

# Adolescent Emotion Regulation Who were Raised with Authoritarian Parenting Style

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional regulation is a process of directing and expressing emotions which impacts on various aspects, such as affect, social, cognitive, physical, and psychological. Less adaptive emotion regulation leads to the increase of psychopathological symptoms. During adolescence, individuals experience various developments, changes, and demands. Adolescents' emotions are less stable and their parents still hold important roles in adolescents' lives. This study aims to understand how adolescents with authoritarian parenting style regulate their own emotions. This qualitative research used interviews for primary data collection and was assisted with parenting styles questionnaire which is used to ascertain their parenting styles. The subjects of this research were three adolescents who experience authoritarian parenting styles from both parents. All subjects felt under pressure from high demand, while parental responsiveness is low. The study found that all subjects used every emotional regulation strategy, including situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive changes, and response modification. However, their emotional regulation was shown to be relatively less adaptive. This is due to the use of emotion regulation strategies such as suppression, rumination, self-blame, and blame on others.

**Keywords:** *Emotion regulation, adolescence, parenting styles, authoritarian*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest sphere in society as well as the place where children grow and are raised. The family provides a sense of emotional security, support and a place for children to learn social skills, personality characteristics, and values [1]. Parenting itself is divided into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful [2]. The four parenting styles are distinguished by the level of responsiveness and demands of parents, which is an authoritarian parenting pattern that has high demandingness and low responsiveness [3]. Parenting style plays an important role that does not stop at childhood. Children continue to grow and the role of parents still has an impact on their development. Adolescence is a period of storm and stress, where behavioral and emotional problems in relationships, especially parents, are at the peak [4]. Adolescence is also defined as a period of transition from children to adults accompanied by physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes [5]. Psychological changes, especially unstable emotions are common in adolescents [5].

Emotion is affect related to physiological drives, awareness of experience, and expression through behavior [6]. Regulating emotions is very important for individuals, especially for adolescents whose emotions are yet to be stable [7]. Emotion regulation affects the intensity,

duration, and expression of these emotions [8]. The impact of poor emotional regulation is expressed in the form of internalized problems (such as sadness, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and somatic) and externalized problems (such as aggressiveness and antisocial behavior) [9]. The level of adaptability of emotion regulation is determined by the situation and the achievement goals of these emotions [9], [10]. Emotion regulation that is considered adaptive tends to help individuals to reappraise and accept the situations experienced [11], [12]. Emotion regulation that is considered less adaptive tends to have a temporary impact and does not help individuals in achieving the desired emotional response [13]. Less adaptive emotion regulation tends to have a strong relationship with depression and psychopathological symptoms such as avoidance, rumination, suppression, and blaming oneself and others [14]–[18].

Children with authoritative parents have adaptive emotion regulation, while authoritarian children have less adaptive emotion regulation [19]. This is possibly because parents with authoritarian style tend to emphasize a negative view of the existing situation [19]. Another possibility is that parents make demands and pay less attention to children's emotional needs, thus hindering the development of adaptive adolescent emotion regulation [19]. Research conducted in Australia-Indonesia showed that children

with authoritarian parenting style have low emotion regulation and higher behavioral problems [20]. Children with authoritarian parenting are predicted to be poor at regulating emotions which leads to less positive emotions, higher negative emotions, and behavioral problems [21]. However, another study conducted in Pakistan stated that authoritarian parenting is not significantly correlated with emotion regulation [22]. This could be due to cultural differences, where said research [22] was conducted on a collectivist culture that do not view authoritarian parenting negatively. One research also shows that authoritarian parenting has no effect on the ability to regulate emotions and delinquent behavior [23]. Studies at different age groups yielded similar results in that authoritarian parenting is not associated with emotion regulation and depression in adults [23].

Seeing these differences, it is necessary to study the regulation of emotions individually. In previous studies, the discussion of this topic used a quantitative approach which was used to determine the relationship and generalize the results. The research on emotional regulation with a quantitative approach only focuses on two forms of emotion regulation strategies, namely cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Meanwhile, qualitative approach seeks to obtain the essence of emotion regulation used more thoroughly by investigating five emotion regulation strategies, including situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive changes, and response modification [9], [24]. Emotional regulation of adolescents who experience authoritarian parenting style is also undeveloped. At the same time, the strategies between individuals in regulating their emotions also vary, so research that discusses the description of adolescent emotion regulation individually is still needed. This study will describe the emotion regulation of adolescents with authoritarian parenting style.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative phenomenological approach and non-probability purposive sampling technique. The selected research subjects have several criteria, namely, (a) adolescents, aged 11-19 years; (b) are male or female; (c) brought up under authoritarian parenting style; (d) live with both parents. This research was preceded by distributing a parenting questionnaire created by the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagara in 2014 based on Baumrind's parenting theory. This questionnaire has two dimensions, namely demandedness and responsiveness with a 5-point Likert scale. Of the 49 respondents, 3 of them have an authoritarian parenting style and are willing to be research subjects. The main data collection was conducted through virtual interviews with the three subjects. This interview uses an emotion regulation interview guide which consists of emotion regulation targets and five emotion regulation strategies, namely situation selection, situation modification,

attentional deployment, cognitive changes, and response modification. The questions mainly asking about what they do, feel, effort to change the situation when facing problems or unpleasant situations and their emotions.

**Table 1** Subject Description

Subject	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3
Sex	Male	Female	Female
Age	15 years old	17 years old	16 years old
Place and date of birth	Jakarta, 17 September 2005	Jakarta, 21 March 2003	Bekasi, 01 May 2004
Domicile	Jakarta	Jakarta	Bekasi
Religion	Christian	Christian	Christian
Race	Chinese	Chinese	Javanese
Lives with	Both parents	Both parents	Both parents
Siblings	First child of 2	Second child of 2	Second child of 2
Status	Student	Student	Student
Education	Vocational school	High school	High School

This research used one-to-one interview as the main method. The interviews with all three subjects were held virtually at their respective residences using Zoom and WhatsApp video calls. This study used transcendental phenomenology to get a better understanding of the experience of each subjects. One of the initial steps taken is epoche or bracketing, this step allows researchers to put aside their experiences to discover and explore the subjective experiences of each subjects. Researchers also used member checking as a way to achieve a common understanding within the subject and researcher, avoid misunderstanding, and for avoid interpretation bias. After collecting the data, the researcher wrote down the interview verbatim and processed the interview results. Then researcher analyzed the data with content analysis. Data processing was conducted by making interview transcripts for each subject.

## 3. RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

The three research subjects have authoritarian parents. Each subject stated that they felt pressured by the high demands given by their parents and that the source of the problems is the family, especially their parents. Subjects also feel that the closeness, communication, and support they get from their parents tend to be lacking.

### 3.1. First Subject (S1)

The first subject's daily dominant emotion is bored. Boredom and other negative emotions such as sadness, disappointment, and anger are felt especially when he is

with their parents. Positive emotions such as happiness are felt when playing alone or with friends. The subject feels that the problems in his life originate from his parents, such as academic demands, setting rules that are not in accordance with the needs of the subject. When dealing with problems or unpleasant situations, S1 tries to regulate his emotions.

In the first strategy, namely situation selection, S1 can accurately predict the possible emotions that will arise, so he chooses to avoid the situation. In the second strategy, situation modification, the subject seeks to change the situation by seeking social support from peers, but S1 does not share his personal problems. S1 also strives to find solutions to his problems. The search for solutions is an emotional regulation achievement aimed at down-regulating extrinsic negative emotions. When dealing with problems, subjects tend to divert their attention by doing other activities. The diversion is part of the third strategy, namely the attentional deployment. In addition, the subject also often thinks about the problem again and again and the bad possibilities that may arise. This is also known as rumination, which worsens his negative emotions. Subjects reassessed and tried to look at the situation from another point of view, which is the fourth strategy, the cognitive changes. The subject stated that most of the problems originate from outside, especially his parents. In the response modification strategy, the subject has a tendency to keep the feelings and problems that he faces alone.

“For me, the best possible solution is just let it be and leave it in. Usually I just lay down while thinking, sometimes, well rarely the tears come out”

This suppression leads towards the decrease of his positive emotions. He also thought these impacting not only on his emotion, but his productivity.

“Eee quite a lot (*impact*). In the past, I used to be a lot happier. Now, I have more to think about, because sometimes they (*negative thinking*) stuck on my mind even though I have tried to not think about the problems... For me, if I didn't experience these problems, I might be more productive, because it won't bother me.”

### **3.2. Second Subject (S2)**

S2 feels neutral as their dominant emotion. S2 stated that she tends to feel pressured when she is with her parents because she has to fulfill their demands. Positive feelings such as happiness arise during fun activities alone or together with her peers. The subject feels that the problems she faces stem from high demands, low appreciation, strict regulations, and verbal and physical punishment. When dealing with problems or unpleasant situations, the subject can predict the possible emotions that will arise. The subject then chooses to avoid the situation, which is the first emotion regulation strategy, the situation selection. In

the situation modification strategy, the subject seeks social support from peers in the hope that it can help her regulate her emotions, but the support expected by S2 is rarely fulfilled. In the attentional deployment strategy, the subject diverts her attention by doing other activities. Cognitive changes strategy is achieved by providing a reappraisal of the situation and comparing her condition with others. This gives S2 confidence that she is capable of dealing with his problems.

“Let alone if, sorry to say, broken home, they are surely must be worsen (*their situation*) than mine. Their problems are much bigger than mine, so mine is still normal.”

S2 sees that the problems she faces arise from external sources, such as her parents. Finally, the response modification is achieved by hiding her feelings and problems.

“I don't have the courage to say it (*problems and her feelings*), so yeah I just keep it myself.”

The suppression chosen by the subject is based on feelings of despair about the situation and S2 instead tries to accept it. This suppression leads to a decrease in her positive emotions.

### **3.3. Third Subject (S3)**

The third subject claimed that sadness is the dominant emotion in her daily life. S3 describes herself as a sensitive individual, that she easily feels sad and cries. When S3 does her hobby, spends time with friends, and is allowed to leave the house, S3 feels happy. However, sadness arises more often when she is together with her parents. This is due to strict regulations and restrictions on going out, verbal and physical punishment, and high academic demands. When dealing with problems or unpleasant situations, S3 is able to predict the emotions that will arise. This helps to dodge as well as deal with the situation. Avoidance and situational approach are part of the first strategy, the situation selection. S3 tries to seek social support from her peers and modification of the situation by changing herself. The changes are part of the subject's efforts to down-regulate the negative emotions from extrinsic, especially her parents. In the attentional deployment strategy, S3 diverts her attention by doing fun activities. This helps improve her positive emotions. However, S3 also repeatedly thinks about problems, negative emotions, and the worst possible situations of the problem, which worsens her negative emotions.

“Yes, sure. I do think more toward that (*her negative emotions and the worst possible case*) yeah so it (*her mind*) becomes more-and-more seems like more worsely. Yeah, and my mind become more worsen.”

Cognitive changes strategy involves providing a reappraisal of the situation by looking at the problems that arise internally. S3 tends to blame herself for her sensitivity to emotions. The response modification strategy involves suppressing her feelings and problems alone. This suppression leads to a decrease in her positive emotions.

“Yeah, I just go crying. Even if I was scolded by my mom, I just suppressed it, than I cry when there is no one.”

All subjects used every emotion regulation strategies when dealing with unpleasant situations or problems. Among all these emotion regulation strategies, some strategies are considered less adaptive, especially those that are strongly associated with depression and psychopathological symptoms such as avoidance, rumination, suppression, blame towards oneself and others [14]–[18]. The three subjects have a tendency to suppress, avoid, think about problems repeatedly (rumination), and blame themselves and others. This indicates that the subjects’ emotion regulation is less adaptive. The result of this study is in accordance with [19] that found individuals who raised with authoritarian parenting style have less adaptive emotion regulation. This accordance might be the result of high parental demandingness, while subjects’ emotional needs doesn’t get much attention and given more stressed on negative view of situations. This might hinder the subjects to develop and reach adaptive emotion regulation.

## 4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### 4.1. Conclusion

This research was conducted with the aim of describing the emotional regulation of adolescents raised under authoritarian parenting style. Based on Gross [15], less adaptive emotion regulation has a strong relationship with depression and psychopathology such as avoidance, rumination, suppression, and blame. It can be concluded that the three subjects have less adaptive emotion regulation. This is based on the use of the subjects’ emotion regulation strategies. Subject 1 uses suppression, rumination, and blame on others when dealing with problems or unpleasant situations. Subject 2 uses suppression and blames on others. Subject 3 uses suppression, rumination, and self-blame as the source of the problems. Meanwhile, adaptive emotion regulation tends to have a positive impact on individuals, which takes the form of reassessment in a more positive direction (reappraisal) and acceptance of the situation [11], [12].

According to Baumrind [25], the high demands, coupled with unresponsiveness in authoritarian parenting possess a negative impact on children. The three subjects felt pressured by the demands of their parents. The three subjects felt hopeless, especially regarding their parents, which was the main reason for the subjects’ decision to suppress their feelings. This is due to the high demands on these adolescents and the lack of opportunities for the

subjects to express their opinions. Subjects also have a tendency to feel that their problems come mainly from their families, especially problems with a significant impact on their emotional changes.

### 4.2. Suggestion

This study has some limitation, especially in terms of preparation. Researchers hadn’t give full attention to factors that might influence research results, such as environmental factors, personality, and background. Further research may take these factors into the light for a better understanding and result. Another limitation of this study is the lack of observational data because the interviews were conducted virtually. The researchers suggest that data collection should be conducted face-to-face when possible so that interviews are more effective and in-depth. For other researchers who will conduct research by interview, it is recommended to practice the ability to elaborate on the subject’s statements in order to get a more accurate message.

Adolescents are advised to reduce the suppression of feelings by sharing stories siblings, other family members, or friends. Teenagers can also express their emotions through more productive and constructive activities that are of interest to each individual, such as writing, drawing, sports or other kind of hobbies. Meanwhile, parents are advised to establish two-way communication with children, such as giving children the opportunity to speak, explaining to children about decisions or rules made. Parents can participate in meetings between teachers, parents, and students to get an idea of the child’s condition and opportunities to build communication with children.

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