



Exploring Disparities in Emotional Regulation among School Aged Children: A Comparative Study between Urban Impoverished and Non-Impoverished Areas

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ABSTRACT

The current research study investigates the differences in emotional regulation between school aged children living in urban impoverished and non-impoverished areas, with a particular emphasis on cognitive reappraisal and suppression as key variables. The study used Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ-CA) on a sample size of 200 children and adolescents; 100 from both socioeconomic situations to examine differences, using independent samples t-tests in emotional control mechanisms across these groups. The research shows a significant difference in cognitive reappraisal scores ($t = -2.735$, $df = 198$, $p = 0.007$), showing a distinct lack of cognitive reappraisal skills among persons from urban poverty areas compared to their

non-impooverished counterparts. In contrast, the evaluation of suppression scores produces no significant difference ($t = 0.725$, $df = 198$, $p = 0.469$) between the two groups. Socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in understanding and treating emotional development challenges among children and adolescents, as there are significant differences in emotional regulation across different strata.

Key words: *Emotional Regulation, Cognitive Reappraisal, Suppression, Children and Adolescents, Comparative study: Urban impooverished vs Non-impooverished areas.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The current study was conducted as a need to shed light on the disparities in emotional regulation of children and adolescents residing in the urban and the rural sector. There are lesser number of researches that talk about the differences in the emotional expression among the two groups that are the children and adolescents from the urban sector and the rural sector.

Children's emotional well-being is a crucial element of their overall development, significantly influencing their cognitive, social, and psychological growth. However, the socio-economic context in which children grow up can play a crucial role in shaping their emotional expression.

Emotional regulation refers to the methods by which humans control their own emotional experiences, including how they feel and express emotions. This talent is vital for healthy child and adolescent development, since it influences practically all areas of life—from social interactions and school achievement to mental well-being and physical health. The development of emotional regulation is controlled by a complex combination of biological predispositions, social interactions, and environmental factors. For children and teenagers, the

ability to control emotions successfully benefits in negotiating the social difficulties of school contexts, contributes to the development of resilience, and boosts problem-solving abilities. Poor emotional control may lead to a variety of psychological difficulties, including anxiety, sadness, and behavioural troubles. Therefore, gaining a knowledge of how emotions are regulated throughout these formative years is essential for gaining crucial insights into developmental psychology and laying the groundwork for treatments that might improve developmental outcomes across a variety of life domains.

Investigating regional differences in emotional regulation is essential for several reasons. First, disparities in emotional regulation capabilities can lead to unequal educational outcomes, as children who better manage their emotions are often more successful in academic settings, exhibiting greater attention, higher motivation, and better adaptation to school life. Additionally, emotional regulation influences mental health; inadequate emotional control can increase vulnerability to various mental health disorders, which are often more challenging to address in regions with limited healthcare resources. Furthermore, understanding these regional disparities is vital for social integration, as children with better emotional regulation are more likely to form healthy relationships and participate effectively in community life. By exploring how emotional regulation varies between urban and rural environments, this study aims to uncover underlying factors that contribute to these differences, potentially guiding targeted policies and programs that can reduce educational and health inequalities.

The fundamental purpose of this comparative research is to investigate and get an understanding of the differences in the processes of emotional regulation that are shown by children and adolescents who live in urban as opposed to rural settings. The purpose of this research is to determine the particular methods of emotional regulation that are used by young people in these varied circumstances, as well as to assess the efficacy of these methods in a variety of socio-economic and cultural settings. In addition, the purpose of this research is to

investigate the impact that environmental elements, such as educational facilities, community support networks, and family dynamics, have in determining the results of emotional regulation. The study expects that by doing so, it will be able to give insights that can be put into action about how treatments may be adapted to diverse geographical settings in order to improve the emotional and developmental health of children and adolescents. In order to design comprehensive and context-sensitive interventions that support the emotional and general developmental health of young people living in a variety of situations, it is essential to have this knowledge.

Emotional regulation, or the ability to successfully manage and express emotions (Gross, 2015), is a critical component of mental and physical well-being, influencing our ability to deal with stress, maintain good relationships, and achieve goals (Eisenberg & Morris, 2002). Understanding how environmental influences affect emotional regulation is critical for fostering mental health equity among diverse communities. This study looks at potential differences in emotional regulation mechanisms between those living in rural and urban environments.

While some study suggests no significant difference in total emotional intelligence ratings between rural and urban people (Grewal et al., 2012), this may not be the complete story. Other research suggests differences in certain components of emotional intelligence, such as emotional stability and stress management (Mushtaq & Bhat, 2012). This disparity could be attributed to a variety of variables. For instance, rural environments may have stronger social support networks that buffer against stress (Evans, 2006), potentially leading to different emotional regulation strategies than urban environments with higher anonymity and social isolation (Kawachi & Berkman, 2003). Conversely, rural areas may have limited access to mental health resources, which could necessitate the development of alternative coping mechanisms (Liu et al., 2017).

This study intends to shed light on how different social structures, stresses, and support systems in rural and urban areas influence the specific ways people control their emotions. This information can lead to a better understanding of the elements that influence emotional regulation, ultimately informing the creation of more effective therapies for enhancing mental well-being in varied populations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional regulation and Environmental factors

Valentine and McKendrick (1997) disclosed parental worries about children's perceptions and safety, which affects how children play outside. Safety worries and changing perspectives have a big influence on how people grow emotionally. Pretty et al. (2003) investigated how feeling off place affects the identity of rural residents, emphasizing the distinctions between adults and adolescents. Comprehending the attachment to location is crucial for comprehending emotional control in various environmental settings. Huang et al. (2023) investigated the differences between Chinese adolescent populations in rural and urban areas with regard to bullying victimization and depressed symptoms, emphasizing the impact of environmental factors on mental well-being. Ltifi et al. (2024) investigated the movement patterns of pre-schoolers in Tunisia that differ between urban and rural areas, highlighting the significance of sleep and physical exercise in fostering emotional well-being at a young age.

Guidelines and Intervention Techniques for Mental Health:

Comprehensive diagnostic and treatment guidelines for suicidal behaviour in children and adolescents are emphasized by Ohayon et al. (2000). Promoting emotional well-being requires addressing community intervention techniques and emergency management. The usefulness of trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (TF-CBT) and cognitive-

behavioural therapy (CBT) in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children is highlighted by Dyregrov and Yule (2006). Obstacles in researching background variables affect the effectiveness of interventions. Lim et al. (2019) highlights the need for focused treatments to address mental health disparities by identifying factors influencing suicidal behaviour and self-harm among children and adolescents.

The Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Emotional Growth

Harrod and Scheer (2005) discovered that socioeconomic characteristics like gender, parental education, and family income were positively correlated with emotional intelligence levels. These imply that socioeconomic circumstances affect how people develop emotionally. Halleröd et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between deprivation indices, child poverty, and the effectiveness of governance, highlighting the role of governance in resolving socioeconomic inequalities that impact mental health. Etindele Sosso et al. (2022) focused on the influence of social class, income, and education on emotional well-being in all age groups as they examine the connection between sleep health and socioeconomic position.

Educational Environments and Emotional Hardiness

Sexton (2007) explored into how rural primary children' self-concept and extracurricular involvement relate to one another, offering insights on what affects students' emotional wellbeing in the classroom. Siaw (2009) examined the differences in educational resources and outcomes that have a big impact on emotional development by comparing the teaching and learning procedures in urban and rural schools. Bryant et al. (2006) highlighted how parenting practices affect kids' and teens' career development. The development of emotional resilience and career goals is greatly influenced by the support and direction of parents.

Racial and Cultural Aspects of Emotional Wellness

Priest et al. (2013) examined research on the effects of racial discrimination on the health of children and adolescents, highlighting the necessity of addressing structural injustices in order to support marginalized communities' emotional well-being. Jagjit et al. (2018) found no discernible difference between boys from rural and urban areas with regard to emotional stability, indicating that place may not be the main factor influencing emotional regulation. Young (2013) highlights the socioeconomic elements influencing emotional well-being in various geographic regions as she examines the urban-rural divide and its implications for migration and income inequality.

Developments in Technology and Mental Health Services

Gloff et al. (2015) stresses the significance of access to mental health services in fostering emotional well-being and support tele mental health as a solution to the scarcity of child and adolescent psychiatrists. Keles et al. (2020) investigate how social media affects teenage mental health, highlighting how crucial it is to comprehend digital settings in order to foster emotional wellbeing. In their evaluation of positive psychological therapies for kids and teenagers, Owens and Waters (2020) point to mindfulness as a possible strategy for boosting emotional resilience.

In their study, "A systematic review of the effect of breakfast on the cognitive performance of children and adolescents," Hoyland et al. (2019) stated that their goal was to examine how breakfast affected children who were both well-nourished and at risk for malnutrition. The results of this study suggest that having breakfast is beneficial compared to skipping it, especially for kids whose nutritional status is compromised.

Jiang et al. (2019) conducted a study titled “Stressful life events and well-being among rural-to-urban migrant adolescents: The moderating role of the stress mindset and differences between genders.” The study's findings centres on the negative effects of adverse life events, the protective role of stress mindset, and gender moderating effects. The study examines the relationship between stressful life events and well-being among Chinese migrant adolescents.

Rationale

The significance of this study lies in its capability to reveal deeper understandings of the emotional expression of children residing in slum areas as compared to their counterparts in non-slum areas. Understanding these differences can aid to the development of targeted interventions and support systems that address the distinct emotional needs of children in diverse socio-economic contexts. This research is crucial as it aims to bridge the existing gap in literature and reveal insights into the emotional landscapes of children in underprivileged environments. Understanding how living conditions may affect emotional expression can inform targeted interventions and support systems. Furthermore, shedding light on the emotional resilience of children in slum areas contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of human development across diverse socio-economic background.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To explore the difference between the emotional regulation of the school aged children of the urban impoverished and non-impoverished areas.

Research Objective

The primary objectives of this research are:

- To compare emotional expression patterns in children from slum and non-slum areas.
- To explore the levels of emotional regulation of the children of the impoverished and non-impoverished sectors.
- To contribute to the existing literature by addressing the current gap in research on emotional expression in children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Hypothesis

- H 1: There will be a significant difference in the emotional regulation of school aged children from impoverished and non-impoverished settings.
- H2: There will be higher Emotional Regulation in the children of the non-impoverished areas as compared to the Impoverished areas.

Variables

Independent variables: Comparison of Non-Impoverished (Non-Slum Areas) and Urban Impoverished (Slum Areas): The various socioeconomic environments that the children live in are represented by this independent variable. Based on the degree of urban poverty in each of their respective areas, it divides them into two groups.

Dependent variables: Levels of Emotional Regulation: This dependent variable shows how well kids are able to control and regulate their feelings and how they express

them. It includes things like resilience, coping skills, self-regulation techniques, and emotional awareness.

Sample

A total of 200 children and adolescents are taken as participants using the convenience sampling for the present research wherein 100 belonging to the urban sector and 100 belonging to the rural sector. The targeted age range is from 7-17 years.

Measures

- ***Emotional Regulation Questionnaire For Children And Adolescents (ERQ-CA) and (ERQ-CA Hindi version)***

The ERQ-CA is a 10 - item questionnaire on a 5- point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree in which the items for Cognitive Reappraisal are 1,3,5,7,8 and 10 whereas, the items for Suppression are 2,4,6 and 9.

Tool Description

The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA) is a psychometric tool created to assess how children and adolescents regulate their emotions. It was developed based on Gross and John's (2003) Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for adults, the ERQ-CA is altered to suit the developmental needs and experiences of younger individuals.

The ERQ-CA typically comprises of a sequence of self-report items which elicits the respondent to ruminate on their emotional experiences and how they manage or regulate those emotions in numerous situations. The questionnaire may include a bunch of emotions such as

happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and anxiety, as well as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression that are the strategies for emotional regulation.

ERQ-CA evaluates the following facets for emotional regulation:

- **Cognitive Reappraisal:** This dimension of emotion regulation is concerned with changing the way one thinks about a situation in order to influence the emotional response. Items related to cognitive reappraisal might ask respondents how they reinterpret or reframe emotionally challenging situations to alter their emotional experience.
- **Expressive Suppression:** Expressive suppression concerns inhibiting or concealing outward displays of emotion, regardless of whether the emotion itself is tailored. Items related to expressive suppression might prompt about how often individuals suppress their emotional expressions in social interactions or social settings.

The scoring for ERQ-CA is done by adding responses to items related to cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression separately, allocating scores for each aspect of emotion regulation. Higher scores on cognitive reappraisal typically shows a greater tendency to use adaptive emotion regulation strategies, while higher scores on expressive suppression may suggest difficulties in managing emotions effectively.

The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ-CA) gives insightful information about how children and adolescents regulate their emotions, which can be valuable for understanding emotional development, classifying potential areas for intervention or support, and nurturing healthy emotional functioning.

Data Collection

An appropriate research topic was selected for which there wasn't enough data and that was deemed to be intriguing. A hypothesis was developed. Emotional Regulation under which Cognitive Reappraisal and Suppression was the variable, and a scale based on that variable was employed in this quantitative procedure. The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire for children and Adolescents ERQ-CA and the Hindi version of ERQ-CA, a measure with strong psychometric qualities, was then employed on the children and adolescents of the Non- Impoverished and Urban Impoverished areas respectively. It included ten items that were used as Google Forms with instructions; also one on one offline data was collected. The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis using Jamovi software, which examined variances across variables using statistical techniques such as the independent t test. The analysis's goals were to evaluate the study hypotheses and provide information on the variations in emotional regulation in the children and adolescents of the Urban impoverished and Non-impoverished areas.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Table 1

<i>Descriptive</i>					
	AREA/SECTOR		COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL		SUPPRESSION
N	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)		100		100
	Urban (cities, towns etc)		100		100
Missing	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)		0		0
	Urban (cities, towns etc)		0		0

Mean	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)	19.6	13.3
	Urban (cities, towns etc)	21.1	13.0
Median	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)	20.0	14.0
	Urban (cities, towns etc)	21.0	14.0
Standard deviation	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)	3.91	2.69
	Urban (cities, towns etc)	3.74	3.33
Skewness	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)	-0.304	0.125
	Urban (cities, towns etc)	-0.376	-0.114
Std. error skewness	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)	0.241	0.241
	Urban (cities, towns etc)	0.241	0.241
Kurtosis	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)	0.421	-0.371
	Urban (cities, towns etc)	0.508	-0.553
Std. error kurtosis	Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc)	0.478	0.478
	Urban (cities, towns etc)	0.478	0.478

The following table depicts descriptive statistics for two variables—Cognitive Reappraisal and Suppression—across two distinct sectors: Urban, which includes cities and towns, and Rural, which includes impoverished areas and villages.

There are no missing values in the data for either Cognitive Reappraisal or Suppression, and it is available for both urban and rural locations. While the mean values for Suppression are comparable across the two areas (13.0 for urban and 13.3 for rural), the mean values for Cognitive Reappraisal are marginally higher in urban areas (21.1) than in rural areas (19.6). Similar trends are also shown in the median values, which indicate that both variables have slightly higher values in urban areas. Standard deviation measurements reveal that the variability in Suppression scores is higher in urban regions (3.33) compared to rural areas (2.69), while the variability in Cognitive Reappraisal scores is higher in rural areas (3.91) compared to urban areas (3.74). For both variables, there is a slight difference in the range of scores between rural and urban locations, as evidenced by the minimum and maximum values, with higher maximum scores being found in urban areas.

Statistics on skewness and Kurtosis shed light on the data's distributional properties. In both rural and urban locations, both variables show a modest negative skewness, suggesting a tendency towards higher scores. Furthermore, Kurtosis values imply that both variables' score distributions are roughly normal, with somewhat larger values for urban locations. Altogether, the descriptive statistics point to some variations in the scores for Cognitive Reappraisal and Suppression between rural and urban locations, with the mean and median values for both variables being somewhat higher in urban areas. Nonetheless, there are some similarities in the patterns between the two areas' scores' variability and distributional characteristics.

Table 2

Independent Samples T-Test						
		Statistic		df	p	
COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL	Student's t	-2.735		198	0.007	
SUPPRESSION	Student's t	0.725	^a	198	0.469	
Note. H _a μ Rural (villages, underprivileged areas etc) ≠ μ Urban (cities, towns etc)						
^a Levene's test is significant (p < .05), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances						

The following table demonstrates the results of an Independent Samples T-Test which compares two conditions: Urban Impoverished and Non-Impoverished areas. The variables that were analysed are Cognitive Reappraisal and Suppression in emotional regulation. It can be seen that the t-statistic for Cognitive Reappraisal is -2.735 and for Suppression the t-statistic is 0.725. The degrees of freedom (df) linked with the t-distribution are 198 for both Cognitive Reappraisal and Suppression. The p-value for the Cognitive Reappraisal associated with the t-test is 0.007 whereas, the p-value for the Suppression associated with the t-test is 0.469.

As can be seen the p-value of 0.007 for the Cognitive Reappraisal is to a lesser degree than the derivative significance level of 0.05. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of Cognitive Reappraisal in rural and urban areas. On the other hand, the p-value for suppression is of 0.469 which is greater than 0.05, indicating no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of Suppression in rural and urban areas. To summarise the case study, it can be seen that there is a significant difference in Cognitive Reappraisal scores between the urban impoverished and non - impoverished areas, but no significant difference in the Suppression scores.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to compare emotional expression patterns in children from slum and non-slum areas. The findings of the independent samples t-test comparing cognitive reappraisal and suppression in emotional regulation between urban impoverished and non-impoverished areas offer insights into the emotional development of children and adolescents in different socioeconomic circumstances. The research sheds light on emotional regulation disparities among school-aged children from urban impoverished and non-impoverished neighbourhoods, emphasizing the impact of socioeconomic factors on emotional development.

The significant difference in cognitive reappraisal scores across urban impoverished and non-impoverished areas underscores the complex link between socioeconomic position and emotional regulation. Cognitive reappraisal, a process requiring cognitive flexibility and problem-solving abilities, is crucial for effectively managing emotional arousal and coping with challenges. The lower cognitive reappraisal scores in disadvantaged metropolitan regions suggest obstacles in developing and applying cognitive reappraisal strategies due to resource constraints and increased exposure to adverse circumstances.

Previous research findings by Jagjit et al. (2018); Young (2013) support the notion that socioeconomic circumstances significantly influence emotional regulation, irrespective of geographical location. Chronic stressors associated with poverty, such as financial insecurity and neighbourhood violence, may deplete cognitive resources and hinder purposeful emotion control. Moreover, the socio-cultural context of urban poverty may shape individuals' cognitive schemas and belief systems, affecting their ability to engage in cognitive reappraisal effectively.

Interventions targeting urban disadvantaged areas should address underlying structural disparities while promoting adaptive emotional regulation abilities. Trauma-informed therapy,

resilience-building programs, and community-based initiatives focusing on socio-emotional learning can empower individuals to reframe their experiences positively. Additionally, comprehensive approaches to emotion regulation, including mindfulness-based practices and emotion-focused therapy, can reduce reliance on suppression as a coping mechanism.

Addressing socioeconomic disparities in emotional development requires tailored interventions that improve cognitive reappraisal abilities and encourage adaptive coping mechanisms. The study's findings highlight the importance of establishing equitable opportunities for emotional health and resilience across all socioeconomic levels.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that its conclusions might not apply to other metropolitan poor and non-poor areas than those that were examined. The findings may not be applicable to larger populations due to differences in socioeconomic status, cultural traits, and geographic locations. Because the study depends on a specific sample size and demographic composition, biases may arise that compromise the validity and dependability of the results. The generalizability of the findings may be limited, for instance, by the sample's potential failure to accurately reflect the diversity of urban impoverished and non-impoverished neighbourhoods. When evaluating emotional regulation in children and adolescents, particularly those who are susceptible to social desirability biases or have limited introspective abilities, the use of self-report methods may result in response biases and inaccuracies.

Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design makes it more difficult to establish causation or draw conclusions about the temporal relationships between emotional regulation disparities and socioeconomic variables. More trustworthy evidence of developmental

pathways and the dynamic interplay between socioeconomic determinants and emotion regulation throughout time would come from longitudinal studies.

The study also examines how urban impoverished and non-impoverished areas differ in terms of emotional regulation, but it might not account for all important environmental factors that affect emotional development, such as neighbourhood features, family dynamics, or availability of local resources.

Scope of the Study

This study evaluates the differences in emotional regulation between urban impoverished and non-impoverished neighbourhoods, providing insightful information about how children's and teenagers' emotion control mechanisms are influenced by socioeconomic surroundings. The research also focuses on how people from different socioeconomic backgrounds employ adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms to manage their emotions. It looks at suppression and cognitive reappraisal as two important emotion regulation techniques.

The results of the study have real-world implications for creating focused interventions that support at-risk populations' ability to regulate their emotions, especially in urban environments where they are disadvantaged. Interventions may target underlying social factors of emotional wellness in addition to enhancing cognitive reappraisal skills. Furthermore, this research provides empirical evidence of the various emotion control strategies employed by children and adolescents from urban impoverished and non-impoverished homes, adding to the body of knowledge on socioeconomic variations in emotional regulation. This expands on the complexity of the interaction between emotional development and socioeconomic conditions.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasises the significance of socio-economic issues when studying emotional regulation in children and adolescents. The large disparity in cognitive reappraisal scores emphasises the need for focused treatments to improve emotion regulation abilities, particularly in urban underprivileged groups. Interventions could include cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques that teach adaptive coping strategies and promote resilience in the face of adversity. Furthermore, community-based programmes that address the underlying social determinants of emotional health, such as poverty reduction efforts and access to mental health care, are critical for promoting positive emotional development in at-risk populations.

The non-significant difference in suppression scores highlights the need for holistic approaches to emotion regulation that go beyond simple behavioural control. Educators, parents, and mental health professionals should be encouraged to provide emotionally supportive environments that allow for open expression and validation of feelings, hence minimising reliance on maladaptive suppression tactics. By addressing the unique problems that children and adolescents confront in urban disadvantaged neighbourhoods, society can seek to reduce emotional inequities and promote fair possibilities for emotional well-being across all socioeconomic groups.

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