



The Impact Of Perceived Parental Emotional Immaturity On Young Adults' Self-Autonomy And Emotional Regulation

¹Eema Zaidi, ²Dr. Deepa Pandey

¹M.A. Counselling Psychology, ²Associate Professor

Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Lucknow, India

Abstract: This research examines the impact of perceived parental emotional immaturity in terms of inconsistent emotional responses, restricted empathy, and psychological control on self-autonomy and emotional regulation in young adults in India. With a quantitative, correlational design, 132 participants between 18 and 29 years were surveyed through the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI), Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), and Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF). Findings indicated maternal care correlated positively with self-autonomy ($r = 0.22, p < 0.05$) and cognitive reappraisal ($r = 0.18, p < 0.05$) and decreased emotional suppression ($r = -0.26, p < 0.01$), reflecting its protective function. In contrast, overprotection by both parents adversely affected autonomy (maternal: $r = -0.21, p < 0.05$; paternal: $r = -0.25, p < 0.01$), although it had no significant influence on emotional regulation. Regression analysis revealed that although the total model predicted autonomy ($F(3, 128) = 3.53, p = 0.017$), individual predictors were not significant, implying minimal predictive value of emotional immaturity by itself. These findings underscore the nuanced influence of parenting behaviours in a collectivist context, emphasizing maternal care's benefits and overprotection's drawbacks.

Keywords: Parental Emotional Immaturity, Self-Autonomy, Care, Young Adults, Overprotection, Emotional Growth.

I. Introduction

Parenting is widely recognized as a cornerstone of human development, significantly influencing emotional, cognitive, and social abilities. Parent-child interactions, especially during the sensitive periods of childhood and adolescence, provide a foundational support for the psychological traits that young adults bring into adulthood. These qualities encompass emotional regulation, the capacity to effectively manage and respond to emotional experience and self-autonomy, the ability to make decisions following one's values and identity without regard to external influence (Overbeek et al., 2007). The importance of these early relational processes cannot be overstated, as they influence not only short-term developmental outcomes but also long-term patterns in personal resilience, relational competence, and life satisfaction.

Decades of psychological research have illuminated how various parenting styles impact child development. Baumrind's (1971) seminal typology of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive has provided a robust framework for understanding how parental warmth, control, and responsiveness influence outcomes such as academic achievement, social adjustment, and emotional well-being. Authoritative parenting, characterized by high warmth and moderate control, is consistently linked to positive developmental outcomes, including greater emotional resilience and autonomy in emerging adulthood (Das, 2022). In contrast, authoritarian parenting, marked by high control and low warmth, often fosters dependency

and emotional suppression, while permissive parenting, with its low control and high warmth, may lead to difficulties in self-discipline and regulation (Herzog et al., 2015). These broad categories have been extensively validated across cultures and developmental stages, offering a comprehensive lens through which to view parental influence.

However, while this traditional focus on parenting styles has yielded valuable insights, it typically does not pay attention to more subtle aspects of parental behaviour that can have equally powerful influences. Such a dimension is parental emotional immaturity, which remains an under-researched yet decisive influence that deserves further consideration. Emotionally immature parents are characterized by their unstable emotional reactions, low empathy, and use of psychological control behaviours that destabilize the emotional world in which a child grows up (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009). In contrast to parenting styles, which focus on structural patterns of affection and authority, emotional immaturity concerns a parent's inner emotional capability, or absence thereof, to respond to their child's psychological demands. This distinction is very important, as it changes the attention from explicit parenting tactics to the parent's internal emotional dynamics that give rise to a child's sense of self and emotional regulation.

The shift to young adulthood, an important developmental period marked by attempts at independence and the creation of an individualized identity, is influenced heavily by the parent-child relationship dynamics (Beyers & Goossens, 1999). Emerging adulthood, characterized frequently by exploration, instability, and pivotal decision-making around love, work, and residence, calls for a wide understanding of what shapes individual growth (Saldana & Forthun, 2020). Parent-child relationship, especially at the early stage, sets the stage for the emotional and psychological well-being of an individual and how it determines his or her ability to manage self-autonomy and emotional control. Family environments are crucibles in which individuals learn to manage their independence, with parental control and autonomy support being key predictors of their life courses (Estefanía et al., 2020). Parental emotional immaturity is a relevant factor that helps shape the transitions of emerging adults to adulthood, as well as their general quality of life. It is observed that if young adults continue to be excessively reliant on their parents for emotional support, decision-making, and problem-solving, it can inhibit the acquisition of self-efficacy and self-concept clarity. These are necessary for developing autonomy and establishing a secure sense of identity. Consequently, this lowered sense of independence adversely impacts subjective indicators of adulthood and lowers general life satisfaction. (Kaniušonytė et al., 2021). The establishment of emotional autonomy during this stage highlights the fine balance between desiring independence from parental figures and preserving supportive family relationships, a balance essential for psychological health (Mendoza et al. 2020).

The nature of parent-child interactions during childhood and adolescence significantly influences young adults' capacity for emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships (Overbeek et al., 2007). While extensive research has examined the impact of parenting styles on child development, the role of parental emotional immaturity remains an underexplored but critical area. Emotionally immature parents often exhibit inconsistent emotional responses, a lack of empathy, and psychological control, which can impair their children's ability to form stable emotional identities and autonomous decision-making abilities (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009).

Parental Emotional Immaturity and Its Characteristics

Parental emotional immaturity occurs in a wide range of behaviours, each with profound impacts on child development. Briere and Rickards (2007) describe emotionally immature parents as being unable to provide stable emotional support, avoiding difficult issues, or in some way failing to confirm and validate their children's emotional lives. Such parents may have volatile mood swings, switching between warmth and withdrawal, or display a narcissistic approach in which their own emotional needs are prioritized over those of their children. Gibson (2022) names four types of emotionally immature parents: emotional, driven, passive, and rejecting, each characterized by distinctive modes of behaviour. For instance, emotional parents are driven by worry and instability, causing children to suppress their own needs to stabilize family life. Driven parents impose strict expectations, producing a high level of fear of failure, whereas passive parents disregard emotional engagement, and rejecting parents are aloof and punitive, with children ultimately being rejected.

These are in line with the Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPAR), i.e., that perceived rejection by parents, whether expressed in modes of emotional unavailability or overt rejection, impacts a child's ability to manage emotions, as well as self-concept development (Das, 2022). Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) also points to the importance of having a secure emotional base, so that inconsistent or unresponsive parenthood interferes with the formation of a coherent sense of self and with effective emotion management.

When emotionally immature parents create such a conflicted atmosphere, they can inadvertently foster insecurity, confusion, and unmet needs as they push their children to adapt in ways that compromise their psychological development.

The consequences of such dynamics are particularly significant on the boundary issues between children and parents as described by Mayseless and Scharf (2009). These include role reversal, in which children are supposed to take care of the parents; triangulation, where children are drawn into parental conflicts; guilt induction, where emotional manipulation stifles independence; psychological control, where autonomy is actively undermined; and blurred boundaries, where the distinction between parent and child roles becomes unclear. All these patterns lead to an unstable emotional environment, hindering the development of emotional independence and self-autonomy abilities essential for healthy functioning in adult life.

Autonomy Development in Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood is a critical developmental phase during which individuals transition from parental dependence to self-governance (Arnett, 2000). The ability to establish self-autonomy is closely linked to parental influence, particularly the balance between support and control (Gong & Wang, 2021). Authoritative parenting, characterized by high warmth and moderate control, has been associated with higher levels of autonomy and emotional resilience in young adults (Das, 2022). Conversely, parental emotional immaturity especially in the form of erratic behaviour and emotional unavailability, can lead to identity diffusion, where individuals struggle with decision-making, experience heightened emotional distress, and exhibit reduced confidence in their life choices (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009).

Self-autonomy, rooted in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), refers to the capacity to act in alignment with one's intrinsic values and desires, free from undue external influence. Autonomous individuals exhibit authenticity, making choices that reflect their true selves rather than conforming to societal pressures or parental expectations. The development of both emotional regulation and autonomy is closely tied to early parental influences. Authoritative parenting, for example, provides a balance of support and freedom that nurtures these capacities, while emotionally immature parenting may disrupt them through over control or neglect (Gong & Wang, 2021). The stakes are high; deficits in these areas can lead to identity diffusion, emotional instability, and difficulties in forming healthy relationship outcomes that persist well into adulthood (Overbeek et al., 2007).

Impact of Childhood Maltreatment on Emotional Regulation

Childhood maltreatment, including emotional abuse and neglect, has long-term implications for emotion processing and regulation. Briere and Rickards (2007) confirmed that maternal emotional abuse was positively correlated with emotional instability, impairment of identity, and susceptibility to external influence. Further, Warmingham et al. (2023) demonstrated that neglect exposure and chronic maltreatment predicted affective processing deficits, which led to difficulties with emotion recognition and management. These findings point to the critical role of early parental interaction in building emotional regulation skills that are maintained into adulthood. Negative experiences during childhood, such as parents' divorce, substance abuse, or abuse, can profoundly undermine the parent-child relationship, resulting in continued emotional difficulties. Emerging adults experiencing multiple adversities are likely to face emotional difficulties, highlighting the importance of supportive parenting in building well-being, regardless of past challenges (Chainey & Burke, 2021). The parental emotional immaturity construct encompasses a range of traits, including but not limited to an impaired ability to accurately perceive and understand emotions, an inability to express empathy for others, and an inconsistency in providing appropriate and reliable emotional support.

Most current parenting research emphasizes parenting styles and how they affect childhood development, with a particular focus on authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles. Limited attention has been given to parental emotional immaturity as a separate factor affecting emotional regulation and autonomy during young adulthood.

II. Review of Literature

Parental Emotional Immaturity

Overbeek et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal, birth-to-maturity study examining the influence of parent–child relationships on emotional adjustment and partner relationship quality in adulthood. Drawing on attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1989) and social-cognitive perspectives (Collins et al., 2002), the study highlights that poor-quality parent–child bonds in childhood predict low-quality partner relationships and dissatisfaction with life in adulthood, mediated by parent–adolescent conflict and poor communication. Unlike prior studies that relied on retrospective reports, this study utilized multi-informant data, reducing recall bias. Significant findings indicated that conflictual parent–adolescent relationships led to lower partner relationship quality and life dissatisfaction.

Briere and Rickards (2007) investigate the effects of childhood and adult victimization on self-capacities, including identity disturbance, affect dysregulation, and relational difficulties. Drawing on psychodynamic theories (Kohut, 1977; McCann & Pearlman, 1990) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), the study highlights that maternal emotional abuse, more than other forms of maltreatment, is a critical predictor of disturbances across these domains. Unlike prior studies that broadly examine trauma effects, this research differentiates between childhood and adult trauma, revealing that childhood emotional abuse, particularly from maternal figures, has a more profound impact on self-functioning than other forms of maltreatment. These findings underscore the importance of addressing childhood emotional abuse in therapeutic interventions to mitigate long-term psychological consequences.

Mayseless and Scharf (2009) conducted a longitudinal study examining the impact of inadequate parent–adolescent boundaries on girls' individuation and adjustment during the transition from high school to military service. The study references prior works by Bowen (1978) and Minuchin (1974), emphasizing the detrimental effects of psychological control, guilt induction, parentification, triangulation, and boundary blurring on emotional development. Their findings revealed that psychological control and guilt induction resulted in the lowest individuation and coping abilities, while blurred boundaries and parentification led to overdependence and immaturity. Unlike previous research that examined boundary violations retrospectively, this study used concurrent assessments and longitudinal analysis, highlighting how these inadequate boundaries impact individuation and adjustment over time. The results highlight the importance of recognizing boundary violations in families to facilitate healthier developmental outcomes.

Stack et al. (2010) provide a comprehensive review of longitudinal and intergenerational studies on the impact of parenting behaviours on children's emotional development. Drawing from foundational works by Saarni (1999) and Thompson (1994), the paper emphasizes the importance of emotional competence, which includes emotion regulation, self-awareness, and understanding emotions in others. The study highlights that negative parenting styles, such as harsh and inconsistent behaviours, contribute to maladaptive emotional outcomes, whereas positive parenting fosters emotional resilience. Unlike previous research that focused primarily on behavioural outcomes, this study explores intergenerational transmission of emotional competence, offering insights into long-term developmental consequences across generations.

Dobrić and Patrić (2024) provide a detailed exploration of parental emotional immaturity, emphasizing its detrimental effects on children's emotional development. The study identifies four distinct types of emotionally immature parents: emotional, driven, passive, and rejecting, as conceptualized by Gibson (2022). Emotional parents are governed by anxiety and emotional instability, leading children to prioritize others' needs over their own. Driven parents impose rigid expectations and prioritize achievements over emotional connection, instilling a persistent fear of failure in their children. Passive parents, though less aggressive, neglect emotional support and overlook the needs of their children, often retreating from emotional responsibilities. Rejecting parents exhibit emotional detachment and punitive behaviour, leaving children feeling unwanted and burdened by guilt (Gibson, 2022). The paper highlights how these patterns foster emotional insecurity, hinder emotional regulation, and contribute to long-term psychological distress. The study systematically classifies emotionally immature parents, offering a more nuanced understanding of their impact, unlike previous studies that focus on general parenting styles.

Emotional Regulation

Herzog et al. (2015) examined the interplay between parenting styles, emotion regulation, and trait emotion in emerging adults. Drawing on Baumrind's (1971) parenting framework and Cole et al.'s (2004) work on emotion regulation, the study explored how authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles predict emotional well-being. Findings revealed that authoritative parenting positively correlated with high positive emotionality and emotional self-awareness, while permissive parenting predicted negative emotion. Surprisingly, authoritarian parenting did not directly predict emotional outcomes but influenced them indirectly through emotional control and trait emotion. Unlike earlier studies that examined parenting styles as direct predictors of psychological outcomes, this research introduced path models to assess how emotion regulation mediates the relationship between parenting and trait emotion. A notable contribution is the identification of emotional control and situational awareness as key mediators in shaping emotional responses. The study highlights the complexity of these relationships and suggests that future research should explore cross-cultural variations and longitudinal outcomes to validate these findings.

Flores Saldana (2020) examined how parenting styles, emotional self-regulation, and identity development interact in emerging adulthood using a person-centered approach. Grounded in Baumrind's (1971) parenting typology and Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory, the study utilized cluster analysis to identify four distinct parenting profiles: Parental Nurturance, Parental Repression, Parental Equivocation, and Maternal Mitigation. Findings indicated that Parental Nurturance characterized by high parental support and low psychological control led to the highest levels of identity commitment and use of cognitive reappraisal. Conversely, Parental Repression was associated with higher ruminative exploration and emotional suppression. Unlike prior studies that treated parenting styles as uniform constructs, this study differentiated outcomes by incorporating distinct profiles. The research highlights a gap in exploring how diverse parental profiles shape emotional self-regulation and identity in emerging adults.

Gong and Wang (2021) explored the interactive effects of parental psychological control and autonomy support on emerging adults' emotion regulation and self-esteem. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2013) and prior research by Kunz and Grych (2013) and Silk et al. (2003), the study emphasized that autonomy support and psychological control are distinct constructs rather than opposite ends of a continuum. The findings revealed that autonomy support significantly predicted higher emotion regulation and self-esteem, but its positive effects were diminished when psychological control was high. Conversely, psychological control was associated with poor emotion regulation and lower self-esteem. This study built upon earlier research by highlighting the interactive effects of these parenting dimensions, demonstrating that psychological control can offset the benefits of autonomy support.

Das (2022) investigated the relationship between perceived parenting styles and emotional regulation abilities among young Indian adults. Grounded in Baumrind's (1971) typology of parenting styles and Gross's (1998) emotion regulation model, the study identified that permissive and authoritative parenting styles had a positive and significant relationship with cognitive reappraisal, whereas authoritarian parenting showed no such association. Additionally, expressive suppression did not correlate significantly with any parenting style. Unlike prior studies that primarily focused on Western populations, this research explored these relationships in an Indian cultural context. The most significant finding was that permissive and authoritative parenting promotes better emotional regulation.

Qian et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between parental psychological control, adolescent emotion regulation, and social problems in Chinese multi-child families. The study explored how psychological control negatively impacts adolescents' emotional and social development. The findings revealed that parental psychological control significantly predicted higher levels of adolescent social problems, with emotion regulation acting as a partial mediator. Adolescents who experienced higher psychological control displayed less cognitive reappraisal and more emotional inhibition, leading to increased social difficulties. Unlike prior studies that primarily examined direct relationships, this research introduced a mediation model to highlight the complex pathways through which psychological control affects social outcomes.

Warmingham et al. (2023) explored the impact of childhood maltreatment on emotion regulation and affective processing in emerging adulthood. Drawing on developmental psychopathology (Cicchetti, 1989) and emotion regulation theories (Gross, 2015), the study identified five emotion regulation profiles using Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) and examined how these profiles relate to affective processing and maltreatment exposure. Findings revealed that chronic, multi-subtype maltreatment was linked to higher

emotional dysregulation, marked by poor impulse control, low emotional clarity, and greater difficulty with goal-directed behaviour. Unlike prior research that examined single emotion regulation dimensions, this study's person-centred approach captured nuanced patterns of regulation. Key findings showed maltreatment affected sensitivity to emotional stimuli, with neglect predicting lower sensitivity to affective words.

Simon et al. (2024) conducted a scoping review exploring the relationship between childhood neglect and emotion regulation in adulthood. Drawing on prior research by Gratz and Roemer (2004) and Gross (1998), the study defines emotion regulation as the ability to manage emotional responses effectively. The review highlights that while neglect is the most prevalent form of child abuse, its impact on adult emotion regulation remains underexplored. Significant findings indicate that childhood neglect, especially emotional neglect, is associated with long-term impairments in emotion regulation, contributing to various psychopathologies. Unlike earlier studies that focused on childhood outcomes, this review shifts attention to adult consequences, emphasizing the need for longitudinal studies and diverse, culturally representative samples. The paper identifies research gaps in understanding the effects of neglect subtypes and highlights the importance of distinguishing neglect from other forms of abuse for future investigations.

Autonomy

Cullaty (2011) investigated how parental involvement shapes autonomy development in traditional-age college students, using a grounded theory approach with 18 third-year students at a southeastern U.S. university. Drawing on prior work like Chickering and Reisser (1993) and Levinson (1978), which frame autonomy as a critical developmental goal involving separation from parents, this study extends the focus to relational dynamics. Findings reveal three key themes: autonomy thrives with supportive parental relationships, is promoted by redefining parent-student ties as adult-to-adult, relinquishing control, and encouraging responsibility, but is hindered by excessive parental control. Unlike earlier research emphasizing autonomy's aspects (e.g., Kuh, 1993), Cullaty highlights parental influence, aligning with Mather and Winston (1998). The most significant result is that supportive, non-intrusive involvement fosters autonomy, while over control stifles it. This synthesis underscores the need for balanced parental roles, offering practical implications for administrators navigating rising parental engagement.

Inguglia et al. (2014) examined autonomy and relatedness in 325 Italian adolescents (17–18) and emerging adults (20–26), exploring their links to parental support and psychological distress. Grounded in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the study references prior work like Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2005) on supportive parenting and Allen et al. (1994) on adjustment outcomes. Unlike earlier research focusing on autonomy or relatedness independently, this study investigates their interplay across developmental stages. Key findings include autonomy and relatedness were positively tied to parental support but only related to each other in emerging adults; autonomy reduced depression and loneliness, while relatedness lowered externalizing problems (adolescents only), stress, depression, and loneliness. Age moderated these relationships, suggesting distinct roles in adolescence versus emerging adulthood. This synthesis highlights parental support's critical role in fostering well-being, with nuanced age-specific effects.

Laitonjam and Gulati (2014) investigated how 200 Indian adolescents (aged 16–18) perceived their parental relationships and their impact on emotional autonomy, using Rao's (1989) Parent-Child Relationship Scale and Steinberg and Silverberg's (1986) Emotional Autonomy Scale. Building on prior studies (e.g., Allen et al., 1994; Ryan & Lynch, 1989), which link supportive parenting to autonomy, this research uniquely explores gender-specific perceptions in an Indian context. Findings revealed that highly autonomous boys perceived fathers as rejecting and neglecting, while girls viewed fathers as demanding and mothers as less loving. Unlike Stanik et al. (2013), who tied warmth to reduced risk behaviours, this study found positive parenting (e.g., loving) negatively correlated with autonomy. Further analysis highlighted fathers' indifference as a key contributor. This suggests that unsupportive parenting fosters autonomy, contrasting with Western findings, possibly due to cultural or peer influences.

Liga et al. (2017) investigated the associations between parental psychological control (PPC), autonomy, relatedness, and problem behaviours during emerging adulthood across two cultural contexts: Italy and the USA. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory and previous work by Soenens et al. (2010), the study differentiated between dependency-oriented PPC (DPPC) and achievement-oriented PPC (APPC) and explored their effects on internalizing and externalizing difficulties. Findings revealed that DPPC and APPC were negatively associated with autonomy and relatedness, which in turn were linked to increased anxiety, depressive symptoms, and risky behaviours. This study extends prior research by identifying distinct pathways through which PPC affects adjustment outcomes and highlights cultural differences. DPPC was positively associated with risky behaviours in the USA but not in Italy, while APPC had opposite effects on

risky behaviours in both cultures. These findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive approaches to understanding the impact of PPC on emerging adults.

Melendro et al. (2020) analysed the relationship between autonomy and psychological well-being in young people transitioning to adulthood across three pathways: education, employment, and social disadvantage. The study found that higher levels of autonomy correlated with greater well-being, with the education pathway showing the highest scores. Unlike prior research that focused primarily on educational and employment trajectories, this study included the social disadvantage pathway, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. The most significant finding was that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds exhibited lower psychological well-being despite demonstrating higher socio-political engagement.

Hwang and Jung (2021) explored parenting typologies among emerging adults (aged 18–25) and their impact on psychological and relational well-being using a latent class analysis of 472 mother-child and 426 father-child relationships. Building on prior research (e.g., Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014), which identified helicopter parenting and autonomy-supportive parenting as distinct yet related constructs, this study uniquely examines their co-occurrence. Four classes emerged: helicopter parenting (high HP, low AS), autonomy-supportive parenting (low HP, high AS), uninvolved parenting (low HP, low AS), and a combined style (high HP, high AS). Significant findings indicate autonomy-supportive parenting is linked to higher life satisfaction, self-efficacy, and parent-child relationship quality, while the combined style outperformed it in life satisfaction and relationship quality. Unlike past studies emphasizing negative helicopter parenting effects (e.g., Kouros et al., 2017), this suggests autonomy support mitigates overparenting's downsides.

III. Rationale

Emotionally immature parents, who tend to have volatile and varied emotional responses, practice psychological control, and struggle to reflect on their own and their child's emotional experience, create an emotionally threatening atmosphere. Most teenagers and young adults who grow up in a narcissistically inclined home usually do so in an environment where they have little opportunity to build a strong sense of self and learn how to regulate their own emotions. These deficiencies can limit their ability to make independent choices and develop emotional strength, both of which are essential to the survival of young adulthood.

However, the effect of perceived parental emotional immaturity on self-autonomy and emotional regulation has been less investigated. This research hopes to address these gaps through a clarification of the relationship between parental emotional immaturity and the emotional and psychological development of young adults. By uncovering these connections, the research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform therapeutic interventions and promote healthier emotional development in individuals who have experienced emotionally immature parenting.

IV. Methods of study

Objective

To examine the relationship between perceived parental emotional immaturity and self-autonomy in young adults.

Hypothesis

H1: There will be a negative relationship between perceived parental emotional immaturity and young adults' self-autonomy.

H2: There will be a negative relationship between perceived parental emotional immaturity and young adults' cognitive reappraisal emotional regulation.

H3: Perceived parental emotional immaturity will significantly predict lower self-autonomy in young adults.

Variables

- **Perceived Parental Emotional Immaturity**

Parental Emotional Immaturity refers to a pattern of inconsistent emotional responses, limited empathy, and psychological control that hinders a child's ability to develop a stable emotional identity and difficulty setting boundaries. Emotionally immature parents often struggle to provide consistent emotional support, avoid difficult conversations, and fail to recognize or respond to their child's emotional needs. This immaturity is characterized by unclear boundaries, difficulty managing emotions, an inability to take responsibility for their actions, and a lack of genuine empathy. As a result, their parenting style often leads to confusion and emotional insecurity.

- **Self-Autonomy**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985) and later expanded by Ryan and Deci (2000), defines autonomy as the ability to regulate one's actions in alignment with personal values and desires. When individuals experience true autonomy, they feel a deep sense of ownership over their actions, acting with wholehearted willingness and conviction. Their choices resonate with their inner values, fostering a sense of authenticity and alignment. Autonomous individuals are not only open to self-exploration but also possess the courage to confront their feelings, values, and needs, using this awareness to make decisions that reflect their true selves. In contrast, low autonomy reflects a state where one's actions feel governed by external forces and social pressures, leading to a disconnection from one's core self. In such cases, behaviour feels compelled by external contingencies rather than emerging from genuine internal motivation. Without autonomy, individuals may feel trapped in a cycle of externally driven expectations, leaving little room for authentic growth and fulfilment.

- **Emotional Regulation**

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to effectively recognize, understand, and manage emotional experiences in a balanced and adaptive manner. Rather than suppressing emotions, it involves acknowledging and processing them in a way that promotes psychological well-being. Successful emotional regulation allows individuals to respond to challenging situations with composure and thoughtful decision-making, reducing impulsivity and emotional reactivity.

Design and Sample

The study adopts a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationship between perceived parental emotional immaturity and its impact on young adults' self-autonomy and emotional regulation. The sample consists of young adults aged 18 to 29 years from India. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who perceived their parents as emotionally immature. A total of 132 responses were collected through both online and offline methods using questionnaires.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Individuals aged 19–29 years.
- Participants who have lived with or had consistent interactions with their parents during childhood and adolescence.
- Participants willing to provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals with a history of diagnosed psychiatric disorders that may affect emotional regulation.
- Participants who did not have consistent parental involvement during childhood.

Measures

- **Emotional Regulation**

The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), developed by Gross and John (2003), is a 10-item instrument designed to measure an individual's tendency to regulate emotions through cognitive reappraisal or expressive suppression. Participants respond to each item using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 7 represents strongly agree. The scores for the cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression subscales are calculated by averaging the responses for the respective items. Higher scores reflect a greater tendency to use that particular emotion regulation strategy, while lower scores indicate less frequent use.

• Parental Emotional Immaturity

The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) is a 25-item self-report measure designed to assess individuals' recalled perceptions of their relationships with their parents up to the age of 16. The instrument includes two parallel versions, one for the mother and one for the father, that evaluate perceived relationships with each parent separately, with each version consisting of 25 items. The measure consists of two subscales. The parental care subscale features items like "Enjoyed talking things over with me," while the parental overprotection subscale includes statements such as "Did not want me to grow up." Responses are rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from 0 ('Very Like') to 3 ('Very unlike'). Certain items were reverse scored to ensure that higher scores indicated increased parental care and overprotection.

• Self- Autonomy

The Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF; Weinstein et al., 2012) was utilized to assess self-autonomy. This 15-item scale is divided into three subscales: interest-taking (five items, e.g., "I often reflect on why I react the way I do"), self-congruence (five items, e.g., "My decisions are steadily informed by the things I want or care about."), and susceptibility to control (five items, e.g., "I often pressure myself"). Participants responded to each statement based on their general experiences using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true) to 5 (Completely true). The total autonomy score was obtained by summing all item responses.

Procedure

Prior to administering the questionnaire, informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were also made aware of their right to withdraw consent at any point during the data collection process. The participants were aged between 18-29 years of the Indian continent. A total of 132 responses were collected through both online and offline methods using questionnaires. The form included a detailed debriefing about the study, along with clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. Participants consented to their voluntary participation. Confidentiality of participant information was maintained throughout the study, and respondents were thanked for their contribution. The collected data was analysed using SPSS. Pearson's correlation was used to assess relationships between parental emotional immaturity, self-autonomy, and emotional regulation. Multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive power of parental emotional immaturity on self-autonomy and emotional regulation.

V. Result

In this section, the data analysis has been undertaken to verify the hypothesis about which it has been mentioned in the previous section.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CARE SCORE OF MOTHER	132	3	36	25.24	7.695
OVERPROTECTION MOTHER	132	1	34	16.27	7.379
CARE FATHER	132	0	36	22.44	9.148
OVERPROTECTION FATHER	132	1	39	16.30	7.887
COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL	132	1.82	7.00	4.7120	1.02059
AUTONOMY	132	2.00	4.60	3.2949	.47603
EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION	132	1.00	35.00	4.6513	3.02420
Valid N (listwise)	132				

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables Care Score of Mother, Overprotection Mother, Care Score of Father, Overprotection Father, Cognitive Reappraisal, Autonomy, and Emotional Suppression.

The sample size was 132. The mean and standard deviation (SD) for Care Score of Mother are 25.24 and 7.695, for Overprotection Mother are 16.27 and 7.379, for Care Score of Father are 22.44 and 9.148, for Overprotection Father are 16.30 and 7.887, for Cognitive Reappraisal are 4.7120 and 1.02059, for Autonomy are 3.2949 and 0.47603, and for Emotional Suppression are 4.6513 and 3.02420, respectively.

Table 2 shows that Overprotective mother have a Negative correlation with Autonomy: ($r = -0.211$, $p < 0.05$) 0.015. A weak negative correlation suggests that higher maternal overprotection is associated with lower levels of autonomy in the child. Overprotective Father has a Negative correlation with Autonomy ($r = -0.247$, $p < 0.01$). A weak negative correlation suggests that higher paternal overprotection is linked to lower levels of autonomy in the child. These findings suggest that higher levels of overprotection by both parents are associated with lower self-autonomy in young adults.

Interestingly, maternal care was positively correlated with self-autonomy ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher perceived maternal care is linked to greater self-autonomy. However, paternal care and self-autonomy did not show any significant correlation ($r = -0.004$, $p > 0.05$).

Thus, our hypothesis (h1) that there is a negative relationship between perceived parental emotional immaturity and young adults' self-autonomy is partially supported, as overprotection by both parents negatively impacts self-autonomy, while only maternal care showed a positive association with self-autonomy

		Correlations				
		CARE SCORE OF MOTHER	OVERPROTECTION MOTHER	CARE FATHER	OVERPROTECTION FATHER	AUTONOMY
CARE SCORE OF MOTHER	Pearson Correlation	1	-.501**	.538**	-.424**	.217*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	.012
	N	132	132	132	132	132
OVERPROTECTION MOTHER	Pearson Correlation	-.501**	1	-.231**	.765**	-.211*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.008	<.001	.015
	N	132	132	132	132	132
CARE FATHER	Pearson Correlation	.538**	-.231**	1	-.410**	-.004
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.008		<.001	.963
	N	132	132	132	132	132
OVERPROTECTION FATHER	Pearson Correlation	-.424**	.765**	-.410**	1	-.247**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		.004
	N	132	132	132	132	132
AUTONOMY	Pearson Correlation	.217*	-.211*	-.004	-.247**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.015	.963	.004	
	N	132	132	132	132	132

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

Table 2

		Correlations					
		CARE SCORE OF MOTHER	OVERPROTECTION MOTHER	CARE FATHER	OVERPROTECTION FATHER	COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL	EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION
CARE SCORE OF MOTHER	Pearson Correlation	1	-.501**	.538**	-.424**	.176*	-.258**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	.043	.003
	N	132	132	132	132	132	132
OVERPROTECTION MOTHER	Pearson Correlation	-.501**	1	-.231**	.765**	-.033	.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.008	<.001	.707	.302
	N	132	132	132	132	132	132
CARE FATHER	Pearson Correlation	.538**	-.231**	1	-.410**	.072	.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.008		<.001	.410	.709
	N	132	132	132	132	132	132
OVERPROTECTION FATHER	Pearson Correlation	-.424**	.765**	-.410**	1	-.104	-.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		.233	.915
	N	132	132	132	132	132	132
COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL	Pearson Correlation	.176*	-.033	.072	-.104	1	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	.707	.410	.233		.500
	N	132	132	132	132	132	132
EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION	Pearson Correlation	-.258**	.091	.033	-.009	.059	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.302	.709	.915	.500	
	N	132	132	132	132	132	132

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

Table 3

According to Table 3, a weak positive correlation was observed between Maternal Care (CARE_M) and Reappraisal ($r=0.176$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that higher maternal care is associated with greater cognitive reappraisal. A moderate negative correlation was found between Maternal Care (CARE_M) and Suppression ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher maternal care is associated with lower expressive suppression.

There is a negative correlation between Maternal Overprotection and Reappraisal: $r=-0.033$, $p>0.05$, but it was not statistically significant.

Overprotection by Mother and Emotional Suppression ($r=0.091$, $p=0.302$) shows no significant relationship. Thus, overprotection by the mother is not significantly associated with emotional suppression.

A weak positive correlation between Paternal Care and Reappraisal: ($r = 0.07$, $p > 0.05$), although here is no significant relationship. Similarly, a weak positive correlation is also found between Paternal Care and Suppression: ($r = 0.03$, $p > 0.05$), which is not significant.

Overprotection by Father and Cognitive Reappraisal: $r=-0.104$, $p>0.05$ has no significant relationship. Overprotection by the father does not significantly affect cognitive reappraisal. Overprotection by Father and Emotional Suppression shows $r=-0.009$, $p>0.05$, signalling no significant relationship. Hence, overprotection by the father is not linked to emotional suppression.

H2 (There is a negative relationship between perceived parental emotional immaturity and young adults' cognitive reappraisal emotional regulation) is partially supported. While maternal care demonstrated a positive impact on cognitive reappraisal and reduced suppression, overprotection by either parent did not show a consistent or significant impact on emotional regulation.

Table 4.1

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.277 ^a	.076	.055	.46279

a. Predictors: (Constant), OVERPROTECTION FATHER, CARE SCORE OF MOTHER, OVERPROTECTION MOTHER

Table 4.2

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.271	3	.757	3.534	.017 ^b
	Residual	27.415	128	.214		
	Total	29.686	131			

a. Dependent Variable: AUTONOMY

b. Predictors: (Constant), OVERPROTECTION FATHER, CARE SCORE OF MOTHER, OVERPROTECTION MOTHER

Table 4.2 shows $F(3, 128) = 3.534$, $p = 0.017$: The model is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, suggesting that the combination of the three predictors significantly predicts autonomy.

Table 4.3

		Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	3.262	.230		14.163	<.001	2.806	3.717
	OVERPROTECTION MOTHER	.000	.009	.006	.043	.966	-.017	.018
	CARE SCORE OF MOTHER	.009	.006	.139	1.409	.161	-.003	.021
	OVERPROTECTION FATHER	-.012	.008	-.193	-1.458	.147	-.027	.004

a. Dependent Variable: AUTONOMY

Overprotection by Mother ($B = 0.000$, $p = 0.966$) has no significant relationship with autonomy. A negligible effect indicates that overprotection from the mother does not significantly predict autonomy. Care Score of Mother ($B = 0.009$, $p = 0.161$) shows a weak positive and non-significant relationship between the care score of the mother and autonomy. This variable is not a significant predictor of self-autonomy ($p > .05$). A unit increase in the care score of the mother will increase self-autonomy by 0.009 units, but this effect is not statistically significant.

Overprotection by Father ($B = -0.012$, $p = 0.147$) has a negative but non-significant ($p > .05$) relationship with autonomy. A unit increase in overprotection by the father results in a slight decrease of 0.012 units in self-autonomy, but this is not significant.

The hypothesis H3, perceived parental emotional immaturity significantly predicts lower self-autonomy in young adults, is not supported. Although the overall model is statistically significant ($p = .017$), indicating that the combination of predictors explains a small proportion of the variance in self-autonomy, none of the individual predictors (care and overprotection scores) show statistically significant effects. This suggests that perceived parental emotional immaturity, as measured by these variables, does not have a significant impact on self-autonomy at the individual level.

VI. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of perceived parental emotional immaturity - expressed by dimensions of parental care and overprotectiveness of both parents - on the self-autonomy and emotional regulation of young adults. Implemented with young Indian adults, results indicate a mixed association between parenting behaviours and developmental outcomes, providing only partial support for the proposed hypotheses. These findings reflect the protective role maternal care plays, the negative influence overprotection has on autonomy, and the limited effect emotional immaturity has on emotional regulation, yielding insights on parenting to psychological development within a culturally grounded framework.'

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that perceived parental emotional immaturity would negatively affect young adults' self-autonomy, defined as the ability to align with personal values and resist external pressures. The correlation analysis supports this hypothesis to some extent, showing that overprotection from both parents is associated with reduced autonomy. This suggests that when parents exhibit emotionally immature behaviours, such as excessive control or restriction, young adults may struggle to develop a sense of independence. Overprotection, often characterized by limiting a child's opportunities for exploration and decision-making, can stifle the development of self-authorship, a key component of autonomy as conceptualized by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the Indian context, where familial interdependence is often prioritized, such overprotection may be perceived as a form of care but can inadvertently hinder the growth of autonomy, as young adults may feel obligated to conform to parental expectations rather than pursue their paths (Chadda & Deb, 2013).

Notably, maternal care was found to be a protective factor with a positive correlation with self-autonomy. This finding is consistent with attachment theory, which holds that a caregiver's warmth and support create a secure base from which individuals can explore their autonomy with confidence (Bowlby, 1988). Mothers who are seen as caring probably create an environment where the individuals feel free to explore their own identities, something that might hold particular importance in Indian families, given the central role mothers often play in emotional nurturing (Saraswathi & Pai, 1997). In contrast, paternal care did not show a significant relationship with autonomy in the correlation analysis

The regression analysis further complicates the picture for H3, which hypothesized that perceived parental emotional immaturity would significantly predict lower self-autonomy. While the overall model was significant, indicating that the combination of parenting behaviours explains some variance in autonomy, none of the individual predictors (maternal care, maternal overprotection, paternal overprotection) showed significant effects. This suggests that while emotional immaturity, particularly through overprotection, may relate to autonomy on a relational level, its predictive power is limited when considered alongside other factors. This finding aligns with the Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory; Rohner, 2004), which suggests that perceived rejection such as overcontrol can negatively impact psychological adjustment, but the effect may be diluted by other influences, such as cultural expectations or individual resilience. The descriptive statistics indicate a sample with moderate levels of autonomy and considerable variability in parenting behaviours, which may explain why the relationships are significant in correlations but not in predictive models, where shared variance among predictors (e.g., the strong correlation between maternal and paternal overprotection) may reduce individual effects.

The second hypothesis (H2) posited that perceived parental emotional immaturity would negatively affect young adults' emotional regulation, specifically their use of cognitive reappraisal (an adaptive strategy) and emotional suppression (a less adaptive strategy). The findings provide partial support for this hypothesis, with maternal care again playing a pivotal role. Higher maternal care was associated with greater use of cognitive reappraisal and lower reliance on emotional suppression, suggesting that a warm and supportive maternal relationship fosters adaptive emotional coping. This is consistent with attachment theory, which emphasizes that a secure base provided by a caregiver enables individuals to develop healthy emotional regulation strategies (Bowlby, 1988). Mothers who are emotionally available likely model and reinforce effective ways of managing emotions, such as reframing negative situations, while also creating a safe space for emotional expression, reducing the need to suppress feelings (Morris et al., 2007).

In contrast, overprotection from both parents showed no significant relationship with either emotional regulation strategy. This was unexpected, as prior research has suggested that overprotective parenting can lead to emotional dysregulation by limiting opportunities for children to develop independent coping mechanisms (Segrin et al., 2015). The lack of significant effects may be due to the specific focus of the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) on overprotection as a form of control, which may not fully capture other aspects of emotional immaturity, such as emotional volatility or inconsistency, that more directly influence emotional regulation. Additionally, the cultural context of India may play a role. In collectivist societies, emotional suppression is sometimes normative as a means of maintaining social harmony, which could weaken the link between overprotection and suppression in this sample (Matsumoto et al., 2008).

Paternal care also showed no significant association with emotional regulation, further highlighting the differential roles of mothers and fathers in this sample. This may reflect cultural dynamics where mothers are more involved in emotional socialization, while fathers' roles are more instrumental or authoritative (Kagitcibasi, 2005). The findings suggest that while maternal care can buffer the effects of emotional immaturity by promoting adaptive regulation, overprotection and paternal care do not have a consistent impact, indicating that emotional regulation may be influenced by other factors, such as peer relationships or individual temperament.

The findings contribute to the understanding of how perceived parental emotional immaturity affects young adults' development, particularly in a non-Western context. The negative association between overprotection and autonomy underscores the importance of fostering autonomy-supportive parenting practices, such as encouraging independent decision-making and exploration, even in cultures that value interdependence (Grolnick et al., 2015). The protective role of maternal care suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing maternal warmth could mitigate the adverse effects of emotional immaturity, promoting both autonomy and adaptive emotional regulation. This has practical implications for family therapy and parenting education in India, where cultural norms often emphasize parental authority, potentially at the expense of individual growth (Saraswathi & Pai, 1997).

The limited impact of overprotection on emotional regulation suggests that emotional immaturity's effects may be more pronounced on autonomy than on coping strategies or that other dimensions of immaturity, such as emotional inconsistency, are more relevant to regulation. This aligns with research indicating that emotional regulation development is heavily influenced by direct modelling of emotional behaviours, which may not be captured by measures of overprotection (Calkins & Hill, 2007). The findings also highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches to understanding parenting effects, as the interplay between

autonomy and interdependence in Indian families may shape how young adults perceive and respond to parental behaviours.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the developmental trajectories of autonomy and emotional regulation concerning parenting behaviours. Incorporating multi-informant methods, such as parent or sibling reports, could provide a more comprehensive view of family dynamics. Exploring additional dimensions of emotional immaturity, such as emotional inconsistency or unavailability, may reveal stronger links to emotional regulation. Given the cultural context, examining the role of extended family members such as grandparents, who often play a significant role in Indian households, could offer a more holistic understanding of parenting influences.

VII. Conclusion

The study offers valuable insights into the impact of perceived parental emotional immaturity on young adults' self-autonomy and emotional regulation in an Indian context. Overprotection from both parents appears to hinder autonomy, while maternal care acts as a protective factor, fostering both independence and adaptive emotional regulation. However, the lack of significant effects on emotional regulation from overprotection suggests that emotional immaturity's influence may be more specific to autonomy or that other aspects of parenting are more relevant to emotional coping. These findings highlight the importance of balanced parenting, combining warmth with autonomy support to promote healthy psychological development, particularly in cultural contexts where familial interdependence is emphasized.

VIII. Limitations

The study does not come without its limitations. First, the dependence on self-report measures introduces recall bias and subjectivity, as participants' perception of past parenting may be influenced by current emotions or social desirability. Second, the cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions, limiting insights into how these variables evolve compared to the longitudinal approach. Third, the small sample selected purposively restricts generalizability due to cultural specificity. Further, the PBI's focus on care and overprotection may not fully capture the breadth of emotional immaturity like volatility, empathy issues etc, narrowing the constructs assessment. Finally, lacking parental perspectives risks one sided data, as perceptions may not reflect actual behaviours.

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