



Impact of Parental Relationships, Social Comparison and Emotional Regulation Among Young Adults

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to examine how college students' connections with their parents affected their ability to control their emotions and engage in social comparisons. We used a convenience sample technique to pick 140 people, all between the ages of 18 and 25. We employed the Parental Bonding Instrument, the Social Comparison Scale, and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, all of which are standardized. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, regression, and Pearson correlation. Parental interactions significantly affected children's ability to regulate their emotions but had no discernible influence on children's ability to compare themselves to others. A slight positive correlation was found between emotional control, social comparison, and connections with parents. According to the results, young people's comparison tendencies are shaped by the type of parental connection, although their skills for regulating their emotions may be unaffected. This study adds to our knowledge of how children's brains grow and develop by shedding light on how early family dynamics impact children's social and emotional development.

Keywords: *Parental Relationships, Social Comparison, Emotional Regulation, College Students, Psychological Development.*

1. Introduction

Young adulthood constitutes a pivotal developmental phase marked by substantial personal, social, & emotional transformations. During this phase, people go from youth to adulthood, endeavoring to forge their identity, profession, relationships, and autonomy. Amid these transitions, three critical factors—parental connections, social comparison, & emotional

regulation—significantly influence young people's psychological state and life outcomes. Comprehending the influence of these characteristics is crucial for fostering healthy mental health, resilience, & general life satisfaction in young people. Parental interactions are the cornerstone of an individual's emotional and psychological development. The caliber of early parental ties profoundly affects self-esteem, attachment patterns, and coping strategies in adulthood. Affirmative parental interactions, defined by affection, support, and transparent communication, foster emotional stability, self-assurance, and social proficiency in young people. Dysfunctional and strained parental relationships—characterized by neglect, excessive control, or conflict—can lead to emotional anguish, insecurity, and challenges in establishing good interpersonal connections. Research indicates that young individuals with solid parental relationships have superior emotional control, enhanced self-esteem, and reduced anxiety and depression levels.

Social comparison is an intrinsic element of human behaviour, whereby people assess themselves relative to others to measure their capabilities, accomplishments, and self-esteem. Although social comparison may function as a motivating instrument for self-enhancement, excessive or adverse comparison, especially in the era of social media, can adversely impact mental health. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok provide young people with tailored representations of others' lives, often resulting in unreasonable expectations and feelings of inadequacy. Continuous comparison with peers about academic accomplishments, professional success, physical beauty, and social standing may induce tension, worry, and self-doubt. Moreover, upward social comparison—evaluating oneself against others deemed more successful—may result in diminished self-esteem, while downward social comparison—assessing oneself relative to those considered less successful—may provide transient self-enhancement but can also cultivate complacency.

Emotional regulation denotes the capacity to control and react to emotional events in a constructive and appropriate way. It is essential for managing stress, establishing strong relationships, and making prudent judgements. Young people who cultivate proficient emotional regulation abilities are more adept at managing life's obstacles, sustaining emotional stability, and enhancing resilience. Inadequate emotional control may result in impulsivity, mood problems, and challenges in interpersonal interactions. Numerous variables, such as parental upbringing and societal experiences, affect an individual's capacity to manage emotions. Supportive parenting and a favorable social milieu may improve emotional regulation abilities, but unfavorable parental interactions and frequent exposure to false social comparisons might impede emotional resilience.

The interaction among parental ties, social comparison, and emotional regulation profoundly influences the psychological well-being of young people. A robust foundation in parental interactions cultivates emotional stability, but the impact of societal comparison may either enhance or diminish self-esteem. The capacity to manage emotions proficiently influences how young people confront life's obstacles and sustain mental well-being. Comprehending these impacts may facilitate the formulation of methods to assist young people in cultivating resilience, promoting positive self-image, and improving emotional well-being.

2. Review Of Literature

How a person handles the mental, emotional, and social challenges they face in life is heavily influenced by their parents' parenting approaches. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between parenting styles, emotional regulation techniques, social comparison, and methods of self-regulation among young adults, as well as to examine the effects of different parenting styles on these variables. A quantitative research approach is used in this work. A convenience sample of 297 people from different regions of India was used to compile the data for this research. People between the ages of 18 and 25 make up the sample. The results show that controlling parents are more likely to see their children engage in social comparison & express and repress their feelings. There is a strong positive correlation between it and cognitive reappraisal on emotions. There is a negative correlation between cognitive reappraisal of emotions and authoritarian or permissive parenting styles, and a positive correlation between these styles and social comparison and expressive repression. Research has shown that different styles of parenting have different effects on adults' ability to regulate their emotions and engage in social comparison. Permissive parenting has no discernible effect, while authoritarian parenting has a negative effect. As a result, this proves that, in comparison to other parenting methods, authoritative parenting provides children with favorable conditions (Swathi, 2024).

When first-time moms are trying to figure out how to parent, they often turn to social media for advice and support. Mothers' experiences with social comparison, belonging, & emotions on SNSM may greatly impact their pleasure with parenting, because these sites have an environmental impact on the family system. The current research surveyed 336 moms to learn more about their experiences with these factors. We specified a well-fitting model using structural equation modelling; the results showed that parental satisfaction was directly correlated with lower levels of negative emotion and belonging, and that higher levels of downward comparison were directly associated to higher levels of parenting satisfaction. The

discussion focusses on the potential consequences for family communication & moms' SNSM practices (Amaro, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to examine the impact of parental relationships, social comparison and emotional regulation among young adults.

3.2 Variable of the Study

Independent Variable

Parental Relationships: The quality of the emotional, behavioural, and verbal interactions among parents as well as their children is what we call a parental connection. Included in this category are qualities like emotional connection, warmth, support, trust, discipline, and communication style.

Dependent Variable

Social Comparison: People engage in social comparison when they assess their own worth by contrasting it with that of other people, most commonly their siblings or classmates.

Emotional regulation: The capacity to control and appropriately react to one's emotional experiences is known as emotional regulation. This encompasses the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions as well as the proper expression of those feelings.

3.3 Research Objectives

- a) To determine the impact of parental relationships on social comparison.
- b) To investigate the impact of parental relationships on emotional regulation.
- c) To explore the interrelationship among parental relationships, social comparison, and emotional regulation.

3.4 Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant impact of parental relationships on social comparison among young adults.

H2: There is a significant impact of parental relationships on emotional regulation among young adults.

H3: There is a significant relationship between parental relationships, social comparison, and emotional regulation among young adults.

3.5 Participants of the Study

A total of 140 undergraduate and graduate students, ranging in age from 18 to 25 years, participated in this research. The sample was drawn from a single university using a convenience sampling approach.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Three standardized tools were used to gather data for this investigation. Care and control are two of the aspects measured by the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI), which was utilized to evaluate the caliber of parental connections. College students' propensity for and level of social comparison was assessed using the Social Comparison Scale. Finally, the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was administered to evaluate the participants' capacity to control their emotions, specifically their methods for handling different types of emotional challenges.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

This study used a structured survey to get its data. They were informed of the study's goal and asked for their consent. Upon obtaining consent, a battery of standardized questionnaires was distributed to each participant. These included the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, which assessed participants' capacity to manage their emotions, the Social Comparison Scale, which measured participants' tendency to compare themselves to others, and the Parental Bonding Instrument, which assessed participants' relationships with their parents. Ensuring participants' identity and confidentiality throughout the procedure, we gave them around 20-30 minutes to complete the surveys. The duration of data collecting was three weeks.

3.7.1 Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI)

A measure of how children felt their parents cared for and guided them throughout their formative years is the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI). It is a 25-item assessment of two aspects: control (authoritarianism, overprotection) and caring (warmth, compassion). The PBI provides insight into the ways in which children's connections with their parents shape their mental growth.

Reliability

High levels of internal consistency and test-retest repeatability have been demonstrated by the PBI. With a high degree of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89), the instrument was determined to be extremely dependable by Parker et al. (1979). In addition, the instrument has shown stability over time, and there is good test-retest repeatability across diverse samples.

Validity

The PBI's construct validity has been shown to be high. According to studies conducted by Parker et al. (1979), the PBI can differentiate between people who have had varying degrees of parental connection. In addition to successfully assessing the targeted components of care and control, it has demonstrated convergent validity through its association with other psychological indicators of parental engagement and emotional well-being in children.

3.7.2 Social Comparison Scale

Individuals' propensity to evaluate themselves in relation to others across several dimensions, including physical attractiveness, social standing, and scholastic achievement, is assessed by means of the Social Comparison Scale. There are a number of topics on the survey that ask respondents to indicate the frequency with which they compare themselves to their friends and family.

Reliability

According to several research, the Social Comparison Scale is reliable. For example, research conducted by Buunk as well as Gibbons (2007) discovered that Cronbach's alpha values varied between 0.83 and 0.89, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Another indicator of the scale's stability over time is its test-retest reliability.

Validity

According to Wood (1989), the scale has solid construct validity since it correlates positively with other self-esteem and social comparison measures. Another important aspect of social behaviour is comparing oneself to others. The scale has been verified across several demographics and circumstances, demonstrating that it accurately reflects this propensity.

3.7.3 Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

One popular method for measuring emotional regulation skills is the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). This instrument focusses on two main areas: cognitive reappraisal, which involves shifting one's perspective to change one's emotional reactions, and expressive suppression, which involves limiting one's emotional outpouring. There are ten elements that assess how often and well each method is used.

Reliability

Gross and John (2003) found that the ERQ's expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal subscales both had high Cronbach's alpha values of 0.75. Individuals' techniques for managing their emotions are consistently assessed with high test-retest reliability.

Validity

The ERQ's construct validity has been confirmed by its validation across various age and cultural groups. This scale effectively reflects individual variations in emotion

management methods, since it correlates considerably with measures of emotional intelligence as well as well-being. The fact that it can differentiate between various methods of controlling one's emotions—such as cognitive reappraisal as well as expressive suppression—is further evidence of its discriminant validity.

3.8 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data in this study, and regression analysis was used to assess the influence of parental ties on social comparison as well as emotional regulation. The connections between the important variables were also examined using Pearson correlation analysis.

4. Result and Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine how college-aged siblings deal with emotional control, social comparison, and their parents' relationships. In order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the measurements, data was gathered using standardized questionnaires. In order to investigate the interrelationships of the variables, the replies were methodically collected and evaluated with suitable statistical tools. The data analysis yielded insights into the factors under study's patterns, correlations, and relevance, which are presented in this part.

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics of all variables of the research*

	<i>Parental Relationships</i>	<i>Social Comparison</i>	<i>Emotional Regulation</i>
Mean	39.14286	72.57143	46.76429
Standard Deviation	6.976395	15.7362	7.850776
N	140	140	140

The study's three main variables—college students' emotional control, their social comparisons, and their connections with their parents—are detailed in Table 1. Participants' answers varied somewhat, and the mean score for parental ties was 39.14 (standard deviation: 6.97), suggesting a modest degree of felt parental connection. Students' answers varied greatly within the sample, but the higher mean score of 72.57 and standard deviation of 15.74 for social comparison indicate that they participate in it substantially more frequently. With a mean score of 46.76 as well as a standard deviation of 7.85, students have a relatively high level of emotional regulation skills, with scores showing moderate dispersion. In order to lay the groundwork for further inferential research, these descriptive statistics give a basic picture of how individuals fared across the variables.

Table 2: *Regression analysis of impact of Parental relationships on social comparison among young adults.*

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.178219
R Square	0.031762
Adjusted R Square	0.024746
Standard Error	15.54028
Observations	140

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	1093.261	1093.261	4.526959	0.035143
Residual	138	33327.02	241.5002		
Total	139	34420.29			

H1: There is significant impact of Parental relationships on social comparison among young adults.

Table 2 displays the results of a regression analysis conducted to examine the impact of parental relationships on social comparison among young adults. The R square value is 0.031, indicating that parental relationships explain approximately 3.2% of the variance in social comparison. The F-value of 4.53 and the corresponding significance value ($p = 0.035$) are both below the standard significance level of 0.05. This suggests that the regression model is statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis (H1) is accepted, confirming that parental relationships have a significant, although modest, impact on social comparison among young adults.

Table 3: *Examining the effect of parental relationships on emotional regulation in young adults using regression analysis.*

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.026233
R Square	0.000688
Adjusted R Square	-0.00655
Standard Error	7.876458
Observations	140

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	5.89578	5.89578	0.095034	0.758337
Residual	138	8561.326	62.03859		

Total	139	8567.221			
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H2: There is significant impact of Parental relationships on Emotional Regulation among young adults.

Table 3 presents the regression analysis results examining the impact of parental relationships on emotional regulation among young adults. The R square value is very low (0.0007), indicating that parental relationships explain less than 1% of the variance in emotional regulation. The F-value is 0.095 with a significance level ($p = 0.758$), which is well above the standard threshold of 0.05. This result indicates that the regression model is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis (H2) is rejected. This means that parental relationships do not have a significant impact on emotional regulation among young adults in the current sample.

Table 4: *Young adults' emotional regulation, social comparison, and parental relationships: a Pearson correlation analysis.*

	<i>Parental Relationships</i>	<i>Social Comparison</i>	<i>Emotional Regulation</i>
Parental Relationships	1		
Social Comparison	0.178219	1	
Emotional Regulation	0.026233	0.150176	1

H3: There is significant relationship emotional regulation, social comparison, and parental relationships among young adults.

Relationships with parents, social comparison, as well as emotional control in young adults are all shown in Table 4 with their respective Pearson correlation coefficients. A small positive association ($r=0.178$) exists between parental ties and social comparison. Relationships with parents and children's ability to control their emotions have a weak link ($r = 0.026$). A slight positive association ($r=0.150$) is also reflected by the correlation between social comparison and emotional control. While there are some favorable relationships, their strength is not very high. Only the correlation between parental ties and social comparison was shown to be statistically significant in the prior regression analysis. So, we may see partial support for the hypothesis (H3) that states no meaningful link exists among the three variables. The hypothesis is not completely accepted since there is only one statistically significant correlation, even if there are some.

5. Conclusion

The study's goal was to look at the ways in which college-aged siblings handle things like emotional regulation, comparing themselves to others, as well as their parents' relationships. According to the study's hypothesis, developing closer bonds with one's siblings and classmates and coming into one's own emotionally during adolescence are hallmarks of this critical period. Through the use of quantitative analysis as well as standardized questionnaires, the study revealed intriguing details on the interaction of different psychological components.

An important and maybe helpful initial discovery concerns the link between social comparison and parental relationships. The kind of bond adolescent children have with their parents may shape their self-perception as they become adulthood. Children may develop self-control and be less prone to engage in negative social comparison activities if they are raised in households that foster a sense of safety and support. The findings of this study support the existing literature that emphasizes the significant role that early interactions with parents have in shaping how individuals view themselves and engage in comparison activities as adults.

The second surprising finding is that, contrary to expectations and previous research, there is no link between emotional regulation and parental relationships. While parental involvement is critical in early emotional development, this finding may suggest that by the time individuals reach college age, factors such as peer pressure, life experiences, and their own coping methods have a greater impact on their ability to regulate their emotions. It raises the question of how much power one has over their own emotions in the face of everyday challenges and their immediate environment, which is a regular occurrence in university life.

In addition, comparing oneself to others was shown to be somewhat associated with better emotional regulation. There may be two sides to social comparison: depending on whether it's an upward, downward, or lateral comparison, it can either hinder or help emotional regulation. This is based on the weak correlation, but it does demonstrate a relationship. For some, the act of making positive comparisons with others helps them keep their emotions in check by encouraging them to improve themselves.

In the end, studies reveal that many familial and social factors influence children's psychological development. The influence of parental interactions may vary across fields of psychology, but it is certain that they have an impact. The results stress the need of encouraging self-awareness as well as resilience in young individuals and the value of solid family relationships. Being able to control your emotions and handle social comparison well requires these traits.

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