

Exploring the Relationship between Emotional Regulation and Emotional Awareness in College Students

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Abstract

This study examined emotional awareness differences and their relationships with emotion regulation strategies among college students. Hypotheses tested group differences in emotional awareness between psychology and non-psychology students, as well as between male and female students, and associations between emotional awareness and two emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Independent samples t-tests showed no significant difference in emotional awareness between psychology and non-psychology students ($t(90) = 1.22, p = .227$, Cohen's $d = 0.254$) or between male and female students ($t(90) = 1.81, p = .074$, Cohen's $d = 0.418$), despite females and psychology students exhibiting slightly higher mean scores. Pearson correlation analyses revealed no significant relationships between emotional awareness and cognitive reappraisal ($r = -0.08, p = .449$) or expressive suppression ($r = 0.08, p = .447$). These findings suggest that emotional awareness levels do not significantly differ by academic background or gender in this sample, nor do they correlate with cognitive reappraisal or expressive suppression strategies. The results contribute to understanding the complexity of emotional awareness and its independent role relative to common emotion regulation strategies in students. Emotions are complex psychological experiences that include changes in the body, personal feelings, and visible behaviours. They help us understand what is happening around us and guide our thoughts, decisions, and actions. Emotions also influence how we interact with other people and adjust to different situations. Because emotions affect both how we think and what we do, it is essential to understand them, especially for young adults who are going through many changes physically, mentally, and socially. One key part of emotions is emotional awareness. Emotional awareness means being able to recognise and understand your own feelings, as well as the feelings of others. It involves paying attention to signals from your body, like a fast heartbeat when you are scared, and being able to tell the difference between emotions that feel

similar, like sadness and disappointment. When someone has good emotional awareness, they can think about their emotions clearly and handle them in healthy ways. This skill is an important part of emotional intelligence, which helps people respond better to emotional situations. Emotional regulation is another important part of how we deal with emotions. It means managing the way we feel and show our emotions. One well-known model by Gross (1998) describes two common strategies for emotional regulation. The first is cognitive reappraisal, where a person changes how they think about a situation to feel less negative emotions. This strategy is usually helpful. The second is expressive suppression, where a person hides their emotions and does not show them outwardly. This approach can cause problems like more stress and difficulties in relationships because emotions are not expressed or resolved. Several theories explain how emotional awareness and emotional regulation work together. Lane and Schwartz's *Levels of Emotional Awareness Theory* suggests that people who understand their emotions better are more able to regulate them effectively. Gross's *Process Model* highlights that recognising emotions early makes it easier to control them well. Mayer and Salovey's *Emotional Intelligence Theory* also point out that being aware of emotions is necessary before one can manage or regulate them well. These ideas show that emotional awareness and regulation are closely related processes that help people become emotionally strong. College students often face many challenges, such as academic pressure, social changes, and emotional difficulties. Learning about how emotional awareness and regulation influence each other in this group is important because it can help improve their emotional health and ability to cope with stress. Research studies on this topic provide useful insights.

Keywords: Relationship, Emotional Regulation, Emotional Awareness

Review of Literature

Abiya Grace Mathew (2023) researched the topic “Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress in Psychology and Non-Psychology Students”, which aims to compare the emotional , Emotional Awareness intelligence and academic stress among psychology and non-psychology students using the method correlation, linear regression, and t-test etc as a result it has been found that males have high emotional intelligence than females and there was no ration of academic stress on gender and this study showed that there is a significant difference in academic stress between psychology and non-psychology students

Stephane cote Et al (2014) researched the topic “The ability to regulate emotion is associated with greater well-being, income and socioeconomic status”, which aims to examine the individual variation in the ability to modify emotional expressive behaviour in relation to evocative stimuli which is related to well-being and financial success using the method questionnaire as a result it has been found that individuals who can suppress their emotional reaction to an acoustic article are happiest with their life and individuals who can amplify their emotional response to a disgust-eliciting disgust movie are happiest with their life and have highest disposable income and socioeconomic status, which concludes that emotion regulation strategies is closely linked to wellbeing and financial success.

Pavani Narukurthi Etal (2017) researched the topic “A study to examine the relationship Emotional Regulation and Resilience among First-year Undergraduates” which aims to examine the relationship among ER and Resilience using the method ERQ Questionnaire and BRS Scale as a result it has been found that there was a significant positive correlation among cognitive reappraisal and resilience and expressive suppression showed a negative correlation with both cognitive reappraisal and resilience, which concludes that effective life skills training program is necessary to battle various psychological in competencies.

Hill Et Al (2012) conducted a research on the topic “Mindfulness and its relationship to emotional regulation” using the method by collecting data from participants through PalmPilot device as a result mediational models indicated that relationship between mindfulness and emotional lability was mediated by emotion differentiation which concluded that people who are having mindfulness are better at identifying and differentiation their emotions and this ability helps to regulate their emotions effectively.

Gross Et Al (1995) conducted research on the topic “Emotional regulation and mental health”, which aims to study the emotion regulatory perspective which concluding with the importance of emotion regulation in the broader context of public mental health.

Richard Chambers Et Al (2009) conducted a review that aimed to integrate the constructs of mindfulness and emotion regulation using the method review analysis, which concluded that by practising a mindful approach, we can consciously choose how to respond to our emotions and can enhance our emotional skills.

Liana R.N. Schreiber Et Al (2012) conducted a study on the topic “Emotion regulation and impulsivity in young adults” which aims to understand the relationship between emotional regulation and impulsivity using the method ERQ and UPPS Impulsive behaviour scale which concluded that high emotion dysregulation group scored higher on two self-report measures of impulsivity, harm avoidance and cognitive reasoning and there was no significant differences between groups in impulsive behaviours and cognitive impulsivity which concluded that ER is an important factor to consider in assessing individuals at a higher risk for developing addiction.

Kevin N. Ochsner Et Al (2012) conducted a study on Functional imaging studies of emotion regulation: a synthetic review and evolving model of the cognitive control of emotion which aims to understand the brain mechanisms underlying emotion regulation which resulted in a model of the processes and neural systems involved in emotion generation and regulation which concluded that the model can be generalized to understand the brain mechanisms underlying other ER strategies.

Amelia Aldao Et Al (2009) conducted a research on the topic “Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: A meta-analytic review”, which examined the relationship between six ER strategies namely acceptance, avoidance, problem solving, reappraisal, rumination, and suppression with four mental health issues such as anxiety, eating disorder, depression and substance related issues using a meta analytical approach which concluded that rumination has the strongest negative impact on mental health issues, avoidance and suppression has a moderate impact on mental health, and acceptance and reappraisal often promoted in therapies like CBT and Acceptance based treatments which concluded that emotional strategies like rumination and avoidance consistently linked to internalizing disorders and thinking positively and accepting emotions didn't show a strong impact on mental health.

Kouhei Masumoto Et Al (2016) researched on the topic “Age and Gender Differences in Relationships Among Emotional Regulation, Mood, and Mental Health”, using the method SEM as a result the SEM analysis showed that older participants were having more cognitive reappraisal which further enhanced positive mood and reduced negative mood and age did not affect expressive suppression and it was found that expressive suppression had a small impact on cognitive reappraisal and in males cognitive reappraisal increased within age.

Together, these studies show a strong connection between emotional awareness and regulation. Understanding how these two aspects work in college students can help develop programs and strategies to support their emotional well-being, resilience, and positive adjustment during this important life stage.

Need and Significance of the study

In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding emotional processes among college students, particularly how they perceive and manage their emotions. Emotional awareness is considered an important factor in psychological well-being, as it helps individuals recognise, understand, and respond effectively to their emotional experiences. Similarly, emotion regulation plays a crucial role in how individuals cope with stress and adapt to changing life situations. Among young adults, especially college students, these emotional processes become highly relevant due to increasing academic pressure, social transitions, and personal challenges.

The rationale for examining emotional awareness and its relationship with emotion regulation strategies arises from previous research suggesting that individuals who are more aware of their emotions are better able to regulate them effectively. While several studies have explored emotion regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, limited research has focused on how emotional awareness is associated with these strategies, particularly among college students from different academic backgrounds.

This study is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the existing literature by examining whether emotional awareness is related to commonly used emotion regulation strategies and whether differences exist based on academic background and gender. Practically, the findings may help educators, counsellors, and mental health professionals better understand emotional functioning in students and develop interventions aimed at improving emotional skills and coping mechanisms.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine emotional awareness among psychology and non-psychology students and to explore its relationship with cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression strategies in a college student population.

Statement of the Problem

The present study aims to examine whether emotional awareness differs between psychology and non-psychology students and to determine its relationship with cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression among college students.

Definition of Key Terms

Emotional awareness is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and differentiate one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others, including the capacity to identify emotional states and reflect on them. (Lane & Schwartz, 1987)

Emotion regulation is defined as the processes through which individuals influence the emotions they experience, when they experience them, and how these emotions are expressed. (Gross, 1998)

Cognitive reappraisal is defined as an emotion regulation strategy that involves changing the way one interprets a situation in order to modify its emotional impact. (Gross & John, 2003)

Expressive suppression is defined as an emotion regulation strategy that involves inhibiting the outward expression of emotions after they have been generated. (Gross & John, 2003)

Aim

To measure and compare emotional awareness among psychology and non-psychology college students, and to examine how emotional awareness relates to emotional regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression).

Objectives

1. To measure emotional awareness in psychology and non-psychology students using the Emotional Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ).
2. To compare emotional awareness levels between psychology students and non-psychology students.

3. To measure emotional regulation strategies (reappraisal and suppression) using the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ).
4. To see whether emotional awareness is related to emotional regulation strategies among students.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a significant difference in emotional awareness between psychology and non-psychology students.
2. There is a significant difference in emotional awareness between male and female students.
3. There is no significant relationship between emotional awareness and cognitive reappraisal strategy among students.
4. There is no significant relationship between emotional awareness and expressive suppression strategy among students

Methods

Research Design

The present study used a cross-sectional, quantitative design to explore the relationship between emotional awareness and emotional regulation among college students. The data were collected once using an online Google Form, and participants were allowed to submit only a single response.

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling method was used. Only psychology and non-psychology college students were invited to participate.

Participants

A total of 92 undergraduate students participated in the study, including 45 psychology students and 47 non-psychology students; 66 females and 26 males. Basic demographic details such as age, gender, and type of student (psychology/non-psychology) were collected.

Instruments of the Study

1. **Emotional Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ)**
2. **Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)**

Emotional Awareness Questionnaire

The Emotional Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ) was developed by Rieffe et al. (2007) to assess different aspects of emotional awareness in children and adolescents, and it has been widely used with young adult populations. The scale consists of 30 items designed to measure how individuals perceive, understand, and respond to their emotions. The EAQ is structured into six dimensions: Differentiating Emotions, Verbal Sharing of Emotions, Not Hiding Emotions, Bodily Awareness of Emotions, Attending to Others' Emotions, and Analyses of Emotions. Each dimension captures a specific component of emotional awareness, such as the ability to distinguish between emotions, express them verbally, and understand emotional experiences in oneself and others. Responses are recorded on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not true") to 3 ("often true"). Some items are reverse-scored to ensure response accuracy.

Scoring

The total score of the EAQ is obtained by summing the responses across all items after reverse scoring the appropriate items. Higher scores indicate greater emotional awareness. In addition to the total score, subscale scores can also be calculated for each of the six dimensions to provide a more detailed understanding of emotional functioning. In the present study, the total EAQ score was used for analysis to represent overall emotional awareness.

Reliability and Validity

The Emotional Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ-30) has demonstrated good psychometric properties across different studies. Rieffe et al. (2007) reported acceptable internal consistency for the total scale and its subscales. Subsequent research has supported its reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values generally ranging from approximately 0.70 to 0.85 across subscales. The six-factor structure of the EAQ has been validated through factor analysis, supporting its construct validity. The scale has also shown good convergent validity with related constructs such as emotional intelligence and emotion regulation, indicating that it is a reliable and valid measure of emotional awareness.

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was developed by Gross and John (2003) to assess individual differences in the use of two common emotion regulation strategies:

cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The scale consists of 10 items, with 6 items measuring cognitive reappraisal and 4 items measuring expressive suppression. Cognitive reappraisal refers to changing the way one thinks about a situation to alter its emotional impact, whereas expressive suppression refers to inhibiting the outward expression of emotions. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). The ERQ is widely used in psychological research due to its simplicity and strong theoretical basis.

Scoring

The ERQ is scored by calculating separate totals for the two subscales. The cognitive reappraisal score is obtained by summing the responses to its six items, while the expressive suppression score is obtained by summing the responses to its four items. Higher scores indicate greater use of the respective emotion regulation strategy. In the present study, the two subscale scores were used independently, rather than combining them into a total score, as they represent distinct emotion regulation processes

Reliability and Validity

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) has demonstrated good psychometric properties across multiple studies. Gross and John (2003) reported satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha values of approximately 0.79 for cognitive reappraisal and 0.73 for expressive suppression. The two-factor structure of the ERQ has been consistently supported through factor analysis, confirming its construct validity. The scale has also shown good convergent and discriminant validity, with cognitive reappraisal generally associated with positive psychological outcomes and expressive suppression linked to less adaptive outcomes. Due to its reliability and validity, the ERQ is considered a widely accepted measure of emotion regulation strategies.

Procedure

The data was collected from undergraduate college students belonging to both psychology and non-psychology streams. For this purpose, a Google Form was prepared including all the items of the Emotional Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ) and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), along with a Personal Data Sheet. Initially, a consent form was provided to the participants explaining the purpose and details of the study. Assurance was

also given regarding the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Only those participants who agreed to take part in the study proceeded to complete the form.

The participants took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The responses collected through Google Forms were downloaded as an Excel sheet. The data were then checked and cleaned to ensure the absence of missing or inconsistent responses. Cases with incomplete data or uniform responses were excluded from the analysis. The remaining data were scored according to the guidelines of the respective scales, coded, and organized into a format suitable for statistical analysis. The dataset was then imported into Jamovi software, where appropriate statistical analyses were conducted.

Statistical Analysis

Independent Samples t-test

The independent samples t-test was used to examine differences in emotional awareness between psychology and non-psychology students, as well as between male and female students. This test is appropriate for comparing the mean scores of two independent groups when the data are normally distributed and the assumption of homogeneity of variance is met. The test determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between the group means, and the results are interpreted using the t-value, degrees of freedom, and p-value.

Pearson Correlation

Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between emotional awareness and emotion regulation strategies, specifically cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. This test is appropriate when the data are continuous and normally distributed, and it measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. The correlation coefficient (r) indicates whether the relationship is positive or negative, as well as its magnitude, while the p-value determines the statistical significance of the relationship.

Result & Discussion

This chapter consists of a description of the main research findings reached by the investigator, as well as an interpretation and significance of those findings. The results were obtained through appropriate statistical analysis of the collected data using Jamovi software. The analysis describes and summarizes the data, compare and identify the relationship between variables, and forecast outcomes. Results of the statistical procedures are discussed under various headings.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics was used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the nature of variables. Preliminary statistical procedures were conducted to examine the distribution and characteristics of the data. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize emotional awareness scores across groups. In addition, assumptions required for parametric analysis were tested, including normality and homogeneity of variances. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess whether the data were normally distributed, while Levene’s test was used to examine the equality of variances between groups. These preliminary analyses were necessary to ensure that the data met the assumptions for conducting independent samples t-tests and Pearson correlation analysis. The results of these tests are presented in Table 1, followed by descriptive statistics in Table 2.

Table 1

Tests of Normality and Homogeneity for Emotional Awareness

Test	Statistic	df	p
Shapiro–Wilk (EAQ)	0.989	-	0.646
Levene’s Test	0.634	1,90	0.428

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Awareness by Student Type

Group	N	Mean	SD
Psychology Students	45	32.6	6.26
Non-psychology Students	47	31.1	5.85

The normality of the data was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. As shown in Table 1, the results indicated that emotional awareness ($p = .646$) was not significantly different from a normal distribution ($p > .05$), suggesting that the data are normally distributed. In addition, Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances indicated that the variance between groups was not significantly different ($p = .428$, $p > .05$), confirming that the assumption of equal variances was satisfied. Descriptive statistics for emotional awareness across student groups are presented in Table 2. The results show that psychology students ($M = 32.6$, $SD = 6.26$) had slightly higher emotional awareness scores compared to non-psychology students ($M = 31.1$, $SD = 5.85$).

Relationship of Variables

The present study aims to understand the relationship of emotional awareness and emotional regulation among psychology and non-psychology students. It also tries to understand the correlation between emotional awareness and emotion regulation strategies, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.

Relationship of emotional awareness between psychology and non-psychology students

Table 3

<i>Independent Samples t-Test for Emotional Awareness by Student Major</i>							
Group	n	M	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Psychology Student	45	32.60	6.26	1.22	90	0.227	0.25
Non-Psychology student	47	31.10	5.85				

An independent samples t-test showed no significant difference in emotional awareness between psychology students and non-psychology students, $t(90) = 1.22$, $p = .227$, Cohen's $d = 0.254$. Although psychology students had a slightly higher mean EAQ score, the effect size was small, indicating a minimal practical difference. Therefore, the hypothesis that psychology students would have higher emotional awareness was not supported. The assumptions for conducting an independent samples t-test were met.

Difference in emotional awareness between male and female students

Table 4

Independent Samples t-Test for Emotional Awareness by Gender

Variable	Group Comparison	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference
Emotional Awareness	Female vs Male	1.81	90	0.074	2.51	1.39

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether emotional awareness differed between male and female students. Results indicated that the difference was not statistically significant, $t(90) = 1.81$, $p = .074$, although females showed slightly higher emotional awareness scores (Mean difference = 2.51). The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.418$) indicated a small-to-medium effect size. Therefore, H2 was not supported, and emotional awareness does not significantly differ between male and female students in this sample.

Correlation between emotional awareness and cognitive reappraisal**Table 5***Correlations Between Emotional Awareness and Cognitive Reappraisal*

Variable	1	2
Emotional awareness	-	
Cognitive reappraisal	-0.08	-

Note. N=92. P=0.449

A Pearson correlation between emotional awareness and cognitive reappraisal indicated no significant relationship, $r(90) = -.08$, $p = .449$. The confidence interval crossed zero, and the effect size was minimal, indicating a lack of association between the two variables. These results do not support the hypothesis that emotional awareness is not significantly related to the cognitive reappraisal strategy among students.

Corelation between emotional awareness and expressive suppression**Table 5***Correlation between Emotional Awareness and Expressive Suppression*

Variable	1	2
Emotional awareness	-	-
Expressive Suppression	0.08	

Note. N=92

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional awareness and expressive suppression among students. The results showed that emotional awareness was not significantly related to expressive suppression, $r(90) = .08$, $p = .447$. The 95% confidence interval (-0.127 to 0.280) crossed zero, further indicating the absence of a meaningful association between the two variables. This very small, non-significant positive correlation suggests that students' levels of emotional awareness do not predict their tendency to use expressive suppression as an emotion regulation strategy. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between emotional awareness and expressive suppression among students was supported.

Summary & Conclusion

This study examined emotional awareness and emotion regulation among psychology and non-psychology students. Four hypotheses were tested using independent samples t-tests and Pearson correlations.

First, the results showed no significant difference in emotional awareness between psychology and non-psychology students. Although psychology students had slightly higher average EAQ scores, this difference was small and not statistically meaningful.

Second, emotional awareness did not differ significantly between male and female students. Female students scored somewhat higher than males on emotional awareness, but the difference did not reach statistical significance. This means gender did not play a major role in emotional awareness levels within this sample.

Third, the relationship between emotional awareness and cognitive reappraisal was examined. The findings showed no significant correlation, suggesting that students with higher or lower emotional awareness were not more or less likely to use cognitive reappraisal as an emotion regulation strategy.

Finally, emotional awareness was also found to be unrelated to expressive suppression. The correlation was very small and non-significant, indicating that expressive suppression does not depend on a person's level of emotional awareness.

Across all analyses, the statistical assumptions of normality and equal variances were met, confirming that the tests used were appropriate. Overall, the study found that emotional awareness does not significantly differ based on academic background (psychology vs. non-psychology) or gender. Additionally, emotional awareness showed no meaningful relationship with the emotion regulation strategies of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. These findings suggest that emotional awareness among college students may be influenced by factors other than academic training in psychology or gender. Likewise, emotion regulation strategies do not appear to depend on how aware students are of their emotions.

The results highlight the complexity of emotional processes and indicate that emotional awareness and emotion regulation may function as independent constructs in this population.

Future research with larger samples or additional psychological factors may provide deeper insights into how emotional skills develop and interact among students.

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