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The relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation among final-year college students

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ABSTRACT

Final-year students often face academic and emotional pressure while completing their thesis, making emotion regulation essential. This study examined the relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation among 205 final-year PGSD students at Universitas PGRI Semarang, selected via proportionate stratified random sampling ($N = 420$). A correlational design was used, with data collected through a 24-item self-developed parental social support scale and a 30-item emotion regulation scale based on Sarafino and Smith (2011) and Gratz and Roemer (2004), yielding Cronbach's Alpha of 0.911 and 0.877. Assumption tests were satisfied prior to Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. Results showed a positive and significant relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), with parental social support accounting for 17% of the variance in emotion regulation. These findings suggest parental social support may contribute to students' emotional stability during thesis completion, alongside other factors not examined in this study.



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Introduction

University students in their final year are undergoing the developmental stage of early adulthood, a period marked by the pursuit of emotional, social, and economic independence (Nurani, 2024). For many, this stage coincides with the demanding process of completing an undergraduate thesis, which requires critical thinking, time management, consistency, and psychological resilience. A literature review by Wijaya (2024) further notes that repeated setbacks during thesis writing often erode final-year students' academic self-efficacy over time, compounding the emotional demands of this period. Beyond technical obstacles such as repeated revisions and limited references, students frequently face emotional burdens including anxiety, fear of failure, and uncertainty about the future. When such emotions are not managed adaptively, they can lead to procrastination, decreased motivation, poor concentration, and even more serious psychological distress.

The capacity to manage and direct one's emotional experience is known as emotion regulation, defined by Gross (2014) as the process through which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how these emotions are experienced and expressed. Gratz and Roemer (2004) similarly conceptualize emotion regulation as the ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions adaptively, encompassing not only the reduction of emotional intensity but also individuals' awareness, understanding, and acceptance of their emotional experiences. Difficulties in emotion regulation are transdiagnostically linked to psychopathology and psychological adjustment across developmental stages (Aldao et al., 2010), underscoring

why this capacity remains consequential well into early adulthood, the developmental stage final-year students are navigating. Students with strong emotion-regulation skills tend to remain calmer, think more clearly, and make better decisions under pressure (Reskido et al., 2022), while poor emotion regulation is associated with heightened academic stress and reduced concentration (Handayani et al., 2023).

Emotion regulation does not develop in isolation; it is shaped by both internal and external factors, one of the most significant being social support from parents. Sarafino and Smith (2011) describe parental social support as encompassing four dimensions: emotional/esteem support, tangible/instrumental support, informational support, and companionship support, a form of care from others that makes an individual feel valued, loved, and attended to (Aprilia & Yoenanto, 2022). Previous studies have consistently linked parental social support to more adaptive emotion regulation. Rizkiana and Indrawati (2019) found a significant positive relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation among adolescents ($r = 0.471$), while Baroinnisrina and Ardyanti (2026) reported that parental social support significantly predicted emotion regulation and psychological wellbeing among junior high school students. Adinda and Prastuti (2021) further demonstrated that social support and emotion regulation jointly reduce the risk of suicidal ideation among university students, underscoring the protective role both variables play for psychological wellbeing.

For final-year students specifically, the pressures of thesis completion can trigger prolonged academic stress if not managed effectively (Tanjung Sari et al., 2024), compounded by anxiety about an uncertain future after graduation (Syuhadak et al., 2023). Angela and Murti (2026) found that students with strong emotion regulation were better able to manage academic stress adaptively and remain focused despite academic difficulties. This is particularly relevant for final-year students, who often juggle thesis writing alongside other academic or personal roles and therefore rely on deliberate emotion-regulation strategies to stay functional under competing demands (Kumala & Darmawanti, 2022). Preliminary data gathered by the researcher in February 2026 from 26 final-year students of the PGSD study program at Universitas PGRI Semarang indicated that most students reported relatively high emotion regulation and simultaneously perceived high parental social support, suggesting a possible alignment between the two variables that warranted closer empirical examination.

Within the field of guidance and counseling, examining the relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation is relevant because counseling services extend beyond academic assistance to encompass students' personal, social, and emotional development (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Parental social support, as an environmental factor, contributes to the formation of emotional maturity and psychological wellbeing (Rizkiana & Indrawati, 2019), while emotion regulation itself constitutes part of the personal competence addressed within counseling practice. However, empirical studies that specifically examine this relationship among final-year students preparing to complete an undergraduate thesis, particularly within the PGSD context, remain limited. Most previous research has focused on general student populations or younger age groups, leaving the dynamics among final-year students preparing their theses comparatively underexplored. Final-year thesis-writing students constitute a particularly appropriate population for this inquiry: they are concurrently navigating the developmental demands of early adulthood while facing the acute, time-bound academic and emotional pressures of thesis completion, a convergence that heightens both the relevance and the urgency of understanding how parental social support relates to their capacity for emotion regulation, with direct implications for the guidance and counseling services this population receives prior to graduation.

Based on this background, the present study aimed to examine the relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation among final-year students of the PGSD study program at Universitas PGRI Semarang. It was hypothesized that parental social support would be positively and significantly related to emotion regulation among these students.

Method

This study used a quantitative correlational design, aimed at determining the direction and strength of the relationship between two variables measured numerically (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research was conducted at the Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) study program, Faculty of Education, Universitas PGRI Semarang, from February to July 2026, covering instrument preparation, data collection, and analysis (see Figure 1).

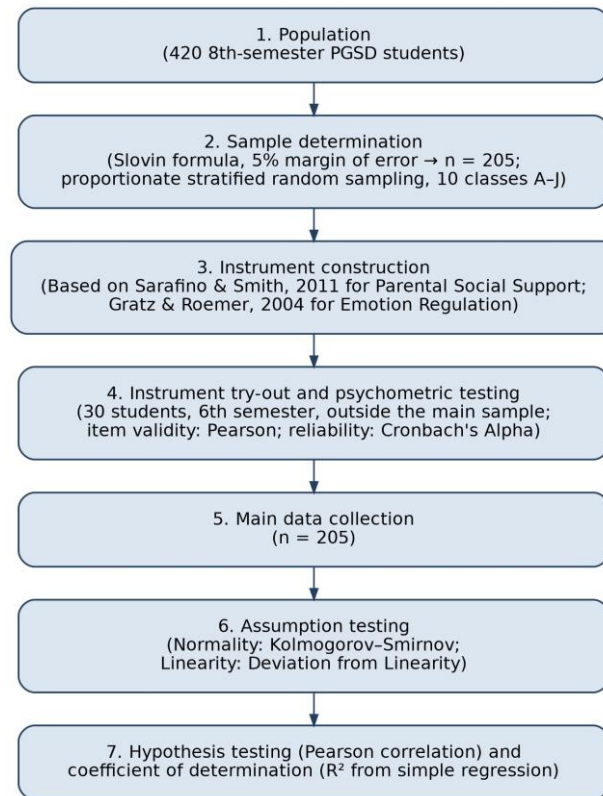


Figure 1. Research Design Flowchart

The population comprised all 420 eighth-semester students of the PGSD study program who were in the process of completing their undergraduate thesis. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula (as cited in Sugiyono, 2023) with a 5% margin of error, yielding a required sample of 205 students. Samples were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling, given that the population was divided into ten parallel classes (Class A–J) of 42 students each; 21 students were drawn from each of Classes A–E and 20 students from each of Classes F–J, so that every class was proportionally represented and every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Class membership was treated as a meaningful stratification variable rather than a mere administrative grouping because each class is supervised by a different thesis advisor and follows a distinct schedule of guidance sessions, so that students in different classes are plausibly exposed to differing levels of academic workload, supervisory feedback intensity, and thesis-related deadline pressure; stratifying by class was therefore intended to ensure that this potential source of between-class variation in parental support and emotion regulation was proportionally represented in the sample, rather than left to chance.

Data were collected using two Likert-scale instruments developed by the researcher: a Parental Social Support Scale, constructed based on the four dimensions of social support proposed by Sarafino and Smith (2011) emotional/esteem, tangible/instrumental, informational, and companionship support and an Emotion Regulation Scale, constructed based on the six aspects proposed by Gratz and Roemer (2004): emotional awareness, emotional clarity, emotional acceptance, impulse control, access to emotion-regulation strategies, and goal-directed behavior. Both scales used four response options (strongly appropriate, appropriate, inappropriate, strongly inappropriate). Prior to the main study, both instruments were tried out on 30 sixth-semester students with characteristics similar to the target population. Item validity was tested using Pearson product moment item-total correlation, with items considered valid if r -count exceeded the r -table value of 0.361 ($df = 28$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Of the initial 28-item Parental Social Support Scale, 24 items were retained as valid; of the initial 36-item Emotion Regulation Scale, 30 items were retained as valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients of 0.911 for the Parental Social Support Scale and 0.877 for the Emotion Regulation Scale, both indicating strong internal consistency.

Data analysis was conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 and proceeded through several stages. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores) were computed to characterize both variables. Prerequisite assumption tests were then performed, comprising a normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov technique and a linearity test using ANOVA, both essential before parametric statistical analysis can proceed (Curran-Everett, 2017). Hypothesis testing was carried out using Pearson

product-moment correlation to examine the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation, with the hypothesis accepted at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. A simple linear regression analysis was additionally conducted to estimate the proportion of variance in emotion regulation explained by parental social support, through the coefficient of determination (R^2).

Results and Discussions

Descriptive analysis of the 205 respondents showed a mean parental social support score of 77.14 ($SD = 6.48$, range 55–92), while the mean emotion regulation score was 97.19 ($SD = 7.61$, range 75–118). Categorization based on the class-interval distribution indicated that most students (51.7%, $n = 106$) perceived a high level of parental social support, followed by 32.7% ($n = 67$) in the low category, 12.7% ($n = 26$) in the very high category, and only 2.9% ($n = 6$) in the very low category. In contrast, the distribution for emotion regulation showed a different pattern: 49.3% ($n = 101$) of students fell into the low category, 41.0% ($n = 84$) into the high category, 6.8% ($n = 14$) into the very low category, and only 2.9% ($n = 6$) into the very high category. Categorization for both variables followed an empirical class-interval procedure, in which the interval width was obtained by dividing the range between each scale's highest and lowest observed total scores by the number of categories (four). This yielded an interval width of 9 for parental social support (range 55–92: 55–64 very low, 65–74 low, 75–84 high, 85–94 very high) and 11 for emotion regulation (range 75–118: 75–86 very low, 87–98 low, 99–110 high, 111–122 very high).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Parental Social Support and Emotion Regulation

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Dominant Category	%
Parental Social Support (X)	205	55.00	92.00	77.14	6.48	High	51.7
Emotion Regulation (Y)	205	75.00	118.00	97.19	7.61	Low	49.3

According to Sarafino and Smith (2011), a high level of perceived parental social support indicates that students adequately receive all four dimensions of support emotional/esteem, tangible/instrumental, informational, and companionship support. Jameel et al. (2024) similarly show that parental support continues to predict university students' well-being indirectly through the quality of the parent–child relationship, rather than through tangible assistance alone; this suggests that even perceived or relational forms of support can function as a psychological resource for students living apart from their parents. Wicaksono et al. (2025), drawing on House's classic framework, further note that instrumental support tends to be the most directly felt form of assistance during periods of pressure, which may explain why parental social support was reported as high among PGSD students, consistent with the still-strong family ties characteristic of Indonesian culture. This aligns with Saptandari et al. (2025), who found that social support was associated with greater academic resilience among Indonesian university students, partly through its influence on emotion-regulation strategies, suggesting that supportive relationships remain a salient source of psychological grounding even as students approach graduation.

The comparatively lower emotion-regulation scores, however, suggest that nearly half of the final-year students in this study still struggled to manage their emotions optimally while completing their thesis. Gratz and Roemer (2004) note that low emotion regulation may stem from weaknesses in specific components, such as limited emotional awareness, difficulty accepting emotional experiences, poor impulse control, or restricted access to effective regulation strategies. This is consistent with Gross (2014) view that emotion regulation is shaped by cognitive demands and situational pressures; final-year students preparing a thesis typically face substantial cognitive load the pressure to finish on time, uncertainty about supervisory feedback, and anxiety about graduation conditions that plausibly explain why a considerable share of students fell into the low-to-moderate emotion-regulation range. This pattern aligns with prior findings on final-year students' vulnerability to anxiety about the future (Syuhadak et al., 2023) and academic stress during thesis completion (Tanjung Sari et al., 2024). Riemens et al. (2023) similarly found that parental communication style regarding emotion distinguished as emotion-coaching versus emotion-dismissing reactions shapes children's emotion-regulation capacity from an early developmental stage; parents who adopt an emotion-dismissing style may contribute to lower emotion regulation even when the overall level of support they provide is perceived as high, which may help explain why a substantial proportion of students reported low emotion regulation despite predominantly high parental support.

Before the hypothesis was tested, assumption checks were carried out first, beginning with normality and linearity. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test on the main sample ($N = 205$) yielded Asymp. Sig. values of 0.076 for parental social support and 0.063 for emotion regulation, both above 0.05, confirming that the data for both variables were normally distributed. The subsequent linearity test showed a Deviation from Linearity

significance of 0.958 ($p > 0.05$), confirming a linear relationship between the two variables (Table 2), so that the assumptions required for Pearson correlation analysis (Curran-Everett, 2017) were satisfied.

Table 2. Results of Normality and Linearity Tests (N = 205)

Test	Statistic	Sig.	Description
Normality – Parental Social Support (K–S)	.059	.076	Normal
Normality – Emotion Regulation (K–S)	.061	.063	Normal
Linearity (Deviation from Linearity)	F = .585	.958	Linear

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation, $r(203) = .412$, $p < .001$ (Table 3). The alternative hypothesis (H_a) was therefore accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. Following the conventional interpretation guideline, a coefficient of 0.412 falls within the moderate category, indicating that greater parental social support was associated with better emotion regulation among final-year students, although the relationship was not strong enough to be considered the dominant explanatory factor. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.170$) indicated that parental social support accounted for 17% of the variance in emotion regulation, while the remaining 83% was attributable to other factors outside the scope of this study. Gross (2014) notes that emotion regulation is shaped not only by social and environmental influences but also by biological and neurobiological processes, developmental stage, and individual differences such as temperament, self-control, and emotional sensitivity; these unmeasured factors, alongside cognitive appraisal and social support from peers or thesis supervisors, plausibly account for a substantial share of the variance left unexplained by parental social support alone.

Table 3. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination

Variables	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	R ²	Category
Parental Social Support × Emotion Regulation	.412**	.000	.170	Moderate

This finding is consistent with several previous studies. Rizkiana and Indrawati (2019) reported a comparable positive relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation among adolescents ($r = 0.471$), reinforcing the notion that parental social support consistently relates to emotion-regulation capacity across different developmental stages, from adolescence to early adulthood. Baroinnisrina and Ardyanti (2026) similarly found a significant positive effect of parental social support on emotion regulation among junior high school students, although with a considerably larger contribution (64.2%) than found in the present study; this difference may be attributed to developmental characteristics, as junior high school students remain more dependent on parental involvement in daily life, whereas final-year university students have greater autonomy and access to alternative sources of support such as peers and academic supervisors, which may reduce the relative influence of parental support on their emotion regulation. The protective role of both variables is further supported by Adinda and Prastuti (2021), who found that social support and emotion regulation jointly reduced the risk of suicidal ideation among university students, and by Putri et al. (2025) and Aprilia and Yoenanto (2022), who reported that emotion regulation and perceived social support together mitigated academic stress during thesis writing.

Findings from the broader international literature converge with this pattern. Wan and Huang (2025) found that parental emotional warmth enhanced social support, which in turn positively predicted emotion regulation and reduced school bullying among students, illustrating a support-to-regulation pathway consistent with the present findings. Among adolescent samples, supportive parental emotion socialization has similarly been linked to more adaptive use of emotion-regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, and to fewer internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety (Guo et al., 2024). Within university-student populations specifically, lower parental psychological control has been associated with fewer emotion-regulation difficulties via greater self-compassion (Chen et al., 2025), while perceived parental support has been shown to relate to fewer depressive symptoms through emotion-regulation strategies and resilience in a large sample of Chinese college students (Ye et al., 2022). More directly relevant to the present sample, Boyes et al. (2023) reported that stronger family functioning and social support were associated with more adaptive emotion regulation among emerging-adult university students, with poorer emotion regulation in turn linked to a greater likelihood of self-injurious behavior. A warm parenting style has likewise been found to predict better emotion regulation among undergraduates, partly through the quality of academic and social interactions with faculty (Yao et al., 2022), and retrospective reports indicate that adults who recalled supportive parental emotion-socialization practices in childhood also reported stronger emotion-regulation skills and lower trait anxiety (Cabecinha-Alati et al., 2020). Taken together, this body of work reinforces the conclusion that parental social support functions as a

consistent, though partial, contributor to emotion regulation across developmental stages and cultural contexts, even as the strength of the association varies with sample and measurement differences.

Not all prior findings point in the same direction, however. Siswandi and Caninsti (2020), studying first-year migrant students in Jakarta, found that peer social support significantly predicted cognitive reappraisal ($p = .003$) but did not significantly predict expressive suppression ($p = .114$). This partial null finding suggests that the association between social support and emotion regulation may depend on the specific regulatory strategy and the source of support being measured. Unlike the present study, which measured parental support specifically, their instrument assessed peer support alone. This distinction may help explain the divergent results: as Jameel et al. (2024) found, parental support continues to influence student well-being through an ongoing parent-child relationship rather than requiring daily face-to-face contact, whereas peer support depends more heavily on proximity and daily interaction, whose influence on emotion regulation may vary across strategies and contexts. Differences in academic discipline and institutional context between the two samples may also have contributed to this discrepancy.

Returning to the present dataset, a closer examination of correlations between specific dimensions of parental social support and aspects of emotion regulation (Table 4) revealed that companionship support was the only dimension significantly correlated with all six aspects of emotion regulation, including the sole dimension significantly related to goal-directed behavior ($r = .201$, $p < .01$). Emotional/esteem support was significantly correlated with five of the six aspects, most strongly with emotional acceptance ($r = .243$, $p < .01$), while tangible/instrumental support and informational support showed comparatively weaker and more selective patterns of association. This pattern suggests that parents' willingness to be present and to spend time with their children may be the most consistent contributor to students' capacity to regulate emotion during thesis completion, more so than material or informational forms of assistance alone.

Table 4. Correlations between Parental Social Support Dimensions and Emotion Regulation Aspects

Support Dimension / ER Aspect	Awareness	Clarity	Acceptance	Impulse Control	Access to Strategies	Goal-Directed
Emotional/Esteem Support	.181**	.215**	.243**	.232**	.162*	.080
Tangible/Instrumental Support	.182**	.057	.043	.135	.140*	.127
Informational Support	.064	.163*	.183**	.168*	.074	.077
Companionship Support	.216**	.206**	.205**	.137*	.161*	.201**

Note: ** correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); unmarked values indicate non-significant correlations ($p > .05$).

Taken together, these findings help clarify the pathway linking parental social support to emotion regulation. Emotional/esteem support fosters a sense of security and acceptance (Sarafino & Smith, 2011), which supports the development of emotional awareness and emotional acceptance (Gratz & Roemer, 2004), as students who feel accepted by their parents tend to be more willing to acknowledge and accept their own emotions without shame. Tangible/instrumental and informational support ease the practical burden and confusion students face when encountering thesis-related obstacles, thereby reducing the cognitive demands and situational pressure that give rise to negative emotions (Gross, 2014), which in turn creates room for better impulse control and more effective access to emotion-regulation strategies. Companionship support, meanwhile, fosters a sense of not being alone in facing academic pressure, helping students remain goal-directed even while experiencing unpleasant emotional states. Through this chain of processes, parental social support functions not merely as a variable that happens to move alongside emotion regulation, but as an active social-environmental factor (Gross, 2014) that shapes final-year students' capacity to regulate their emotions.

This study has several limitations. Its correlational design cannot establish causality between parental social support and emotion regulation. Data were collected through self-report instruments administered at a single point in time, raising the possibility of common method bias. The sample was limited to PGSD students at a single university, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other study programs or institutions. The instruments were also developed by the researcher based on theoretical dimensions and would benefit from further construct validation using more comprehensive psychometric approaches, such as confirmatory factor analysis, in future research. This study also did not examine potential gender differences in emotion regulation, which prior research suggests may be a relevant factor to explore (Widyadari & Fitriani, 2023).

Conclusions

This study found a positive and significant relationship between parental social support and emotion regulation among final-year students of the PGSD study program at Universitas PGRI Semarang ($r = .412$, $p < .001$),

supporting the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Students who perceived greater parental social support tended to demonstrate better emotion regulation, although the relationship was of moderate strength, with parental social support explaining 17% of the variance in emotion regulation. While most students perceived high parental social support, nearly half nonetheless reported comparatively low emotion regulation, indicating that parental support was not associated with optimal emotion regulation in all cases and that other factors likely also contribute to students' emotional management during thesis completion. Given that parental social support explained only a modest share of the variance in emotion regulation, and that nearly half of the students who perceived high parental support still reported low emotion regulation, these findings do not position parental involvement as the primary lever for improving students' emotional stability. Rather, they suggest that attention to parental social support, alongside psychoeducation on emotion regulation and other contributing factors, may usefully inform guidance and counseling services for final-year students. Because the sample was drawn from a single study program at one university using self-report instruments at a single time point, its generalizability and external validity remain limited; future studies are therefore encouraged to involve more diverse samples, spanning multiple institutions, study programs, and data sources, and to examine additional factors, such as peer support and cognitive appraisal, that may further explain students' emotion-regulation capacity.

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