

Parental Psychological Control, Big Five Personality and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation among Adolescents

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Abstract

Introduction: The study aims to examine the big five personality (Dimensions) as a mediator between Parental Psychological Control (PPC) and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DER). It was also researched that child characteristics moderate the effects of parenting outcomes.

Method: Three hundred adolescents studying in different schools in Delhi were selected based on the random sampling technique. Three scales, namely Psychological Control Scale—Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR), Big Five Inventory (BFI), and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale Short Form (DERS-SF) were administered. A dichotomous independent variable (named X1) was used in the research where PPC was divided into two groups 'Both High' group VS 'Others'.

Results: Obtained scores were analyzed by using Parallel mediation analysis through PROCESS macro version 3.2.01 for SPSS created by Hayes in 2018. Results of the mediational analysis revealed that X1(Both High vs. Others) significantly predicted neuroticism, and X1, neuroticism, and openness significantly predicted DER. Total effect ($c=3.78$, $p<.05$) and direct effect ($c=2.73$, $p<.05$) were found to be significant. Indirect effects were obtained by the Bootstrapping method. Findings revealed a specific indirect effect of neuroticism to be significant (coeff. = .1075; LLCI-ULCI= .0077 to.2102).

Conclusion: Neuroticism significantly mediates the relationship between emotion regulation and PPC. It is necessary to incorporate both individual and environmental factors to understand emotional development processes. It is therefore suggested to develop interventions that not only helps adolescents to learn effective ways to regulate emotions but to also guide parents to cater to the child's emotional needs effectually.

Keywords: Parental Psychological Control, Personality, Emotion Regulation, Adolescents

Introduction

In human development, emotions play a vital role [1]. The ability to effectively regulate emotions becomes a crucial process in adolescents, an important developmental milestone marked by key physiological and psychosocial shifts [2]. As labelled by Gross, emotion regulation is the process through which one can influence the type, expression, and experience of emotions [3].

As proposed by emotion developmental models, child's emotion regulatory process is shaped by the parents [4]. One such aspect of child-rearing is psychological control, the term coined by Barber which comprises the use of invasive and deceptive practices by parents to force the child and by manipulating the bond shared by parent-child through guilt induction and love withdrawal [5]. They often engage in these behaviors to shape a child's actions to be in accordance with their wishes and goals. This kind of parenting is not only intrusive to 'child's individual,' but it also hampers the 'self-discovery' process by the child [6]. Barber et al. suggested that psychologically controlling parents encourage children to be dependent on them for decision making, and parental approval becomes a necessity for making any choices [7]. Control also involves verbal constraints and deals with the

ignorance of the child's expression of anxieties and disagreement [8].

Development of self-regulatory abilities and sense of autonomy may be hindered if a child's emotional and psychological requirements are not fulfilled [9]. As posited in the 'Self Determination Theory' (SDT), this type of parental behavior impedes youngsters' universal psychological needs. These needs have been described as inborn mental requirements that are vital for continuous psychological development and welfare [10]. Three elementary needs indicated by SDT include the 'Need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness'. Literature suggests that if these requisites are gratified, it contributes to welfare, and if these needs are not satisfied, it can lead to maladjustment [11]. Several researchers have pointed out that ineffective parenting, such as psychological control, damages a child's self-esteem and competence, and has been linked to emotional dysfunction [12].

Personality can be described as similarities and stability in actions, anticipation, and views that are steady [13]. Personality traits are shaped by the interplay of both genetic and environmental factors [14]. Although numerous theories define personality, most researchers agree over 'the five-factor model' of personality [15]. This model broadly covers personality with five distinctive traits, 'namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness.' Extroversion is exemplified with high amiability, firmness, volubility, and self-assurance. Agreeableness is described as being supportive and considerate. Neuroticism is depicted by the degree of constancy of emotions. Openness refers to intellectual sense and the extensiveness of cultural interests. Finally, conscientiousness is typified by being systematic, structured, and success-orientation [16]. Empirical evidence emphasizes the role of personality in crucial developmental outcomes such as behavioral issues, adjustment, and indulges in risk behaviors in both youngsters and teenagers [17].

Even though existing literature suggests the damaging role of psychologically controlling parenting, personality can also shape the manifestation cost related to psychological Control. Current models suggest the importance of external as well as internal factors in emotion regulation abilities. Based on the Diathesis stress model, individuals with certain predisposed personality traits are more prone to the adverse impact of child-rearing [18]. Likewise, the Differential Susceptibility hypothesis also suggests the disparities in a child's reaction to parenting. It asserts that children with a susceptible personality are not only at more risk to harmful impacts of parenting, but positive parenting or the absence of negative parenting is going to be beneficial for them [19].

The skill to detect, access, and regulate emotions varies from person to person [20], and these differences incline them as to how they react to the circumstances. Previous studies have related neuroticism with difficulties in regulating emotions, and extraversion has been linked positively with emotion regulation [21]. Literature review suggests that a very few studies have tried to explore the variables; parental psychological control, personality, and

emotion regulation together. To the best of our knowledge, no study has yet explored the mediational role of personality in the relationship between parental psychological control and difficulties in emotion regulation especially in the Indian context. The study is unique in the sense that assesses the interplay of both parental psychological control and personality on the emotional regulation process. This study aims to examine the mediational role of the Big five personality (Dimensions) between Parental Psychological Control (PPC) and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DER).

Method

A list of different private schools in Delhi, which are registered with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Board, was taken. Out of that list, 10 schools were randomly selected using the lottery system and were approached for data collection, 7 schools agreed to take part. After permissions from the school authorities, systematic random techniques were used, and every 3rd student listed on the attendance sheet (grades, 9th-12th) were approached. Only willing Participants were selected (233 Males and 67 Females, total= 300).

The tools used in this study were as follows:

Psychological Control Scale—Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR): Developed by Barber [5] this eight-item unidimensional scale. The responses were obtained using a three-point Likert scale. Participants rated both the parents independently with a higher score indicating greater psychological control. Rogers and colleagues reported the Cronbach alphas for this scale on adolescent samples ranging between 0.85 and 0.91 for perceived mothers' psychological control and 0.82-0.91 for perceived fathers' psychological control [22]. Cronbach's alpha for the present study was found to be .64 and .61 for perceived mothers' psychological control and perceived fathers' psychological control, respectively.

Big Five Inventory (BFI): This tool has been developed by John et al. [23] comprising 44 items with five broad dimensions 'Extroversion' (eight items), 'Agreeableness' (nine items), 'Conscientiousness' (nine items), 'Neuroticism' (eight items) and 'Openness' (ten items). Reardon et al. reported the coefficient alphas for five traits ranging from .70 to .80 (average $\alpha = .74$) [24]. For the current research, the Cronbach alphas for five traits were Extroversion ($\alpha = .60$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = .61$), Conscientiousness ($\alpha = .60$), Neuroticism ($\alpha = .63$), Openness ($\alpha = .61$).

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale-Short Form (DERS-SF): This 18-item scale developed by Kaufman et al. [25] is a short form of the original scale with the same name developed by Gratz and Roemer [26]. This scale consists of six subscales namely lack of emotional awareness, non-acceptance of emotional responses, impulse control difficulties, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, lack of emotional clarity and difficulties in engaging in goal-directed behaviour. A total score was used for the present study. Charak et al. reported the internal reliability of 0.90 for the adolescent sample on the composite score [27]. For this investigation, the Cronbach alpha was found to be .81.

School authorities were contacted with a concise research report and its objectives. After obtaining the required permissions, the informed consent of the students was taken. They were informed about voluntary participation, rights of withdrawal, and assured confidentiality. After the rapport formation, all the scales were administered to willing participants.

Results

Obtained scores were analysed by different statistical techniques using SPSS 22.0. Adolescents rated their parents on the psychological control scale, maternal and paternal scores were accounted as two separate variables. Later on both the variables were dummy coded using the median split and were divided into high scores (coded as 1) and low scores (coded as 0) for both the parents separately. Furthermore, a dichotomous dummy variable (BH_PPC) was created where cases of both the parents being rated high were coded as 1 (Both High), and the rest of them were coded as 0 (Others). The check for normality, BH_PPC, and dimensions of big five personality were regressed on DER. Normal distribution of residuals with no extreme outliers which was observed as the histogram was fairly symmetrical (figure 1). Also, Linearity in normal probability plot indicated, a normal distribution of error term (figure 2).

The results of Mean and SD in the descriptive analysis table (Table 1a & 1b) showed high scores on DER, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness and a lower score on agreeableness for participants of the 'Both high' group when compared with the 'Other' group participants. The correlation matrix revealed that DER was negatively correlated with extroversion, conscientiousness, and positively with neuroticism dimensions of personality for 'Both high' group. On the other hand, in the case of 'other' group, DER positively correlated with Neuroticism and Openness.

As suggested by Baron and Kenny, Multiple regression analysis was carried out for establishing the criteria for

mediation [28]. It was checked whether (1) BH_PPC predicted Personality, (2) if DER was predicted by Personality Dimensions, and (3) if BH_PPC predicted DER. Results (Table 2a & 2b) indicated that BH_PPC, Neuroticism, and Openness significantly predicted DER. Also, BH_PPC significantly predicted Neuroticism.

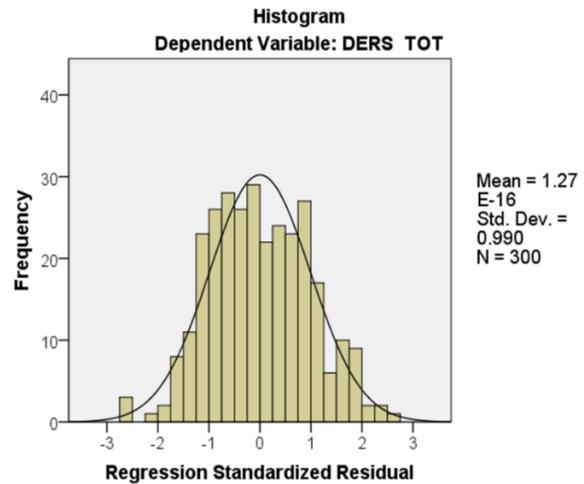


Figure 1. Normal Distribution Curve of Residuals

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

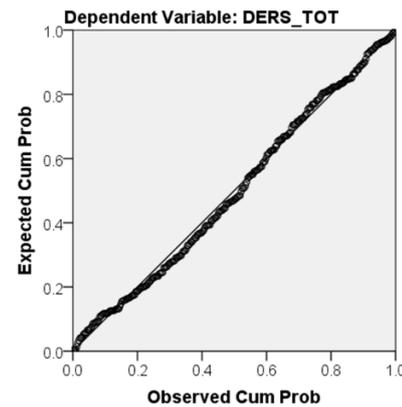


Figure 2. Normal Probability Plot indicating Linearity

Table 1a: Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations based on the category of Parental Psychological Control for Both High Group (N=191)

	Mean	SD	Correlations					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1 OPE	34.8	4.50	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 NEU	24.1	5.28	-.01	-	-	-	-	-
3 CONS	28.6	5.18	.06	-.24**	-	-	-	-
4 AGR	31.2	4.98	.25**	-.09	-.22**	-	-	-
5 EXT	26.4	4.81	.20**	-.24*	.29**	.19**	-	-
6 DER	51.5	10.6	-.09	.47**	-.21**	-.11	-.16*	-

Notes. BH_PPC=Parental Psychological Control (Both High vs Others), DER =Difficulties in Emotion Regulation, EXT=Extraversion, AGR=Agreeableness, CON=Conscientiousness, NEU=Neuroticism, OPE=openness *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 1b: Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations based on the Category of Parental Psychological Control for 'Others' Group (N=109)

	Mean	SD	Correlations					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1 OPE	34.4	5.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 NEU	22.7	5.3	.007	-	-	-	-	-
3 CONS	28.2	5.7	.16	-.07	-	-	-	-
4 AGR	31.5	5.4	.42**	-.14	.21*	-	-	-
5 EXT	26.3	4.7	.12	-.04	.09	.05	-	-
6 DER	47.7	11.4	-.20*	.34**	-.14	-.18	-.11	-

Notes. BH_PPC=Parental Psychological Control (Both High vs Others), DER =Difficulties in Emotion Regulation, EXT=Extraversion, AGR=Agreeableness, CON=Conscientiousness, NEU=Neuroticism, OPE=openness *p<.05, **p<.01

Parallel mediation analysis with a dichotomous independent (X) variable was conducted using PROCESS macro version 3.2.01 for SPSS created by Hayes. In parallel mediation, two or more mediators are tested together and it is possible to account for shared variances between them [29]. In this analysis the independent variable dichotomous in the nature was used. The software using the indicator coding technique a variable named X1 was created which further categorized the BH_PPC into two groups namely 'Both high' and 'Others' for comparisons.

Results of the mediational analysis (Figure 3) revealed that X1 significantly predicted Neuroticism (a4), and DER was significantly predicted by X1(c), Neuroticism (b4), and Openness (b5). Total effect (c=3.78, p<.05) and direct effect (c=2.73, p<.05) were found to be significant. Indirect effects were obtained by the Bootstrapping method (5000). Findings revealed a specific indirect effect of Neuroticism to be significant (coeff. =.1075; LLCI-ULCI=.0077 to.2102). Overall, the results of the analysis revealed a partial mediation.

Table 2a: Regression Predicting Difficulties in Emotion Regulation and Big Five Personality Dimensions from Parental Psychological Control (N=300)

Predictor	Criterion	R ²	β	t	p
BH_PPC	DER	.027	.165	2.89	.004*
BH_PPC	EXT	.000	.019	.322	.748
BH_PPC	AGR	.001	-.031	-.530	.597
BH_PPC	CONS	.002	.042	.723	.470
BH_PPC	NEU	.016	.126	2.191	.029*
BH_PPC	OPEN	.001	-.036	-.616	.538

Notes. R²=Determination Coefficient, β= standardized Beta Coefficient, t=t test, p= significance level*p<.05 BH_PPC=Parental Psychological Control (Both High vs. Others), DER=Difficulties in Emotion Regulation, EXT=Extraversion, AGR=Agreeableness, CON=Conscientiousness, NEU=Neuroticism, OPE=openness *p<.05

Table 2b: Regression Predicting Difficulties in Emotion Regulation from Big Five Personality Dimensions (N=300)

Predictor	Criterion	R ²	β	t	p
EXT	DER	.222	-.063	-1.177	.240
AGR			-.049	-.883	.378
CONS			-.096	-1.767	.078
NEU			.428	8.076	.0001*
OPEN			-.112	-2.040	.042*

Notes. R²=Determination Coefficient, β= standardized Beta Coefficient, t=t test, p= significance level*p<.05 DER=Difficulties in Emotion Regulation, EXT=Extraversion, AGR=Agreeableness, CON=Conscientiousness, NEU=Neuroticism, OPE=openness

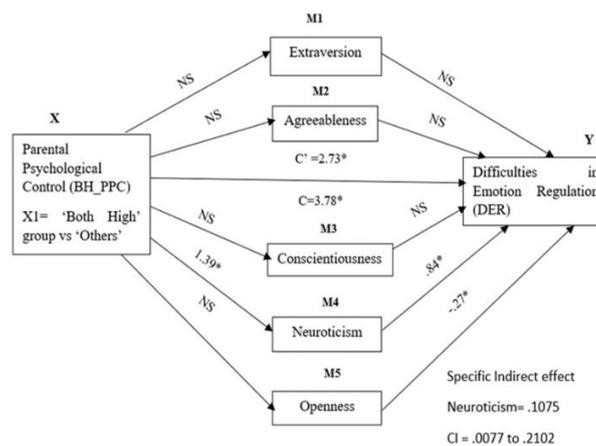


Figure 3. Proposed Parallel Mediation Model with Dichotomous Independent Variable

X=Independent Variable, M₁₋₅=Mediators (Big Five Personality Dimensions), Y= Dependent variable. Arrows from X to M₁₋₅, indicates path 'a' coefficient and from M₁₋₅ to Y indicates path 'b' coefficient. Direct effect of X on Y is represented by C' and C depicts the total effect of X on Y. NS= non-significant, * =p<0.05. Bootstrapping level:5000, CI = confidence interval

Source: Author's own computation

Discussion

The objective of the investigation was to examine the link amid parental psychological control and DER and the mediational effect of the Big five personality. Path coefficient analysis revealed that X1 positively predicted DER (Both High vs. Others), which implies that the 'Both high' group differed significantly on DER when compared with the 'others' group. The result is consistent with previous studies that link high levels of parental control

with intrinsic issues [5]. In a similar research, psychological control by caregivers was linked to a greater negative effect on youngsters [30]. The DER was found to be negatively linked with Openness and positively with Neuroticism. As echoed by earlier studies, these five personality dimensions influence the way individuals think, feel, and act to a given situation [31]. Neuroticism is depicted by anxiety, sense of insecurity etc. High scorers on this dimension are more vulnerable to stress and

emotional instability. High scorers on Openness are characterized as more welcoming to changes, are more disciplined and cautious. This dimension of Personality has shown to have a buffering effect on unpleasant emotional experiences and tend to encourage better coping and regulation of emotion [32]. The total effect which can be defined as a sum of direct and indirect effects of X on Y, was found to be positively significant which implies that interaction between parenting and personality dimensions predicted DER. The findings which supported Differential Susceptibility hypothesis [19] and Diathesis Stress models [18] states that personality varies the effects of parental psychological control over the emotion regulation capabilities of the children. Direct effect (acquired by regressing IV on the DV while controlling M) was found to be significant, indicating that X1 predicted DER. Zarra-Nezhad et al. obtained similar results. They found that mother and father high psychological control was related to an elevated level of emotional issues in cases of youngsters with temperamental issues [33]. As proposed by Hayes special attention should be given to specific indirect effects, which are obtained by controlling the effect of other mediators [29]. Results revealed that indirect effect for Neuroticism dimension of personality differed from zero implying the mediational influence of this dimension in the relationship between PPC & DER. Positive coefficients signified High PPC, and Neuroticism contributed with greater DER. Those with higher scores in Neuroticism have a pessimistic approach towards emotion regulation due to fear of failure [3]. Dynes found that high scorers on this dimension are more likely to engage in unsuccessful adaptive strategies to cope with emotional experiences such as shifting their attention from the situation, and such maladaptive strategies are reinforced due to temporary reduction of negative affects at that given point of time [34].

Conclusion

The study has contributed to the existing literature on emotion regulation. It highlights the role of both personality and parenting on the emotional regulatory capabilities of adolescents. For understanding the emotional development processes, it is necessary to incorporate both individual and environmental factors. It is therefore suggested to develop interventions that not only help adolescents to learn effective ways to regulate emotions but also guide parents to cater to the child's emotional needs effectually. The present research was restricted to the Delhi region; therefore future research can be directed to a larger sample and include qualitative aspects to get a better insight into this field.

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