



A Study on the Effect of Expressive Suppression and Cognitive Reappraisal in Predicting Stress and Anxiety Levels among Young Adults

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Abstract: The present study examined the relationship between emotion regulation strategies and psychological distress among young adults. Specifically, it investigated whether expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal were associated with levels of anxiety and perceived stress. A total of 120 young adults participated in the study. Standardized self-report instruments were used, including the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the relationships among the variables. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between expressive suppression and both anxiety and stress, indicating that individuals who frequently suppress emotional expression tend to experience higher levels of psychological distress. In contrast, cognitive reappraisal did not show a significant negative relationship with anxiety as hypothesized and demonstrated an unexpected positive association with stress in regression analysis. Overall, the results partially supported the proposed hypotheses and highlight the complex role of emotion regulation strategies in influencing mental health outcomes. The study contributes to the existing literature on emotion regulation and underscores the importance of examining adaptive and maladaptive strategies among young adults.

Keywords: *Expressive Suppression, Cognitive Reappraisal, Anxiety, Stress, Young Adults*

1. Introduction

“The ability to regulate emotion determines whether we remain capable of acting effectively in the face of stress and negative affect” (Gross, 2015). As James J. Gross has argued, effective emotional regulation determines whether individuals remain capable of adaptive functioning in the presence of stress and negative affect. In contemporary psychological science, the focus has shifted from simply identifying stressors to understanding the mechanisms that explain why individuals exposed to similar stressors demonstrate markedly different psychological outcomes. Emotional regulation represents one such mechanism.

Young adulthood constitutes a developmental stage uniquely characterized by instability and transition. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2000) conceptualized this period as ‘emerging adulthood’, highlighting its features of identity exploration, academic and occupational uncertainty, relational reorganization, and increased autonomy. These developmental tasks frequently coincide with heightened exposure to chronic stress and increased vulnerability to anxiety-related symptoms. However, exposure alone does not account for psychological distress. Rather, cognitive appraisal processes shape whether external demands are experienced as manageable challenges or overwhelming threats.

The theoretical foundations for understanding this distinction can be traced to the transactional model of stress proposed by Richard Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which posits that stress is determined by the individual’s appraisal of environmental demands relative to perceived coping resources. Within this framework, emotion regulation strategies directly influence appraisal processes, thereby shaping emotional and physiological outcomes.

Gross’s (1998) process model of emotion regulation provides a structured account of how individuals modulate emotional experiences across different stages of the emotion-generative sequence. Two strategies have received particular empirical attention: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Cognitive reappraisal involves altering the meaning assigned to a potentially emotion-eliciting situation before emotional responses are fully activated. Expressive suppression, in contrast, occurs after emotional activation and involves the deliberate inhibition of emotional expression.

Although both strategies aim to manage emotional experience, their psychological consequences appear to diverge significantly. In their foundational work, Gross and John (2003) demonstrated that individuals who habitually engage in cognitive reappraisal report greater positive affect, stronger interpersonal functioning, and enhanced overall well-being. Conversely, habitual use of expressive suppression was associated with diminished positive

emotion and impaired social functioning. Importantly, suppression does not appear to reduce internal emotional intensity; experimental evidence suggests that it may increase physiological arousal despite reduced outward expression (Gross, 2002). Thus, suppression may regulate appearance without regulating experience.

Meta-analytic evidence further supports this distinction. Aldao et al. (2010) found that maladaptive regulation strategies, including suppression, are reliably associated with anxiety and depressive symptomatology, whereas reappraisal demonstrates protective associations across clinical and non-clinical populations. Neurocognitive studies indicate that reappraisal engages prefrontal regulatory systems that modulate limbic activation, suggesting that it may reduce emotional reactivity at a structural level rather than merely inhibiting expression.

Despite this growing body of literature, several conceptual gaps remain. First, much of the research has focused on correlational associations rather than predictive modelling that evaluates the relative contribution of different regulation strategies to stress and anxiety outcomes. Second, given the increasing sociocultural pressures faced by young adults, including academic competition, economic uncertainty, and pervasive digital comparison, the role of emotion regulation may be even more central in contemporary cohorts. Understanding whether expressive suppression functions as a vulnerability factor and whether cognitive reappraisal serves as a protective factor within this population is therefore of both theoretical and applied importance.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to examine the independent predictive effects of expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal on stress and anxiety among young adults. By integrating the process model of emotion regulation with appraisal-based stress theory, this research aims to clarify how individual differences in habitual regulation strategies contribute to psychological distress during a critical developmental period.

1.1 Stress

Stress has a different meaning for different people under different conditions. The first and most generic definition of stress was that proposed by Hans Selye: "Stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand." Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being." Stress is the total score on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), reflecting the degree to which individuals find their lives unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded within the last month (Cohen et al., 1983).

The impact of emotional regulation on perceived stress and life satisfaction in Indian individuals aged 25-39 was examined by Agarwal and Tripathi (2024). They discovered that whereas cognitive reappraisal predicted perceived stress negatively, expressive suppression predicted it favourably. Additionally, life satisfaction was favourably predicted by reappraisal. These findings highlight the value of cognitive reappraisal as an adaptive technique that helps adult Indian populations experience less stress and have better psychological health.

Stress and anxiety are closely related concepts that influence emotional health and functioning. Stress is influenced by perceived coping skills and cognitive evaluation in addition to outside demands. Anxiety reactions are often more intense in situations that are perceived as dangerous or unpredictable. These results are influenced by emotion regulation techniques: whereas avoidance and suppression lead to anxiety and worse adjustment, adaptive techniques like cognitive reappraisal and problem-focused coping lessen the impacts of stress. Cognitive-behavioural therapies improve adaptive regulating abilities and target maladaptive judgments. These viewpoints are integrated by Powell and Enright (2016), who emphasize how improving regulation and altering stress assessments can lessen anxiety and increase emotional resilience and treatment results.

1.2 Anxiety

According to Barlow (2002) “Anxiety is a future-oriented mood state associated with preparation for possible, upcoming negative events; and fear is an alarm response to present or imminent danger (real or perceived).” According to Fanselow and Lester, “That is, anxiety corresponds to an animal's state during a potential predatory attack and fear corresponds to an animal's state during predator contact or imminent contact”. Clinically, anxiety may be described as apprehension, tension, or uneasiness arising from anticipated internal or external threats (Griffin et al., 1990).

Indian young people' cognitive emotion regulation techniques and their connections to rumination and state anxiety were the main topics of a study conducted by Batra and Hasan (2025). The study found that whereas maladaptive techniques like ruminating strongly predicted higher anxiety, positive reappraisal was significantly linked to lower state anxiety. The results support the idea that cognitive reappraisal is a useful emotion control strategy for reducing anxiety symptoms in young Indians, even though expressive suppression was not the main focus.

Anxiety disorders are closely linked to sleep problems, which function both as symptoms and risk factors. Poor sleep and anxiety influence each other bidirectionally, potentially worsening over time. Emotion regulation strategies play a key role in this

relationship. Cognitive reappraisal is generally associated with adaptive outcomes and reduced distress, whereas expressive suppression is linked to greater physiological arousal and internalizing symptoms. Although suppression has been positively associated with anxiety severity, its role in explaining sleep disturbances has been less explored. Bendall, Elton, and Hughes (2024) found that expressive suppression significantly mediated the relationship between generalized anxiety symptoms and poor sleep quality, whereas reappraisal did not. These findings highlight maladaptive regulation as a potential mechanism linking anxiety and sleep problems and suggest important targets for intervention.

1.3 Cognitive Reappraisal

Cognitive reappraisal is a form of antecedent focused emotion regulation that involves cognitively construing a potentially emotion-eliciting situation in a way that changes its emotional impact (Gross & John, 2003). According to Mauss et al. (2007) “Cognitive reappraisal involves reframing emotional events so as to decrease their emotional impact, enabling individuals to down-regulate negative feelings without physiological costs associated with some other strategies”. According to Goldin et al. (2009) “Cognitive reappraisal is a type of emotion regulation used to alter negative self-beliefs with the goal of modulating emotional reactivity.”

Indian psychology students' coping mechanisms and emotion control were studied by Mohite and Bhansali (2025). They found that cognitive reappraisal served as a buffer against avoidant coping, which is connected to increased stress, and was highly correlated with adaptive coping methods, such as emotion-focused coping. These results imply that by promoting healthier coping strategies, reappraisal may indirectly lessen stress.

Emotion regulation strongly influences how individuals respond to stress and manage negative affect. Cognitive reappraisal, reframing an emotional experience to change its impact, is associated with lower anxiety and greater resilience. In contrast, expressive suppression, which involves inhibiting emotional expression, is linked to poorer psychological adjustment. Giromini, Corgiat, Mancini, Velotti, and Avanzi (2017) examined how habitual use of these strategies relates to well-being and vulnerability to psychopathology. They found that greater reliance on adaptive strategies like reappraisal predicted lower anxiety and negative affect, whereas frequent use of suppression was associated with higher distress. Overall, this research underscores that the quality of regulation strategies is crucial and supports strengthening adaptive skills in interventions for mood and anxiety disorders.

1.4 Expressive Suppression

According to Cutuli (2014) “Expressive suppression is a response-focused strategy that intervenes once an emotion is already under way and after the behavioural responses have already been fully generated”. Expressive suppression is defined as “The inhibition of emotion expression, such that an outside observer would be unaware of an individual's internal emotional experience” (Gross, 1988). According to John and Gross (2007), “Expressive suppression is a response-focused strategy involving the continuous inhibition of emotion expressive behaviour to reduce subjective emotional experience (e.g., refraining from crying when sad).”

Babuta and Singh (2024) investigated the connection between sleep quality, perceived stress reactivity, and expressive suppression in 202 young people from India. The findings indicated that a larger dependence on expressive suppression and a higher perceived level of stress were linked to poor sleep quality. While no such variations were observed for cognitive reappraisal, gender disparities also surfaced in the use of expressive suppression. These findings point to a maladaptive pattern of regulation among young Indian people and imply that expressive repression may be associated with increased stress reactivity and worse overall functioning.

Research on anxiety in adults has extensively examined thought suppression, the conscious effort to avoid certain thoughts. In adults, suppressing unwanted thoughts can paradoxically strengthen them, known as the “rebound effect,” and has been linked to obsessive-compulsive symptoms and anxiety. Far less is known about children, whose cognitive control and emotion regulation skills are still developing. Intrusive thoughts during suppression tasks are more frequent in individuals with higher trait or state anxiety. Gaskell, Wells, and Calam (2001) studied thought suppression in children aged 7-11 and found that while children could perform suppression tasks, there was little evidence of a consistent rebound effect. However, intrusive thought frequency correlated strongly with state anxiety, highlighting anxiety's role in cognitive control early in development and emphasizing the need to adapt adult models for child populations.

2. Review of Literature

Schneider et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study examining the relationship between stressful life events and anxiety symptoms in youth, while also exploring the role of emotion dysregulation. Using a community sample of 528 participants assessed across seven waves over 18 months, the study tested whether stress predicted later anxiety or whether

anxiety generated additional stress. The findings supported the stress causation model, demonstrating that exposure to stressful life events, particularly dependent interpersonal stressors, significantly predicted subsequent increases in physical and social anxiety symptoms. In contrast, anxiety symptoms did not significantly predict later stress exposure, providing little support for a stress generation model in this sample. Additionally, specific dimensions of emotion dysregulation, such as nonacceptance of emotions and difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour during distress, were associated with higher levels of both stress and anxiety over time. However, emotion dysregulation did not moderate the relationship between stress and anxiety. These findings highlight the temporal role of stress in contributing to anxiety symptoms and emphasize the importance of emotion regulation difficulties as independent predictors of psychological distress among youth.

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was used in a groundbreaking study by Gross and John (2003) to investigate individual differences in expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal. The researchers examined the relationship between these methods and affect, interpersonal functioning, and well-being, based on James J. Gross's process model of emotion regulation. The results showed that good emotions, life satisfaction, and improved interpersonal connections were all positively correlated with cognitive reappraisal. Conversely, expressive repression was associated with worse social functioning, worse well-being, and higher negative affect. More unpleasant emotions and less emotional expressiveness were reported by those who employed suppression regularly. These results imply that while reappraisal may operate as a buffer against stress and anxiety, suppression may lead to greater psychological suffering.

John and Gross (2004) distinguished between healthy and poor emotion management techniques, building on previous research. Because cognitive reappraisal takes place early in the emotion-generative process and modifies the meaning of a situation before emotional reactions are completely triggered, the authors contended that it is generally adaptive. On the other hand, expressive suppression happens later in the process and entails preventing the expression of emotions after they have already been formed. The study underlined that suppression necessitates prolonged mental effort and could raise physiological arousal, which could result in higher stress levels. The scientists came to the conclusion that reappraisal fosters emotional well-being, whereas continuous use of suppression is linked to worse psychological health outcomes. An essential context for comprehending how various tactics could forecast stress and anxiety differently is provided by this theoretical distinction.

A thorough meta-analysis of the connection between different emotion management techniques and psychopathology was carried out by Aldao et al. (2010). To ascertain if these correlations were consistent, the study combined data from several clinical and non-clinical populations. The findings showed a high correlation between anxiety, depression, and stress-related diseases and maladaptive techniques, such as expressive repression. Conversely, there appeared to be a protective effect as cognitive reappraisal had reduced or unfavourable relationships with psychopathology. People who habitually repress their emotions are more likely to suffer from higher levels of emotional distress, according to the meta-analytic research. These results provide credence to the predictive function of emotion management techniques in predicting the consequences of stress and anxiety in young adults.

Moore et al. (2008) looked at the relationship between stress-related symptoms and expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal. In addition to measuring symptoms of anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder, the researchers evaluated the participants' habitual use of these techniques. The findings showed a favourable correlation between expressive inhibition and indicators of stress, such as elevated anxiety. Cognitive reappraisal, on the other hand, was either unrelated to these symptoms or negatively connected to them. According to the study's findings, reappraisal may lessen emotional distress, but suppression may make stress and anxiety worse. Young adults who often deal with social and academic challenges may find these findings especially pertinent, as emotion control techniques are important indicators of mental health outcomes.

A comprehensive review by Dryman and Heimberg (2018) looked at how emotion management techniques relate to depression and social anxiety. The review concentrated on the roles that cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression play in people with anxiety-related illnesses. The results showed that expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal were less common among people with higher levels of social anxiety. Reappraisal was linked to less intense symptoms, while suppression was linked to more severe anxiety and symptom maintenance. The authors came to the conclusion that anxiety disorders may persist as a result of maladaptive regulation techniques. This study emphasizes how crucial it is to look at emotion control as a predictor of young people's anxiety levels.

A neurobiological review of expressive repression and cognitive reappraisal was given by Cutuli (2014). The review looked at the brain correlates of different techniques for regulating emotions. The results showed that cognitive reappraisal decreases emotional reactivity by activating prefrontal cortex areas linked to cognitive control and lowering amygdala activation. Conversely, expressive repression may heighten physiological stress

reactions and may not substantially decrease amygdala activation. The author came to the conclusion that whereas suppression may lead to elevated stress and anxiety because of ongoing physiological arousal, reappraisal is typically more successful in controlling emotional reactions. The idea that reappraisal serves as an adaptive strategy and that suppression may be a predictor of increased stress and anxiety is further supported by these neurobiological findings.

Kakollu, Haroon, and Joseph (2026) carried out a comprehensive cross-sectional study with 1628 young adult students from metropolitan Indian higher education institutions, to investigate emotion management techniques and mental health outcomes following COVID-19. Through the use of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), they discovered that cognitive reappraisal was linked to improved psychological well-being while expressive suppression was positively connected with psychological distress, suggesting that these two strategies have protective benefits against stress. Significant geographical and gender disparities in the application of these tactics were also noted by the study. These results are consistent with research on emotion regulation from throughout the world and highlight how important adaptive regulation techniques like reappraisal are in lowering adverse emotional outcomes in young adults from India.

Emotional control and sleep quality are increasingly recognized as interconnected factors influencing anxiety and depression across the lifespan. Affective neuroscience models suggest sleep supports neural circuits linking the prefrontal cortex and amygdala, which regulate emotional responses. Poor sleep, such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, heightens emotional reactivity, weakens cognitive control, and impairs adaptive regulation. Emotion regulation, the ability to monitor and modify emotional responses, is essential for managing stress. Adaptive strategies like cognitive reappraisal are linked to better outcomes, whereas maladaptive strategies like suppression predict greater distress. Alfano and Gamble (2020) found that poor sleep and emotion regulation difficulties independently and interactively predicted anxiety and depression in youth, highlighting the importance of addressing both sleep and regulation in prevention and treatment efforts.

How people react to stress and control unpleasant emotions is influenced by their emotion regulation techniques. Better psychological outcomes, such as reduced anxiety and increased resilience, are regularly associated with cognitive reappraisal, which is rephrasing an emotional experience to change its impact. On the other hand, worse adjustment and more distress are linked to expressive suppression, which is the repression of emotional expression. Giromini, Corgiat, Mancini, Velotti, and Avanzi (2017) investigated the relationship between

psychopathology susceptibility and well-being when these interventions are used consistently. According to their findings, frequent use of maladaptive methods like suppression was associated with increased psychological distress, while greater reliance on adaptive tactics like reappraisal predicted reduced anxiety and negative affect. Overall, this research highlights that the quality of emotion regulation strategies, rather than their mere use, significantly influences emotional health and supports targeting adaptive skills in interventions for anxiety and mood disorders.

3. Methodology

3.1 Purpose

The aim of this study is to understand the effect of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression in predicting the stress and anxiety levels among young adults.

3.2 Hypothesis

There will be a significant positive relationship between expressive suppression and anxiety levels among young adults.

There will be a significant positive relationship between expressive suppression and stress levels among young adults.

There will be a significant negative relationship between cognitive reappraisal and anxiety levels among young adults.

There will be a significant negative relationship between cognitive reappraisal and stress levels among young adults.

3.3 Sample

A total sample of 120 young adults between the age of 18 to 25 was collected from Delhi NCR.

3.4 Measures

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ): The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire was used to measure the strategies individuals use to regulate their emotions, specifically cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The scale was developed by James J. Gross and Oliver P. John (2003). The scale consists of 10 items and is measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The items are marked as 1- Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Somewhat disagree, 4 - Neither agree nor disagree, 5 - Somewhat agree, 6 - Agree, and 7 - Strongly agree. The scale includes two subscales: cognitive reappraisal (6 items) and expressive suppression (4 items). Higher scores indicate greater use of the respective emotion regulation strategy.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7): The Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) was used to measure the severity of anxiety symptoms among participants. The scale was developed by Robert L. Spitzer, Kurt Kroenke, Janet B. W. Williams, and Bernd Löwe (2006). The scale consists of 7 items and is measured on a 4-point Likert scale. The items are marked as 0 - Not at all, 1 - Several days, 2 - More than half the days, and 3 - Nearly every day. Higher scores indicate greater severity of anxiety symptoms.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): The Perceived Stress Scale was used to measure the degree to which individuals perceive situations in their life as stressful. The scale was developed by Sheldon Cohen, Tom Kamarck, and Robin Mermelstein (1983). The scale consists of 10 items and is measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The items are marked as 0 - Never, 1 - Almost never, 2 - Sometimes, 3 - Fairly often, and 4 - Very often. Some items are positively stated and are reverse scored. Higher scores indicate higher perceived stress levels.

3.5 Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of research and the questionnaires were filled through google forms. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation and kind help. Standardised tests were administered on the participants.

4. Results

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics*

	Stress	Anxiety	Cognitive Reappraisal	Expressive Suppression
N	120	120	120	120
Mean	24.6	10.4	35.4	19.6
Standard deviation	10.7	7.11	12.3	8.07
Minimum	6	0	12	4
Maximum	70	39	72	49
Skewness	1.33	1.37	0.863	0.965
Std. error skewness	0.221	0.221	0.221	0.221
Kurtosis	2.96	2.78	0.505	1.68
Std. error kurtosis	0.438	0.438	0.438	0.438
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.914	0.900	0.938	0.946
Shapiro-Wilk p	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

N = Sample size, *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

The descriptive statistics of the study variables - stress, anxiety, cognitive reappraisal, and expressive suppression, are presented in Table 1. The table includes the sample size (*N*), mean scores (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), minimum and maximum values, as well as measures of distribution such as skewness, kurtosis, and the Shapiro–Wilk test of normality.

The mean stress score was 24.6 (*SD* = 10.7), while the mean anxiety score was 10.4 (*SD* = 7.11). The mean score for cognitive reappraisal was 35.4 (*SD* = 12.3), and the mean expressive suppression score was 19.6 (*SD* = 8.07). The observed minimum and maximum values indicate adequate variability in responses across all variables.

Skewness values ranged from 0.863 to 1.37, suggesting a positive skew in all variables, meaning that more participants scored toward the lower to moderate range. Kurtosis values ranged from 0.505 to 2.96, indicating varying degrees of peakiness in the distributions, with stress and anxiety showing relatively higher kurtosis.

The Shapiro–Wilk test of normality was statistically significant ($p < .001$) for all variables, indicating deviation from normal distribution. However, given the large sample size ($N = 120$), parametric tests such as Pearson's correlation and linear regression were considered appropriate.

Table 2: *Correlation Matrix*

Variable	Stress	Anxiety	Cognitive Reappraisal	Expressive Suppression
Stress	—	.668***	.170	.454***
Anxiety	.668***	—	-.036	.549***
Cognitive Reappraisal	.170	-.036	—	-.030
Expressive Suppression	.454***	.549***	-.030	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The correlation coefficients between stress, anxiety, cognitive reappraisal, and expressive suppression are presented in Table 2. The coefficients indicate both the direction and strength of relationships among the variables.

The results revealed a significant positive relationship between stress and anxiety ($r = .668$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher stress levels were associated with higher anxiety levels. Stress was also significantly and positively correlated with expressive suppression ($r = .454$, p

$< .001$). Similarly, anxiety showed a significant positive relationship with expressive suppression ($r = .549$, $p < .001$).

However, cognitive reappraisal did not show a statistically significant relationship with stress ($r = .170$, $p = .063$) or anxiety ($r = -.036$, $p = .696$). Additionally, no significant relationship was found between cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression ($r = -.030$, $p = .744$).

Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3: *Model Fit Measures for Stress*

Model	R ²
1	.240

The linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression significantly predicted stress levels. The model explained 24% of the variance in stress ($R^2 = .240$), indicating that the predictors accounted for a moderate proportion of variability in stress scores among participants.

Table 4: *Regression Coefficients for Stress*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	Standardized β
Intercept	6.994	3.4156	2.05	.043	—
Cognitive Reappraisal	0.161	0.0705	2.28	.024	.184
Expressive Suppression	0.610	0.1070	5.70	$< .001$	.460

The regression coefficients presented in Table 4 indicate that expressive suppression was a significant positive predictor of stress ($\beta = .460$, $p < .001$). This suggests that higher use of expressive suppression was associated with higher stress levels. Cognitive reappraisal was also found to be a statistically significant positive predictor of stress ($\beta = .184$, $p = .024$), although its predictive strength was comparatively smaller. These findings suggest that both emotion regulation strategies contributed significantly to stress, with expressive suppression emerging as the stronger predictor.

Table 5: *Model Fit Measures for Anxiety*

Model	R ²
1	.302

A separate linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression predicted anxiety levels. The model explained 30.2%

of the variance in anxiety ($R^2 = .302$), indicating that the predictors accounted for a substantial proportion of variability in anxiety scores.

Table 6: *Regression Coefficients for Anxiety*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	Standardized β
Intercept	1.3716	2.1750	0.631	.530	—
Cognitive Reappraisal	-0.0113	0.0449	-0.252	.801	-.019
Expressive Suppression	0.4834	0.0681	7.094	< .001	.548

The regression coefficients shown in Table 6 indicate that expressive suppression was a significant positive predictor of anxiety ($\beta = .548$, $p < .001$), suggesting that greater use of expressive suppression was associated with higher anxiety levels. However, cognitive reappraisal did not significantly predict anxiety ($\beta = -.019$, $p = .801$). These findings suggest that expressive suppression plays a significant role in predicting anxiety, whereas cognitive reappraisal does not have a statistically significant impact on anxiety in the present study.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the associations between emotion regulation strategies, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, and levels of stress and anxiety among young adults. The descriptive findings indicated that participants experienced moderate levels of perceived stress and anxiety, along with varying use of both regulation strategies. This suggests that emotion regulation processes are actively engaged within this population and may play a meaningful role in emotional well-being.

Consistent with existing psychological research done by Schneider et al. (2020), a strong positive relationship was observed between stress and anxiety. This finding reinforces the conceptual overlap between these constructs, as heightened stress is often accompanied by increased physiological arousal, worry, and emotional tension, all of which contribute to anxiety symptoms. The magnitude of this relationship suggests that stress and anxiety may operate in a mutually reinforcing manner within young adults.

With respect to the proposed hypotheses, the results offered partial support. As anticipated, expressive suppression was positively and significantly related to both stress and anxiety. Participants who reported greater use of emotional suppression also experienced higher levels of psychological distress. This finding is in line with theoretical explanations of emotion regulation proposed by Kakollu, Haroon, and Joseph (2026), which suggest that although suppression may reduce visible emotional expression, it does not effectively decrease

the underlying emotional experience. Over time, consistently inhibiting emotional responses may increase internal tension and psychological burden, thereby contributing to heightened stress and anxiety levels. Similarly, neurobiological perspectives, such as those discussed by Cutculi (2003), indicate that suppression may activate stress-related neural pathways, further explaining its association with increased distress.

On the other hand, the hypotheses predicting significant negative relationships between cognitive reappraisal and both stress and anxiety were not supported. Cognitive reappraisal was not significantly associated with anxiety, and its relationship with stress did not reflect the expected negative pattern in correlational analysis. These findings differ from earlier research by Kakollu, Haroon, and Joseph (2026) and Cutculi (2003), which suggested a protective role of reappraisal. The present results imply that the influence of reappraisal on emotional distress may be more complex than previously understood. Although commonly regarded as an adaptive strategy, its effectiveness may vary depending on contextual circumstances, individual characteristics, or the degree of flexibility in its application. Simply employing reappraisal may not adequately alleviate distress, particularly when individuals are confronted with chronic or intense stressors.

The regression analyses further clarified these patterns. Expressive suppression emerged as a significant predictor of both stress and anxiety, even when accounting for cognitive reappraisal, which was also found in the study done by Moore et al. (2008). This indicates that suppression plays a particularly influential role in emotional distress within this sample. The predictive strength of suppression suggests that difficulties in openly processing or expressing emotions may increase vulnerability to both stress and anxiety symptoms.

Cognitive reappraisal, however, did not significantly predict anxiety and showed only limited predictive value for stress. This may indicate that anxiety, especially in young adults, is influenced more strongly by chronic cognitive tendencies such as worry or hypervigilance rather than by deliberate attempts to reinterpret emotional situations. It is also possible that participants used reappraisal inconsistently or in situations where it was less effective.

The findings partially supported the proposed hypotheses. As hypothesized, expressive suppression showed a significant positive relationship with both stress and anxiety, supporting the view that suppression is associated with heightened emotional distress. However, the hypotheses predicting a significant negative relationship between cognitive reappraisal and both stress and anxiety were not supported. Cognitive reappraisal did not significantly predict anxiety and showed an unexpected positive association with stress. These findings suggest that

the role of cognitive reappraisal may be more complex and context-dependent than initially assumed.

Overall, the findings highlight the differential impact of emotion regulation strategies on psychological outcomes. Whereas expressive suppression appears to be consistently associated with higher distress, cognitive reappraisal may function in a more nuanced and context-dependent manner. These results contribute to a growing body of research emphasizing that not all regulation strategies yield equally beneficial outcomes.

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Although the sample size was adequate, the cross-sectional design restricts conclusions regarding causality. It cannot be determined whether suppression leads to greater distress or whether individuals experiencing distress are more likely to suppress emotions. Additionally, cultural norms regarding emotional expression may influence how suppression functions within this population. Future research could explore longitudinal relationships and examine moderating variables such as personality traits, coping styles, or social support.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationships between stress, anxiety, and two key emotion regulation strategies in young adults. The findings revealed a strong association between stress and anxiety, reinforcing the close connection between these emotional experiences.

Expressive suppression emerged as a significant and consistent predictor of both stress and anxiety, suggesting that habitual inhibition of emotional expression may contribute to greater psychological distress. In contrast, cognitive reappraisal did not demonstrate the expected protective relationship with anxiety and showed limited influence on stress. These results indicate that the effectiveness of emotion regulation strategies may vary depending on the nature of the emotional outcome being examined.

The study adds to the understanding of how different emotion regulation processes relate to mental health outcomes in young adults. It underscores the potential risks associated with reliance on expressive suppression and highlights the need to consider the contextual and individual factors that shape the effectiveness of cognitive reappraisal.

Despite its contributions, the study's findings should be interpreted in light of its limitations, including the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-report measures. Future research employing longitudinal designs and more diverse samples would help clarify the directionality of these relationships and enhance generalizability.

In summary, the findings emphasize the complexity of emotional regulation and its influence on psychological well-being. By gaining a clearer understanding of how specific regulation strategies relate to stress and anxiety, future interventions can be better tailored to promote healthier emotional functioning among young adults.

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