



Emotion Labeling in Relation to Resilience: The Mediating Role of Sense of Control

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between emotion labeling, sense of control, and resilience among young adults ($N = 100$, aged 18–30), with sense of control examined as a potential mediator. Standardized self-report questionnaires measured all three variables. Regression and mediation analyses revealed that emotion labeling was a weak and non-significant predictor of resilience ($R^2 = 0.026$, $p = .106$), though it significantly predicted sense of control ($B = 0.401$, $p < .01$). Sense of control did not significantly predict resilience and did not mediate the emotion labeling–resilience relationship. Pearson correlations confirmed a weak positive association between emotion labeling and resilience ($r = .162$) and a moderate positive association between emotion labeling and sense of control ($r = .337$), while sense of control and resilience were essentially unrelated ($r = -.011$). These findings indicate that resilience is shaped by multiple factors beyond emotion labeling and underscore the need for future research incorporating self-efficacy, social support, and coping strategies.

Keywords: *Emotional Labeling, Sense of Control, Resilience, Young Adults, Emotion Regulation, Mediation Analysis.*

1. Introduction

A person's ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions is central to psychological well-being. Emotion labeling — also called affect labeling — refers to the practice of naming one's emotional states (e.g., "I feel anxious" or "I feel angry"). This seemingly simple act translates subjective emotional experience into language and, in doing so, modulates how emotions are processed. Neuroscientific evidence shows that labeling emotions decreases amygdala reactivity while increasing activity in the prefrontal cortex, thereby engaging cognitive control and reducing emotional intensity (Lieberman et al., 2007; Torre & Lieberman, 2018). Individuals who label emotions effectively tend to demonstrate stronger emotional regulation, better coping, and improved psychological well-being overall (Barrett et al., 2001; Fitzpatrick et al., 2019; Lindquist et al., 2024).

Resilience — defined as the capacity to adapt, recover, and maintain well-being in the face of adversity — is a dynamic process rather than a fixed trait (Masten, 2001). Resilient individuals manage stress effectively, sustain mental health under pressure, and find constructive ways to respond to setbacks (Southwick et al., 2011). Emotion labeling may support resilience by enabling individuals to understand and regulate their emotional responses; however, resilience is multiply determined, encompassing emotional competence, self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility, and social support (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Southwick et al., 2014).

Sense of control — the conviction that one's own actions shape life outcomes rather than chance or fate — is another key psychological resource for resilience (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Ross & Mirowsky, 2013). People with a stronger sense of control are more likely to engage in active coping, persist through hardship, and experience less psychological distress (Meier et al., 2026; Zimmerman, 2000). Theoretical reasoning suggests that emotion labeling may foster a sense of control by clarifying emotional experience and supporting deliberate self-regulation — and that this sense of control may in turn promote resilience. The present study tested this mediation model in young adults, a population characterized by heightened psychosocial demands and thus particularly relevant to understanding resilience processes.

2. Literature Review

A growing body of research has examined the interplay between emotional processes, sense of control, and resilience. Surzykiewicz et al. (2022) studied 251 adolescents (mean age

16.85) and found a direct positive association between emotional control and resilience ($B = 0.061$, $p < .001$), with self-esteem and perceived social support serving as significant serial mediators. These results underscore that emotional regulation capacities relate to resilience, but that this relationship is moderated by self-evaluative and social factors.

Zhi and Derakhshan (2024) investigated 430 Chinese EFL teachers and found that resilience and emotion regulation were strong, positive predictors of psychological well-being, and that self-efficacy beliefs mediated the relationship between these variables and well-being. Their study extends the emotion–resilience link into professional adult populations and highlights self-efficacy — a form of perceived control — as a key pathway.

Yang et al. (2024) examined 765 Chinese undergraduates and found that self-control positively predicted learning engagement through chain mediation by resilience and positive emotions. This work suggests that self-regulatory capacities influence resilience indirectly, through affective pathways, rather than directly.

Mouatsou and Koutra (2023) investigated emotion regulation and resilience in 390 emerging adults (mean age 20.64). They found that cognitive reappraisal positively predicted resilience, while expressive suppression was negatively associated with it; both relationships were fully mediated by self-esteem. These findings position self-esteem as a critical bridge between emotional regulation and resilient outcomes — and suggests that sense of control, a related construct, may play a comparable mediating role.

Okur et al. (2025) conducted a longitudinal study among 219 Turkish adults in the aftermath of the 2023 earthquake, using a cross-lagged panel design with two measurement points. They found that difficulties in emotion regulation were associated with poorer mental health, with resilience and psychological distress serving as mediators across time. This study highlights the temporal dynamics of emotional regulation and resilience and underscores the importance of integrated interventions.

Jesline et al. (2025) investigated 667 neglected adolescents in institutional homes and found that negative meta-emotions worsened emotional regulation difficulties, with resilience as a significant mediator. Positive meta-emotions were associated with fewer regulation problems, suggesting that emotional awareness and labeling may serve protective functions for vulnerable populations.

Taken together, these studies converge on several conclusions: emotion regulation

processes are consistently linked with resilience, but rarely in a direct, unmediated fashion. Self-esteem, self-efficacy, positive emotions, and social support frequently serve as mediating or moderating variables. The specific role of sense of control as a mediator between emotion labeling and resilience has not been directly tested, and the present study addresses this gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim and Hypotheses

This study aimed to examine the association between emotion labeling and resilience among young adults, and to determine whether sense of control mediates this relationship. Three hypotheses were tested:

H1: Emotion labeling predicts resilience among young adults.

H2: Sense of control mediates the relationship between emotion labeling and resilience.

H3: There is a positive relationship among emotion labeling, sense of control, and resilience.

3.2 Sample and Procedure

One hundred young adults (aged 18–30; both males and females) were recruited via convenience sampling. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants completed standardized self-report questionnaires in a single session, responding honestly to each item after careful reading. Data were collected, compiled, and analyzed while preserving participant confidentiality.

3.3 Measures

Emotion labeling was assessed using the Emotion Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ; Rieffe et al., 2008), a 30-item scale rated on a 3-point Likert scale (“not true” to “true”; $\alpha \approx 0.80$). Sense of control was measured with the Sense of Control Scale (Lachman & Weaver, 1998), a 12-item instrument assessing personal mastery and perceived constraints, rated on a 7-point Likert scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.70$ – 0.85). Resilience was assessed using the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale – 10 items (CD-RISC-10; Connor & Davidson, 2003), rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = completely false to 4 = true most of the time; $\alpha \approx 0.85$).

3.4 Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, simple regression, and a three-path mediation analysis following the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach.

All analyses were conducted using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Mediation was assessed by examining whether (a) the predictor significantly predicted the mediator, (b) the mediator significantly predicted the outcome, and (c) the predictor–outcome relationship was attenuated when the mediator was included.

4. Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Variables*

Variable	M	SD	N
Emotion Labeling	71.60	10.09	100
Resilience	19.35	14.35	100
Sense of Control	43.35	12.02	100

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the three study variables. Emotion labeling scores ($M = 71.60$, $SD = 10.09$) indicated a moderate to moderately high level of emotional awareness across the sample. Resilience scores ($M = 19.35$, $SD = 14.35$) reflected substantial variability in participants' capacity to manage adversity. Sense of control scores ($M = 43.35$, $SD = 12.02$) indicated a moderate level of perceived agency over life circumstances. All three variables were measured across a consistent sample of 100 participants.

H1: Emotion Labeling as a Predictor of Resilience

Table 2: *Regression Analysis – Emotion Labeling Predicting Resilience*

Multiple R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F (1, 98)	p
0.162	0.026	0.016	2.65	.106

To test H1, a simple regression was conducted with emotion labeling as the predictor and resilience as the outcome. Results indicated that the overall model was not statistically significant ($F(1, 98) = 2.65$, $p = .106$). Emotion labeling accounted for only 2.6% of variance in resilience ($R^2 = 0.026$), and the weak positive correlation ($R = 0.162$) suggests a modest but unreliable association. H1 is not supported: emotion labeling is not a significant predictor of resilience in this sample.

H2: Sense of Control as a Mediator**Table 3: Mediation Analysis – Regression Paths**

Model / Path	Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Model 1 (Path c)	Emotion Labeling → Resilience	0.231	0.142	1.629	.107
Model 2 (Path a)	Emotion Labeling → Sense of Control	0.401	0.113	3.544	.001
Model 3 (Path b)	Sense of Control → Resilience	−0.089	0.127	−0.703	.484
Model 3 (Path c')	Emotion Labeling → Resilience	0.267	0.151	1.766	.080

A mediation analysis was conducted following the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach. Path c (total effect) showed that emotion labeling did not significantly predict resilience ($B = 0.231$, $p = .107$). Path a demonstrated that emotion labeling significantly predicted sense of control ($B = 0.401$, p

$< .001$), indicating that individuals more skilled at labeling their emotions also report stronger perceived agency. However, Path b revealed that sense of control did not significantly predict resilience ($B = -0.089$, $p = .484$). Consequently, the direct effect (Path c') remained non-significant ($p = .080$). As sense of control did not predict resilience, the condition for mediation was not met. H2 is rejected: sense of control does not mediate the relationship between emotion labeling and resilience.

H3: Correlations Among Emotion Labeling, Sense of Control, and Resilience**Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix**

Variable	1	2	3
1. Emotion Labeling	—		
2. Resilience	.162	—	
3. Sense of Control	.337**	−.011	—

** $p < .01$

Pearson correlations revealed a weak positive association between emotion labeling and resilience ($r = .162$), suggesting a modest tendency for individuals with higher emotional labeling ability to report slightly greater resilience. A moderate positive correlation was found between

emotion labeling and sense of control ($r = .337$, $p < .01$), indicating that those who label emotions more effectively also perceive stronger agency over their lives. Conversely, sense of control and resilience were essentially unrelated ($r = -.011$). H3 is partially supported: emotion labeling is positively associated with both resilience and sense of control, but the expected positive relationship between sense of control and resilience was not observed.

5. Discussion

This study examined whether emotion labeling predicts resilience among young adults and whether sense of control mediates this relationship. The findings did not support a direct or mediated pathway from emotion labeling to resilience. The most robust finding was a moderate positive correlation between emotion labeling and sense of control, suggesting that emotional clarity contributes meaningfully to perceived agency, even when it does not translate directly into resilience.

The weak association between emotion labeling and resilience is consistent with perspectives that view resilience as a multiply determined outcome. Surzykiewicz et al. (2022) showed that the emotion regulation–resilience link in adolescents was moderated by self-esteem and social support, while Mouatsou and Koutra (2023) found that self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between emotion regulation strategies and resilience in emerging adults. These findings suggest that emotional awareness may support resilience indirectly, through intermediate psychological resources not captured in the present model. Similarly, Zhi and Derakhshan (2024) demonstrated that self-efficacy — a close conceptual relative of sense of control — mediated the relationship between emotional regulation and well-being, although in a positive direction, unlike the null result obtained here for sense of control and resilience.

The absence of a significant relationship between sense of control and resilience is unexpected given established findings (Ross & Mirowsky, 2013; Zimmerman, 2000). Several explanations merit consideration. First, the sample was relatively small ($N = 100$), limiting statistical power to detect modest effects. Second, the CD-RISC-10 may have a relatively restricted variance ceiling in community samples of young adults not currently facing acute stressors, potentially attenuating correlations. Third, the cross-sectional design cannot rule out the possibility that the relationship between sense of control and resilience manifests over time or emerges in response to significant adversity — a possibility that longitudinal designs, such as that

of Okur et al. (2025), would be better positioned to detect.

The positive relationship between emotion labeling and sense of control is theoretically meaningful and consistent with affect labeling research (Lieberman et al., 2007). When individuals can name and articulate their emotional states, they may experience greater mastery over their internal world — a form of emotional self-efficacy that contributes to perceived agency. This finding suggests that even if emotion labeling does not directly boost resilience in young adults, it may still serve an important psychological function by strengthening the sense of control, which under different conditions or with different outcome measures might relate to adaptive functioning.

6. Conclusion

The present study found that emotion labeling is not a significant predictor of resilience among young adults and that sense of control does not mediate this relationship. A positive and significant association between emotion labeling and sense of control was the most notable finding, suggesting that emotional clarity supports perceived agency. Resilience appears to be shaped by a broader constellation of psychological resources — including coping strategies, social support, self-efficacy, and personal strengths — that future research should investigate in tandem. These results carry practical implications for mental health and educational interventions: while building emotion labeling skills may not directly boost resilience, it may strengthen related competencies, particularly perceived control, that contribute to adaptive functioning over time. Longitudinal studies with larger, more diverse samples and richer variable sets are needed to clarify the mechanisms linking emotional awareness to resilient outcomes.

6.1 Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample size ($N = 100$) limits statistical power and may have precluded detection of small but meaningful effects. The convenience sampling approach and restricted age range (18–30) limit generalizability to other populations and age groups. Exclusive reliance on self-report questionnaires introduces potential response bias; future studies would benefit from incorporating behavioral or observational measures. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inference: it is not possible to determine whether emotion labeling leads to greater sense of control or vice versa. Finally, important variables such as social support, self-efficacy, coping strategies, and optimism were not assessed; their inclusion in

future research may clarify the pathways through which emotional awareness relates to resilience.

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