict-ridden family environments may experience greater emotional strain, possibly due to differences in emotional processing, coping styles, or social pressures. Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of emotional regulation skills and supportive family environments in promoting psychological well-being. The study also highlights the value of interventions aimed at improving emotional regulation and helping young adults develop healthier coping strategies in order to reduce psychological distress and enhance overall mental health.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1.Limited Sample Size-One of the major limitations of the present study is the relatively limited sample size. Although the participants provided valuable insights into the relationship between emotion dysregulation, family conflict, and psychological distress, a larger sample could have improved the statistical power of the findings. A broader sample might have allowed for more detailed subgroup comparisons and increased the generalizability of the results.

2.Restricted Demographic Representation-The study primarily focused on young adults within a specific age range and educational background. As a result, the findings may not fully represent individuals from other age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, or cultural contexts. Family conflict and emotional regulation processes may vary across cultures and life stages, which limits the broader applicability of the findings.

3.Use of Self-Report Measures-The study relied on self-report questionnaires such as the DERS, DASS, and CPIC. While these scales are widely used and reliable, self-report measures are subject to personal biases, social desirability, and inaccurate self-perception. Participants may have unintentionally underreported or overreported their emotional experiences and family conflict.

4.Cross-Sectional Research Design-Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the research design. The study collected data at a single point in time, which makes it difficult to establish causal relationships between the variables. Although significant associations were observed, it cannot be conclusively determined whether attachment styles and family conflict directly lead to emotional dysregulation and psychological distress.

5.Sensitivity of the Topic-Family conflict and psychological distress are sensitive topics. Some participants may have felt uncomfortable disclosing personal family experiences or emotional difficulties. This hesitation might have influenced the accuracy or depth of the responses.

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