

Who Regulates Better? A Gendered Perspective on Emotional Regulation in Senior High School Students

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Abstract

Emotion regulation is an important skill in supporting students' mental health and academic success. This study aims to evaluate the level of emotion regulation in high school students and analyze differences in emotion regulation abilities based on gender. The research subjects amounted to 316 grade XI students from SMA Negeri 1 Bululawang, consisting of 108 male students and 208 female students who were selected using random sampling techniques. The instrument is an emotion regulation scale that has been proven to be valid and reliable. Data analysis was carried out by descriptive statistics, normality test, homogeneity test using Levene's Test ($p = 0.027$), and independent t-test. The results showed that students were generally in the moderate category in terms of emotion regulation. The average emotional regulation score of female students ($M = 66.48$) was slightly higher than that of male ($M = 65.02$), but the t-test showed no significant difference, $t(184.56) = -0.649$, $p = 0.460$. These findings suggest that emotion regulation cannot be generalized based on gender, but rather is influenced by contextual factors. Therefore, guidance and counseling services in schools need to adopt an adaptive and responsive approach to individual needs without relying on gender-based stereotypes.

Keywords: Emotion Regulation; Gender Differences; High School Students

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a complex and challenging transition period, characterized by a variety of significant biological, psychological, and social changes. At this stage, individuals begin to develop self-identity, expand social relationships, and face increasing academic demands. One of the crucial aspects of adolescent development is the ability to manage and regulate emotions, otherwise known as emotion regulation. Emotion regulation itself is the ability of individuals to recognize, understand, and manage emotions that arise so that they can function adaptively in daily life (Gross, 2007). These abilities are essential to support academic success, healthy social relationships, and adolescent psychological well-being (Swastika & Prastuti, 2020). Therefore, mastery of emotion regulation is an essential foundation for holistic adolescent development.

To understand more deeply, the regulation of emotions can be identified through four key aspects according to Gratz and Roemer (2004). First, emotional acceptance, which means that individuals are able to accept negative feelings that arise from an event and not feel ashamed of those emotions when facing problems. Second, the emotion regulation strategy, refers to a person's belief to be able to overcome problems, find ways to reduce negative emotions, and quickly calm down after feeling excessive emotions. Third, behavioral involvement is purposeful, namely the ability of individuals not to be affected by negative emotions, so that they can still concentrate, think, and act well. Finally, the control of emotional responses, which is the capacity of individuals to control the emotions they feel as well as the responses displayed (be it physiological responses, behaviors, or tone of voice), which allows them to avoid excessive emotions and show the

right responses. These four aspects collectively illustrate the importance of adaptive emotion management in daily life, which is a key determinant of the effectiveness of individual emotion regulation.

In the context of education, especially at the high school level, students are often faced with quite high pressure, both academically and socially. Situations such as high value demands, conflicts with peers, and expectations from parents can trigger the emergence of negative emotions which, if not managed properly, have the potential to lead to psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, and even depression. In addition, adolescence is an important period in which individuals begin to feel an attraction to the opposite sex, explore career interests, and form self-identity. These aspects can pose significant stress for adolescents, including academic pressure, the need for popularity and social acceptance, the search for the right group, romantic relationship problems, and body image issues. These conditions, coupled with the changes in emotions, interests, and social roles that occur in adolescents, as well as pressures from the environment, collectively increase their emotional tension. Therefore, good emotional regulation skills are an important provision for students to be able to survive and develop optimally in the school environment (Maharani & Suryani, 2022). Furthermore, adolescents who can regulate their emotions, will be better able to control negative emotions, and can help to deal with various situations that will bring them happiness. (Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih, 2019). (Bariyyah & Latifah, 2019)

The phenomenon of adolescents' inability to manage emotions is also manifested in various maladaptive behaviors. For example, teens tend to choose Instagram for *cyberbullying behavior* because of its popularity, especially with its visual features that allow users to upload photos or videos, the ease with which fake or anonymous accounts are created that increase the courage of the perpetrator, and the presence of a direct message feature. These features allow *cyberbullying actions* such as insults, *body shaming*, negative or degrading comments, sending threats, and spreading disgrace, which can certainly be disruptive and create discomfort (Shakir et al., 2019). In line with this, other researchers also mentioned that 84.1% of adolescents are active in using social media, and 54% of them are women who are involved in *cyberbullying* through *chat rooms* (Tjongjono et al., 2019). These cases underscore the urgency of mastering emotion regulation to prevent maladaptive behavior and maintain adolescents' digital well-being.

Specifically, initial observations conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Bululawang indicated that there were different patterns of emotional behavior between male and female students. Male students tend to show more withdrawn behavior, are reluctant to talk about personal problems, and show aggressive verbal reactions when faced with academic pressure. On the other hand, female students more often express their emotions through crying, confiding in friends, or writing their feelings on social media. Data from school counselors also support these findings, showing that during the odd semester of the 2024/2025 school year, more than 65% of students who attended counseling related to emotional regulation were women, while male students tended to be reluctant to come to the BK room despite indications of having similar problems. These findings suggest a trend of significant differences in emotion regulation patterns between male and female students, which could have implications for how they cope with emotional distress. From this phenomenon, there was initial speculation that women were more open in channeling and managing their emotions, while men tended to suppress or channel indirectly, which could potentially trigger maladaptive behavior.

One of the variables that is believed to also affect differences in emotional regulation ability is the gender factor. The results of the study show that there are indeed differences in the way men and women respond to and manage emotions. Adolescent girls tend to be more open in expressing their feelings and more often use adaptive

emotion regulation strategies such as *reappraisal* or cognitive reinterpretation. On the other hand, adolescent boys are more likely to suppress or avoid negative emotions (Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih, 2020; Maulidina et al., 2022). This difference is strongly thought to be related to the social and cultural norms that develop in society, where emotional expression is often considered less masculine for men, so they tend to internalize their emotions.

However, it is important to note that not all studies found consistent results in this regard. Some studies have shown that gender differences in emotion regulation are not significant or even not found at all (Wibowo & Azizah, 2021). These mixed results indicate that other factors such as social environment, family support, and life experience also contribute to a person's ability to regulate emotions. Therefore, further research is still needed to clarify the extent of gender influence on adolescents' emotional regulation abilities, especially in the context of high school students. This divergence of findings reinforces the need for further investigation into the contextual factors that influence adolescent emotion regulation.

In the realm of guidance and counseling, understanding the differences in emotion regulation based on gender is critical to designing targeted interventions. Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers can use this information to develop self-development programs that are able to reach students' emotional needs as a whole and are sensitive to individual differences. Thus, the regulation of emotions is not only an individual skill, but also part of an inclusive school support system. A comprehensive understanding of gender aspects in emotion regulation will equip BK practitioners to provide more effective and relevant support.

Based on the background and urgency that has been presented, this study aims to explore and analyze the differences in emotion regulation between male and female students at the high school level. Her main focus is to find out if there are significant differences in the ability to regulate emotions by gender, as well as to provide practical implications for the development of gender-responsive counseling services.

2. Method

2.1. Research Methods

2.1.1. Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive and comparative approach. According to Sugiyono (2015), the quantitative method is a research method based on the philosophy of positivism, used to research on a specific population or sample, data collection using research instruments, data analysis is quantitative/statistical with the aim of testing the hypothesis that has been determined. This method was chosen because the study aims to measure the level of emotion regulation of students and analyze differences in emotion regulation abilities based on gender objectively. The descriptive approach was used to describe the general level of emotion regulation in high school students, while the comparative approach was used to test whether there were significant differences in emotion regulation abilities between male and female students.

2.1.2. Time and Place of Research

The data collection process was carried out directly at SMA Negeri 1 Bululawang during the hours of guidance and counseling activities in grade 11.

2.1.3. Research Objectives and Subjects

1. Objectives

The participants in this study were 316 grade XI students from SMA Negeri 1 Bululawang, consisting of 108 male students and 208 female students.

2. Subject

Sample selection was carried out using a stratified random sampling technique, with consideration to maintain proportionality based on gender. All participants are active 11th grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Bululawang who have given their approval as research respondents.

2.1.4. Research Procedure

Before filling in the scale, the researcher provided briefing and guaranteed confidentiality of the participant's identity. The researcher also explained that participation is voluntary and the data collected will only be used for academic purposes.

2.1.5. Research Instruments

The main instrument used in this study is the Emotion Regulation Scale which has been modified from an instrument developed by . This instrument has been adapted to the context of high school students and aims to measure four aspects of emotion regulation, namely strategies to emotion regulation (strategies), engaging in goal directed behavior (goals), control emotion responses (impulse), and acceptance of emotional responses (acceptance) proposed by Gros (2014). Furthermore, the participant's response score was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, as explained by , with answer options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The results of the validity test showed that the entire item had a significant item-total correlation value ($r > .30$), while the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a value of $\alpha = 0.845$, indicating that the instrument had a high internal consistency. (Yunita Sari & Naqiyah, 2023) (Dr. SUGIONO, 2019)

Analysis Results	Item Number	Number of Items
Valid Statement Items	1,2,3,6,7,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,18,22,23,24,26,27,28,29,33,36,37,38	24
Invalid Statement Item	4,5,8,9,17,19,20,21,25,30,31,32,34,35	14
Total		38

Table 2.1 Validity Test Results

Based on the results of the validity test presented in Table 1, it is known that out of a total of 38 statement items tested, as many as 24 items were declared valid. Meanwhile, 14 other items were found to be invalid and therefore dropped from the research instrument. These items that are declared valid are then included in the reliability testing stage to ensure the consistency of the measuring tool.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,845	24

Table 2.2 Validity Test Results

The results of the reliability test were carried out on 24 items that had passed the validity test. Based on statistical analysis, the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was obtained of 0.845. This value indicates that the research instrument has a high level of reliability, as it is significantly above the generally accepted threshold ($\alpha > 0.70$). Thus, it can be concluded that this instrument is consistent and reliable for collecting research data.

2.1.6. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using the latest version of SPSS software. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the level of emotion regulation in general. The normality test was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk methods. The variance homogeneity test was conducted using Levene's Test, and the difference in emotion regulation ability between male and female students was analyzed using the

Independent Samples T-Test. All tests were performed with a significance level set at $p < .05$.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This study involved 316 grade XI students of SMA Negeri 1 Bululawang, consisting of 108 male students and 208 female students. The main objective of the study was to examine the level of emotion regulation of students as well as to analyze the differences in emotion regulation abilities between the male and female groups.

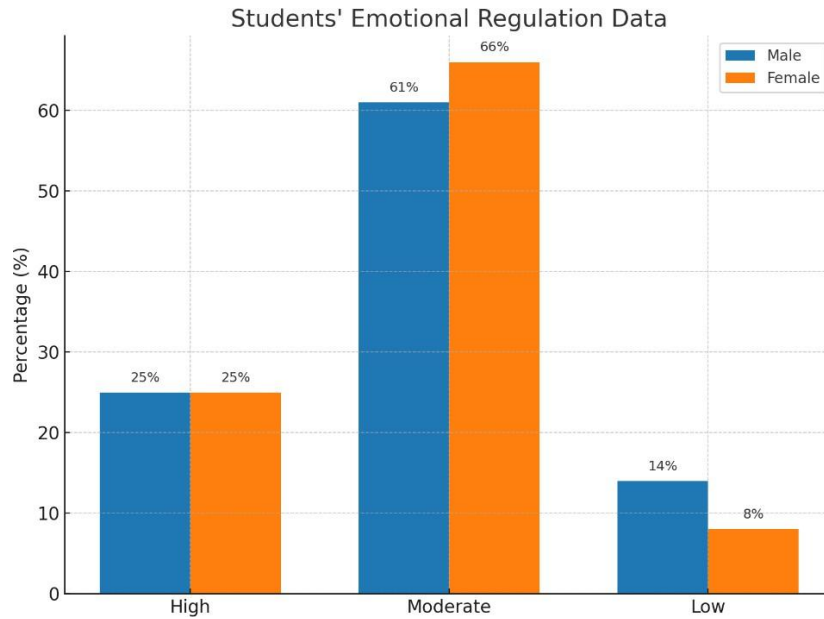


Figure 3.1 data on students' emotion regulation

The results of the categorization of the level of emotion regulation based on the score also showed an interesting distribution. Of the 108 male students, 27 students (25%) were in the high category, 66 students (61%) were in the medium category, and 15 students (14%) were in the low category. Meanwhile, of the 208 female students, 53 students (25%) were in the high category, 138 students (66%) were in the medium category, and 17 students (8%) were in the low category. This distribution shows that both male and female students are dominated by the medium category, which reflects that most students have moderately adaptive but not optimal emotional regulation skills. Although the proportion of female students in the low category is less than that of male students, this difference is not very striking.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
L	108	53,00	120,00	80,1481	12,61938
P	208	58,00	120,00	80,7981	10,44320
Valid N (listwise)	108				

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistical Results

Descriptive statistical analysis of emotion regulation scores showed that the average score of male students was $M = 80.15$ ($SD = 12.62$), while female students had an average of $M = 80.80$ ($SD = 10.44$). Based on the calculation of the category range using standard units of deviation, both groups were in the moderate category in terms of

emotion regulation. This indicates that both male and female students have the ability to regulate emotions that are quite adaptive in dealing with everyday emotional situations.

The minimum and maximum scores in the male group showed a wider distribution of scores than the female group, namely from 53 to 120 (range = 67), with a standard deviation of 12.62. This indicates a greater variation in emotion regulation abilities among male students.

These findings are in line with the research of Wibowo and Azizah (2021), which states that the difference in average scores of emotion regulation between genders in adolescents tends to be insignificant and is more influenced by environmental factors and coping strategies used, rather than solely by gender.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
L	,060	108	,200 [*]	,987	108	,368
P	,072	108	,200 [*]	,980	108	,094

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 3.2 Normality Test Results

Before conducting the inferential analysis, normality **tests** were performed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk methods. The test results showed that the emotion regulation data in both groups was normally distributed. Specifically, the Shapiro–Wilk significance value for male students is Sig.=.368 and for female students is Sig.=.094. Because of the two values of Sig.>.05, the assumption of normality of the data is met. The selection of the Shapiro–Wilk test is based on the recommendation for a sample size of less than 500, as explained by Lubis and Fadli (2022) who stated that "the Shapiro–Wilk test is more accurate on small to medium sample sizes than the Kolmogorov–Smirnov".

Group Statistics

	GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORE REGULASI EMOSI	LAKI-LAKI	108	80,1481	12,61938	1,21430
	PEREMPUAN	208	80,7981	10,44320	,72411

Table 3.3 Group Statistics

Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis shown in Table 1.3 of Group Statistics, it is known that the average emotion regulation score of male students is 80.15 with a standard deviation of 12.62, while female students have an average emotion regulation score of 80.80 with a standard deviation of 10.44. The number of participants in the male group was 108 students, while the female group was 208 students. The difference in average emotion regulation scores between males and females was less noticeable, with the average score of female students slightly higher. The *mean standard error* value of each group was 1.21 for males and 0.72 for females, indicating the average accuracy of the group's scores. These findings form the basis for further inferential analysis to test the significance of differences between groups based on sex.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
SCORE REGULASI EMOSI	Equal variances assumed	4,953	,027	-.314	314	,626	-.64993	1,33219	-3,27107	1,97122
	Equal variances not assumed			-.184	563,646	,460	-.64993	1,41381	-3,43923	2,13938

Table 3.4 t-independent test results

To test the average difference in emotion regulation between groups, the variance homogeneity test using Levene's Test was first carried out. The results showed that the variance between groups was not homogeneous ($p=.027<.05$). Therefore, in the t-independent test, the results used are on the *line Equal variances not assumed*.

The results of the independent t-test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the emotion regulation scores of male and female students, with a value of $t(184.56)=-0.649$, $p=.460$. Although female students showed slightly higher emotion regulation scores, this difference was not statistically significant.

3.2 Discussion

The results showed that there was no significant difference between the emotional regulation scores of male and female students. This finding is interesting because there is generally an assumption that women are better able to express and regulate their emotions than men (Gross & John, 2003). However, the data in this study show that the difference is not statistically significant.

These results are in line with research by Kurniawan and Fadilah (2023) which emphasized that gender differences in emotional regulation among adolescents cannot be generalized because they are strongly influenced by contextual factors, such as social experiences, family culture, and emotional education in the school environment. This reinforces the idea that the regulation of emotions is not solely the result of biological or gender differences, but rather a psychosocial skill that can be learned and developed through social experience and learning.

Furthermore, although the descriptive results showed that women had slightly higher emotion regulation scores, the inhomogeneous variance of the data showed that emotion regulation abilities varied greatly within each group. This shows the importance of avoiding gender-based stereotypes in guidance and counseling interventions. Emotional coaching strategies in schools should focus on individual needs of students, rather than assumptions based on gender.

In the context of education, these findings also support a universal intervention approach that encourages the development of emotion regulation skills in all students regardless of gender. As stated by Thompson (2019), the development of emotion regulation among adolescents is closely related to academic success, mental health, and social relationships. Therefore, guidance and counseling programs in schools need to include emotion regulation training as an integral part of student development services, in order to support the emotional and social readiness of all students.

The findings of this study showing the absence of statistically significant differences in emotion regulation scores between male and female students are consistent with several previous national studies. It was also found that emotion

regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression did not show significant differences in effectiveness between male and female students. This is in line with the current research observation regarding the meaninglessness of the score differences found. (Azizah & Hendriani, 2023)

Further supporting this perspective, Wardhani and Widyastuti (2024) report that differences in emotion regulation are more strongly influenced by age factors and birth order than gender. In addition, in their studies conducted in a boarding school setting, they found no differences in emotion regulation by gender. Instead, they highlight the significant impact of environmental support and social experience on the development of students' emotional regulation. (Husnianita & Jannah, 2021)

These cumulative findings reinforce the interpretation that emotion regulation is a skill that is primarily shaped by psychosocial context rather than solely determined by gender. Therefore, the results of this study reject the existence of gender-based stereotypes related to the ability to regulate emotions. The absence of significant differences in emotion regulation scores between men and women underscores the need for a fair, inclusive, and responsive approach in counseling and counseling services. Emotion regulation training interventions should be tailored to the individual conditions and needs of students, not based on gender assumptions or categories alone.

Thus, this study is not only aligned with its goal to examine differences in emotion regulation between male and female students, but also provides a strong empirical basis to support a gender equality-based approach to education. Schools are encouraged to design interventions that are adaptive, responsive, and contextual in the development of emotional skills, thereby contributing to the strengthening of students' character and overall psychological well-being.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of emotion regulation between male and female students at SMA Negeri 1 Bululawang. Although the average score of emotion regulation of female students was slightly higher than that of male students, the difference was not statistically significant. This indicates that the ability to regulate emotions cannot be generalized based on gender, but rather is influenced by contextual factors such as social environment, emotional experiences, and family upbringing.

These findings support approaches to guidance and counseling that are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to students' individual needs, without relying on gender-based stereotypes. Therefore, it is recommended that schools develop an emotion regulation training program that targets all students universally. The program should be designed in an adaptive and contextual manner to strengthen students' emotional skills and psychological well-being. For further research, it is recommended to explore other factors such as age, family environment, birth order, or social experience that may have a greater influence on students' emotional regulation.

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