

# Emotion Regulation in Adolescents

Husna Mulyati, Syamsu Yusuf LN, Mamat Supriatna

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia  
*husnamulyati16@gmail.com*

## Abstract

The emotional life of adolescents is different from children and adults, they react more strongly to situations that emit emotions, experience negative emotions, feel various mixed emotions, and flare up more quickly in certain situations. This article provides an overview of research on regulation of emotions in adolescents in the past decade. In this article three important points are discussed: 1) factors that contribute to the development of emotional regulation skills in the adolescent phase, 2) the motivation of adolescents to regulate emotions compared to other age groups, and 3) the development of research in the past ten years. Based on the literature review that has been carried out, adolescents experience more varied variations of emotions than children but do not have many variations of emotional regulation skills. Therefore, there is a need to guide adolescent emotional regulation skills. Thus it is suggested for future research, there is a need for a program to develop the regulation of adolescent emotions.

**Keywords:** regulation of emotions, adolescents

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood (Santrock, 2007). Adolescent emotional life is also different from children and adults, they react more strongly to situations that emit emotions, experience negative emotions, feel various mixed emotions, and flare up more quickly in certain situations (Gross, 2014). Facing various changes that occur to him, adolescents do not always live it smoothly. Sometimes teenagers get caught up in teenage aggression or delinquency.

In Indonesia alone, based on UNICEF data in 2016, it shows that violence against fellow teenagers is estimated at 50 percent. In addition, based on data recorded by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission or KPAI, there is an increase in cases of brawl in Indonesia as much as 1.1 percent throughout 2018.

Brawl and drug abuse is one form of externalizing behaviors, namely the behavior of externalizing problems to the outside, among others appearing in the form of stealing, gang fights, sexual violence, damage and entering homes, impulsivity, fighting, fighting, dissent, delinquency / juvenile, unlawful and aggressive behavior and other criminal acts. A recent study conducted by Modecki, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Guerra (2017) stated that there were three abilities related to externalizing behaviors in adolescents, including: emotion regulation, coping, and decision making. The higher the three abilities, the externalizing behaviors will be lower. Thus it can be concluded that by developing emotional regulation in

adolescents, it can reduce externalizing behaviors in adolescents.

In addition, according to Lennarz, Hollenstein, Lichtwarck-Aschoff, Kuntsche, and Granic, (2018), the ability to regulate the emotions of adolescents in their daily lives can determine whether conflict with parents increases or not, and whether they will get social support from peers or not. Therefore, the adaptive ability of emotional regulation is very important for adolescents.

## 2. METHOD

The method used is a literature review that is a critical analysis of the research being carried out on a specific topic or in the form of a question of a part of science.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Emotional Regulation

According to Gross (as cited in Modecki et al., 2017), regulation of emotions is a process by which individuals influence the emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express those emotions.

Emotional regulation itself is divided into two parts, explicit and implicit (Gross 2014; Cisler, Olatunji, Feldner, & Forsyth, 2010; Gyurak, Gross, & Etkin, 2011). Explicit emotion regulation is the regulation of emotions that occur

with the existence of an effort, for example, a student deliberately does not watch his favorite film so he can learn and can answer exam questions tomorrow morning. While implicit emotion regulation is the regulation of emotions that occur automatically, for example, when a child sees something he fears, he immediately avoids it. In this study, the regulation of emotions in question is the regulation of explicit emotions.

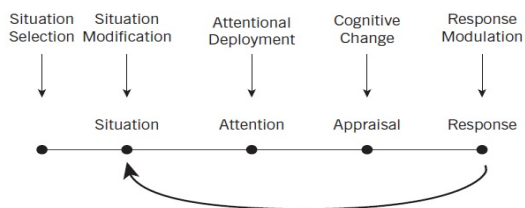
Emotional regulation also needs to be distinguished from mood and coping, which are often considered almost the same. Related to this, Gross (2014) says that, mood regulation refers more to changes in emotional experience, while emotional regulation is more about emotional behavior. For coping, the main focus is the reduction of negative influences and emphasis on longer periods of time, such as mourning, while emotional regulation refers to negative and positive affective responses.

Gross (2014) lists five sets of emotional regulation processes, namely: First, Situation Selection. This type of emotional regulation involves taking actions that increase or decrease the likelihood that we will arrive at a situation that we expect will bring forth expected (or unexpected) emotions. Second, Change of Situation. Potentially arousing emotional situations are attempted to be modified directly to change their emotional impact is one form of strong emotional regulation. Third, the spread of attention, or attentional deployment, for example, a baby will shift his gaze from stimuli that generate emotions to reduce stimulation.

Fourth, cognitive change: changes in the judgments made and included here are psychological defense and social comparison making with those below (the situation is worse than me). In general, this is a transformation of cognition to change the strong influence of emotions from the situation. Cognitive change refers to changing the way we assess situations in which we are involved in changing their emotional significance, by changing how we think about the situation or about our capacity to handle its demands.

Fifth, change in response. This happens at the end, including here drug use, alcohol, exercise, therapy, eating or suppression. Response modulation refers to influencing physiological response, experience, or behavior as directly as possible. Efforts to regulate physiological aspects and emotional experience are common things. Medications may be used to target physiological responses such as muscle tension (anxiolytics) or sympathetic hyperactivity (system-nervous) (beta blockers). Sports and relaxation can also be used to reduce physiological aspects and experience negative emotions, and, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and even food, can also be used to modify emotional experiences. More specifically, below can be seen a picture of Gross's emotional regulation process model.

Picture 1. Gross's emotional regulation process model



Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2011) integrate findings from 58 studies comparing emotion regulation strategies in the age range from childhood to adolescence. Overall, there are two trends that occur. First, there is an increase in regulatory capacity based on age. This is seen not only in increasing understanding of emotional situations, but also in broader and more sophisticated regulatory strategies. For example, from childhood to adolescence there was a gradual increase in planned problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, attention deployment seems to be more diverse and increasingly includes cognitive change. When compared with children, teenagers seem to be more able to pay attention and reflect on their own emotional state. They also seem to use increasingly sophisticated cognitive strategies to deal with emotions, such as positive self-talk and re-realization.

Second, there is an increase in the ability to adjust the emotion regulation strategy used with the situation at hand. That is, adolescents increasingly show emotion regulation strategies that are effective in dealing with certain types of stress. This can be seen from the increase in problem solving capabilities to overcome modifiable difficulties (for example, problems in school) and the disruption to handling uncontrolled stressors (for example, parental diseases) from childhood to adolescence.

Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2011) also emphasize that a real increase in emotion regulation competence does not need to be linear. Some of the evidence reviewed shows a transient increase in emotional regulatory abilities during the transition from late childhood to early adolescence. Zimmer-Gembeck also said that a temporary increase in emotional regulation is potentially more maladaptive during early adolescence, such as cognitive escape, daydreaming, verbal aggression, or negative emotional exertion.

### 3.2 Factors Affecting Emotional Regulation

Based on the research that has been done, there are several factors that influence the regulation of emotions, including; first, age. Older teens experience less anger than younger teens (Blanchard-Fields & Coats, 2008). Second, family. Emotional coaching done by parents and disturbing behavior can influence how teenagers do emotional regulation. Mother's warmth is positively related to the regulation of adolescent emotions. Emotional regulation strategies used by mothers are also related to teenage emotion regulation strategies. But this relationship is not seen in the father. Authoritative parenting both mothers and fathers have a positive impact on the emotional regulatory ability of adolescents.

Third, gender. Men who have difficulty controlling anger in an adaptive manner are associated with increased physical aggression. But this is not the same as women, the difficulty of controlling anger is not related to physical aggression. This is because of differences in the meaning and methods of expressing emotions between men and women, especially regarding anger. Women tend to support relationship-oriented goals, such as relationship maintenance, or prosocial support. Whereas men are more likely to support status and agent oriented goals, for example, dominance, revenge, and control. The suppression tends to increase with age in women, but not

in men. Acceptance (acceptance) also does not diminish with age in women.

Fourth, social relations. Emotional regulation in early childhood shows a direct longitudinal relationship with peer rejection and an indirect relationship with antisocial behavior in early adolescents. Children who regulate maladaptive emotions when dealing with frustrating tasks, tend to experience rejection by peers. Finally, cognitive abilities. Cognitive abilities such as observing and assessing circumstances, situations or events, are very important in emotional regulation.

### 3.3 Motivation for Youth to Regulate Emotions

Riediger, Schmiedek, Wagner, & Lindenberger, (2009) divided motivation into regulating emotions into two types, namely: Prohedonic and Contra-Hedonic. Prohedonic is an urge to maintain or increase positive influence, or to reduce negative influences, whereas Contra-Hedonic is the impulse to maintain or increase negative influences, or to reduce positive influences.

Based on research conducted by Riediger and colleagues (Riediger et al., 2009; Riediger, Wrzus, & Wagner, 2014), participants reported their momentary emotional experience, on average 54 times over 3 weeks, Contra-Hedonic motivation appeared smaller than Prohedonic motivation. This is seen at all ages, but there is a very clear age difference, adolescents are reported to have the most Contra-Hedonic motivation, around 25% of the chance of measurement. Then there was a sharp decline in the prevalence of contra hedonic motivation between adolescents and young adults, and a further decline in all adult adults to old age. In contrast, Prohedonic motivation shows an opposite pattern of prevalence (Riediger et al., 2009, 2014).

In response to this, some opinions say that the high Contra-Hedonic motivation in adolescents is a reflection of instrumental values in handling the tasks of the development of the life phase at that time. This may be because teenagers are often in situations where they have to deal with negative emotional experiences, although in turn, this can help them to build emotional autonomy from their parents, affirm their sense of maturity, develop their sense of identity, or improve regulatory competence their emotions. Until now, however, these assumptions have not been empirically verified (Gross, 2014).

### 3.4 Research Development of the Last Ten Years

Looking at the research in the last ten years, there have been several emotional regulation development programs that have been implemented or proposed, including: Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). DBT is used to develop emotional regulation in suicidal individuals, then extended to suicidal individuals who have the criteria for Borderline Personality Disorder. DBT was also adapted to deal with BPD with several comorbidities and other psychological disorders

where problems in regulation of emotions lead to psychopathologists (Linnehan as cite in Gross, 2014).

Emotional regulation through attention modification. Based on previous studies, treatment (treatment) with attention selection sometimes actually leads to regulation of maladaptive emotions. To overcome this shortcoming, treatment with attention modification is proposed such as: CBM-A (Cognitive Bias Modification for Attention) or ABM/Attentional Bias Modification (Bar-Haim, 2010). ABM is given to individuals who have symptoms of social anxiety (Amir, Weber, Beard, Bomyea, & Taylor, 2008), given to high school students from abroad (See, et al., 2009), and has also been given to individuals who have OCD (Najmi & Amir, 2010).

Cognitive Emotion Regulation (CER). Garnefski, Koopman, Kraaij, and Cate (2009) proposed CER as one of the intervention strategies in adolescents with chronic diseases.

Expressive writing to develop emotional regulation. Horn, Poesel, and Hautzinger (2010) promoted a program to develop school-based emotional regulation by expressive writing.

Mindful Training. Over the past three decades, mindfulness training has become increasingly known for its ability to reduce psychological distress in various clinical disorders (Gross, 2014). Mindfulness training is also considered very effective for promoting the regulation of emotions that are adaptive in individuals with affective disorders such as anxiety and depression (Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010; Piet & Hougaard, 2011).

Based on the explanation above, we can see that most research on regulation of emotion is within the clinical scope. (Garnefski et al., 2009). Therefore, for future research, it is suggested to develop emotional regulation in the scope of education.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Adolescents experience more varied variations of emotions than children but do not have many variations of emotional regulation skills. Although emotional regulation skills will increase with age and experience, this increase does not always occur linearly. As stated by Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2011) the temporary increase is potentially more maladaptive. Therefore, there is a need to guide adolescent emotional regulation skills. Thus it is suggested for future research, there is a need for a program to develop the regulation of adolescent emotions.

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