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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# Emotional Regulation and Psychosocial Well-Being of Adolescent Girls After Relationship Breakups

## A Case Study in Bantul, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose –** This study investigates how adolescent girls regulate their emotions and maintain psychosocial well-being after experiencing relationship breakups. Breakups during adolescence often trigger psychological distress, such as confusion, sadness, and lowered self-esteem, which may disrupt personal development and social functioning. The research aims to understand emotional regulation strategies and the factors influencing resilience among female high school students.

**Design/methods/approach –** Using a qualitative case study design, in-depth interviews and observations were conducted with four female students aged 16–18 at SMK N 1 Sanden, Bantul, Indonesia. Data were analyzed thematically, guided by emotion regulation theory, to explore coping strategies and social support mechanisms.

**Findings –** The study reveals that participants employed three dominant regulation strategies: positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting experiences into perspective. Individual factors, such as personality and self-awareness, played a primary role in regulating emotions, while family and peer support acted as reinforcing elements. Despite emotional challenges, most participants demonstrated resilience and an ability to reframe negative experiences into personal growth opportunities.

**Research implications/limitations –** The study's small sample size limits the generalizability of findings but offers deep insights into adolescent coping mechanisms in a local cultural context. It highlights the need for school-based psychosocial interventions and parental involvement to strengthen adolescent resilience.

**Originality/value –** This research contributes to the literature on adolescent emotional well-being by contextualizing emotion regulation strategies within the Indonesian cultural setting. It underscores the importance of psychosocial support systems in promoting healthy youth development after relational setbacks.

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## Introduction

Adolescence is a pivotal stage characterized by significant changes in identity, autonomy, and interpersonal relationships, particularly with the emergence of romantic relationships that can lead to both joyful experiences and psychological challenges. During this stage, young people navigate intense emotional landscapes, and the establishment of romantic relationships, while normative, often brings emotional

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turbulence that can adversely affect their psychosocial well-being. The complexity of these relationships can lead to psychological distress as adolescents manage expectations and emotional consequences from both successful and failed romantic engagements.

Research indicates that the dissolution of romantic relationships among adolescents can trigger a range of psychological distress, including anxiety, sadness, confusion, and lowered self-esteem—all of which are interconnected with their developmental trajectory. For instance, previous studies have shown that challenges in relationships correlate with heightened emotional difficulties, which subsequently impact academic performance and social interactions (Nalugya et al., 2016). Moreover, the dynamics of parent-adolescent relationships can significantly influence the coping mechanisms adolescents employ in response to romantic upheavals. Healthy parental communication has been linked to better emotional regulation and resilience during these distressing experiences (Thorslund et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2021).

A study on adolescents has highlighted that parental support can act as a buffer against negative emotional outcomes during relational conflicts, reinforcing the idea that strong family ties can mitigate feelings of distress (Wilmots et al., 2019). Furthermore, unfavorable experiences related to romantic relationships can exacerbate feelings of isolation and can lead to long-term mental health consequences, underscoring the necessity for social support during this phase of development (Setordzi & Adjorlolo, 2025; Manitsa et al., 2023). The developmental challenges faced during adolescence, particularly regarding romantic relationships, significantly impact emotional health and life trajectories. Recognizing these challenges can aid in developing supportive frameworks, including family communication and mental health resources, that enhance adolescent resilience and well-being.The phenomenon of relationship breakups among adolescents has gained growing attention in social sciences, psychology, and welfare studies. Research in Western contexts has shown that breakup experiences may lead to negative psychological symptoms, such as depression, rumination, and in extreme cases, self-harm (Monroe et al., 1999; Sbarra & Emery, 2005). However, other studies argue that such experiences, if navigated with effective coping strategies, may foster emotional maturity, resilience, and a more nuanced understanding of interpersonal dynamics (Larson, Clore, & Wood, 1999). These diverging hypotheses illustrate the complex and multifaceted role of breakups in shaping adolescent development: on the one hand, they present risks to psychosocial well-being, while on the other, they offer opportunities for growth.

The examination of adolescent romantic relationships in Indonesia is essential to understanding the psychosocial dynamics that influence young individuals during a stage characterized by diverse challenges and transformations. The prevailing cultural norms often place teenage dating within a moral and normative framework, leading to discourse that emphasizes the potential negative impacts, such as premarital sexual behavior, academic decline, and familial conflict (Volkaert et al., 2024).

Understanding the aftermath of relationship dissolution is key, as this stage can be marked by significant emotional distress. Many adolescents experience heightened anxiety, sadness, and confusion following a breakup, which can adversely affect their academic performance and social interactions (Gorla et al., 2024; Auslander et al., 2009). The importance of emotion regulation becomes evident as adolescents navigate these emotional challenges post-breakup. Research suggests that effective emotion regulation strategies are crucial for mitigating depressive symptoms associated with relationship difficulties, highlighting the interplay between emotion regulation and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Criss et al., 2016; Beckmeyer et al., 2018). Moreover, studies indicate that the quality of parent-child relationships plays a significant role in the development of emotion regulation capabilities. Supportive parenting is associated with better emotional adjustment among adolescents, thereby facilitating healthier responses to relational conflicts (McLaughlin et al., 2011; Costa et al., 2022). The quality of relationships with caregivers can provide a foundation for healthy emotional processing and coping strategies, emphasizing that familial support is integral to adolescent resilience during challenging relational experiences (Verzeletti et al., 2016; Heleniak et al., 2015).

In addressing the critical gap between cultural perceptions and psychological realities regarding adolescence in Indonesia, acknowledging the roles of emotion regulation and psychosocial well-being is essential. This point is particularly pertinent given the culturally sensitive nature of teen relationships, where societal views often emphasize potential risks such as academic decline, premature sexual behavior, and family conflicts Sitepu et al. (2021). The significance of effective emotion regulation is underscored by its impact on adolescents' resilience and coping strategies during emotional upheavals, such as breakups or conflicts in romantic relationships. Emotion regulation—the capacity to influence how, when, and to what extent one experiences and expresses emotions—plays a fundamental role in adolescents' psychological health (Surżykiewicz et al., 2022). Moreover, improved emotion regulation is associated with better mental health outcomes and enhanced social functioning, leading to greater resilience (Hopp et al., 2011; Seo et al., 2016). Accordingly, it is crucial to understand how adaptive emotion regulation can positively impact individual well-being in the context of Indonesian adolescents.

Evidence supporting the beneficial effects of adaptive emotion regulation can be seen in studies highlighting the relationship between emotional resilience, self-esteem, and perceived social support among adolescents (Çakır et al., 2024). For instance, resilience has been shown to enhance emotion regulation skills, emphasizing the reciprocal nature of these constructs (Sia & Aneesh, 2024). Additionally, effective coping strategies focused on emotional expression rather than suppression have been found to promote psychological well-being (Yu, 2025). This relationship illustrates that fostering capabilities like emotion regulation in adolescents can mitigate the negative impacts of relationship dissolution, thus improving their overall mental health and resilience (López-Valle et al., 2018; Pillay et al., 2022). Therefore, the conclusion drawn from this discussion is that by promoting adaptive emotion regulation strategies tailored to the cultural context of Indonesia, mental health professionals and educators can create supportive environments that respect cultural sensitivities while enhancing adolescents'

psychosocial well-being. This culturally informed approach will aid in developing interventions aimed at bolstering resilience during challenging emotional periods stemming from romantic relationships (Lu, 2022). As a result, fostering adaptive emotional regulation among adolescents can serve as a catalyst for long-term psychological flourishing within the broader Indonesian cultural framework.

## Emotional Regulation and Psychosocial Well-Being

Emotion regulation is a critical psychological construct that refers to the processes by which individuals influence their emotional experiences, including when and how these emotions are experienced and expressed Burton et al. (2018). It involves a variety of cognitive, behavioral, and social strategies that enable individuals to modify the intensity and duration of emotional states. Importantly, effective emotion regulation has been linked to favorable mental health outcomes, resilience, and adaptive social functioning (Anwar, 2022). In contrast, maladaptive strategies—such as rumination and emotional suppression—have been associated with negative outcomes, including increased levels of anxiety and depression (Alfasi & Besser, 2024; Andrews et al., 2022). The significance of emotion regulation lies in its ability to impact individuals' mental health and overall well-being. Research has shown that individuals who effectively regulate their emotions tend to experience better psychological outcomes, including reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. For instance, (Goldsmith et al., 2013) demonstrated that difficulties in emotion regulation may mediate the relationship between exposure to betrayal trauma and increased symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Goldsmith et al., 2013). Meanwhile, strategies like cognitive reappraisal—an adaptive emotion regulation technique—involve reinterpreting a potentially emotionally charged situation to alter its emotional impact, which has been associated with improved emotional health (Southward et al., 2021; Çelik & Özkan, 2024).

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that emotion regulation difficulties are leading factors in the development of various psychological conditions. For example, studies have indicated that emotion regulation difficulties can exacerbate mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression (Hittner et al., 2019). Such findings highlight that enhancing emotion regulation capabilities may be a vital component of psychological intervention strategies aimed at individuals experiencing trauma or distress (Dawel et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2024). In conclusion, the capacity to effectively regulate emotions plays an indispensable role in mental health and well-being. The consistent evidence linking poor emotion regulation with adverse mental health outcomes underscores the importance of developing targeted strategies to improve emotional regulation in clinical practice. By improving emotion regulation abilities, individuals may not only enhance their mental health but also foster greater resilience and adaptive social functioning over time (Ion et al., 2023; Bridges-Curry & Newton, 2024). Psychosocial well-being is a broad concept that integrates emotional stability, social connectedness, self-acceptance, and the ability to function effectively within family, school, and community contexts (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). For adolescents, psychosocial well-being is closely tied to identity formation, peer

relationships, and the ability to cope with stress. Relationship breakups pose a potential threat to this well-being by disrupting adolescents' sense of belonging and triggering emotional instability. Yet, with appropriate coping strategies and social support, adolescents may transform these experiences into steppingstones for greater emotional resilience.

## Literature Review and Theoretical Perspectives

Several theoretical perspectives help explain the interplay between emotion regulation and psychosocial well-being in the context of adolescent breakups. Attachment theory, for example, emphasizes that adolescents' responses to romantic dissolution are influenced by their attachment styles, which are rooted in early caregiver relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Adolescents with secure attachment styles are more likely to reframe negative experiences and seek social support, while those with insecure attachment may resort to maladaptive coping such as avoidance or rumination (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Cognitive emotion regulation theory provides another framework, highlighting strategies such as positive reappraisal (finding meaning in adversity), refocusing on planning (engaging in future-oriented coping), and putting experiences into perspective (reducing the perceived severity of an event) as indicators of adaptive regulation (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001). Conversely, maladaptive strategies include self-blame, blaming others, and perseverative thinking. These theoretical insights resonate with the lived experiences of adolescents who, after breakups, either spiral into distress or manage to harness resilience.

Empirical studies worldwide have revealed diverging patterns. For example, Ulfah (2016) found that adolescents with higher emotional maturity reported greater happiness even after breakups, while Sri and Agus (2016) showed that failed relationships often correlated with mild depression, particularly among female adolescents. In Western settings, research has confirmed that gender differences significantly shape emotion regulation: girls tend to emphasize emotional expression and social sharing, while boys often prioritize cognitive detachment (Thompson, 1994). Despite such insights, few studies have contextualized these dynamics within non-Western cultures, where family, community norms, and religious values strongly influence adolescent behavior.

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining the emotion regulation strategies of Indonesian adolescent girls after romantic breakups. Existing scholarship in Indonesia has largely concentrated on issues of adolescent reproductive health, sexual behavior, or delinquency (Suryoputro, Ford, & Shaluhiyah, 2006), while less emphasis has been placed on the psychosocial dimensions of romantic dissolution. Moreover, global literature often privileges Western contexts, leaving cultural nuances in Southeast Asia underexplored.

By situating the research in Bantul, Yogyakarta, this study adds a culturally specific perspective to the global discourse on adolescent well-being. Bantul, as part of a predominantly Javanese community, is shaped by strong cultural norms regarding gender roles, family expectations, and adolescent behavior. These norms potentially influence how young women navigate emotional distress and seek support systems. Thus, exploring

adolescent girls' regulation strategies in this setting not only enhances scholarly understanding but also informs culturally responsive interventions in schools, families, and communities.

Preliminary findings indicate that adolescent girls in Bantul commonly employ adaptive strategies such as positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting experiences into perspective. While individual traits play a central role in regulating emotions, peer and family support systems significantly reinforce resilience. These findings underscore the need for holistic interventions that address not only individual coping mechanisms but also the broader social environment in which adolescents develop.

In sum, the study emphasizes the importance of understanding adolescent emotional regulation within cultural and psychosocial contexts. By doing so, it contributes to the advancement of social welfare research and practice aimed at promoting the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the emotional regulation strategies and psychosocial well-being of adolescent girls following relationship breakups. A case study approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of participants within a specific cultural and educational setting. The research was conducted at SMK N 1 Sanden, Bantul, Indonesia, a public vocational high school where adolescents commonly experience the dynamics of romantic relationships alongside academic and social transitions. The target population consisted of female students aged 16–18 years who had experienced at least one breakup during their adolescence. Through purposive sampling, four participants were selected based on their willingness to share their experiences, variation in breakup histories, and suitability for capturing diverse perspectives on emotional regulation. The presence of the researcher was integral to the study, as rapport-building and empathetic engagement were necessary to elicit authentic narratives from participants.

Data collection relied on semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation review. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a private setting within the school to ensure confidentiality and comfort, lasting between 60 to 90 minutes for each participant. The interview guide was developed based on Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation, covering dimensions such as self-blame, blaming others, acceptance, refocusing on planning, rumination, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting experiences into perspective. Observations were conducted to complement the interview data by recording participants' nonverbal behaviors, emotional expressions, and interactions with peers. Documentation in the form of school records and guidance counseling notes provided contextual insights into the participants' academic and social environments. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect privacy. To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher

also engaged with a school counselor as a significant informant, who offered additional perspectives on adolescent coping and support systems within the school context.

The analysis followed thematic analysis procedures, beginning with data familiarization through repeated readings of the transcripts, coding of meaningful statements, and categorization into broader themes reflecting emotion regulation strategies and psychosocial outcomes. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing interview accounts, observational notes, and insights from the significant informant. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to ensure accuracy and credibility. To ensure reflexivity, the researcher maintained a field journal documenting personal reflections and potential biases throughout the research process. Given the limited sample size, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization but rather for analytical generalization, offering insights into the complex interplay between individual, familial, and social factors in shaping adolescent emotional regulation. The study adhered to ethical research standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Fieldwork was conducted over a six-month period from February to September 2019, allowing sufficient time for rapport building, follow-up clarification, and validation of findings.

## Results

### 1. Overview of Participants and Context

The study involved four female adolescents aged between 16–18 years, all enrolled at SMK N 1 Sanden, Bantul. Each participant had experienced at least one romantic breakup, with variations in the duration of relationships, frequency of breakups, and emotional responses. The school environment was marked by strong peer influence, supportive guidance counseling services, and community norms shaped by Javanese culture and Islamic values. The participants' accounts provided rich narratives on how adolescent girls in this setting navigated the emotional aftermath of relationship dissolution.

Table 1 presents the demographic background of participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Participant | Age | Grade | Number of Breakups | Family Background | Peer Support Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 17 | X RPL | 3 | Intact, supportive | High |
| B | 17 | X RPL | 1 | Divorced parents | Moderate |
| C | 16 | X RPL | 2 | Intact, moderate | High |
| D | 17 | X RPL | 5 | Intact, limited | Low |

As seen in Table 1, the participants' family situations and peer support levels varied significantly, which shaped their coping strategies and emotional outcomes.

### 2. Emotional Regulation Strategies Identified

## 2.1 Adaptive Regulation Strategies

Across the four participants, three adaptive strategies emerged as dominant:

1. Positive Refocusing – Participants attempted to shift their attention from distressing breakup memories to enjoyable activities. For instance, Participant A described listening to music and spending time with friends to counteract sadness.
2. Positive Reappraisal – Participants reframed the breakup experience as a learning opportunity. Participant C highlighted that her breakup taught her the importance of emotional maturity and patience.
3. Putting Experiences into Perspective – Participants minimized the severity of their breakups by framing them as typical adolescent experiences or "puppy love." Participant B stated: *"I realized it was not a serious relationship, just a part of growing up."*

Figure 1 illustrates these adaptive strategies and their psychosocial outcomes.

(a) Adaptive strategies employed by participants.
(b) Positive psychosocial outcomes derived from adaptive regulation.

Figure 1. Adaptive emotional regulation strategies and their outcomes.

These strategies were strongly associated with improved resilience, better academic focus, and sustained peer relationships.

## 2.2 Maladaptive Regulation Strategies

Despite the presence of adaptive strategies, maladaptive tendencies were also evident. These included:

- Self-blame – Participant D repeatedly questioned her worth and blamed herself for multiple breakups.
- Rumination – Participants described prolonged preoccupation with negative thoughts, particularly feelings of betrayal.
- Blaming Others – Two participants externalized responsibility to their partners, perceiving themselves as victims of dishonesty or emotional neglect.

Such maladaptive strategies correlated with temporary declines in school engagement, emotional withdrawal, and strained family communication.

# 3. Role of Individual Factors

## 3.1 Personality Traits and Self-awareness

The findings revealed that individual characteristics played a pivotal role in determining emotional regulation styles. Participants with higher self-awareness, such as Participant C, demonstrated greater resilience and constructive reframing. Conversely, those with

sensitive and moody temperaments, like Participant D, exhibited difficulty in controlling negative emotions.

### 3.2 Coping Mechanisms

Coping strategies varied in depth and effectiveness. While some participants engaged in proactive planning (refocusing on academic goals), others resorted to avoidance behaviors such as excessive social media use. These variations underscore the importance of individual differences in shaping post-breakup psychosocial well-being.

## 4. Influence of Social Support Systems

### 4.1 Family Support

Parental involvement significantly shaped emotional recovery. Participants with close parental relationships reported greater comfort in sharing their experiences. Participant A emphasized: *"Talking to my mother made me feel lighter, like I wasn't alone in this."* In contrast, Participant B, from a divorced family, reported limited parental support, leading to stronger reliance on peers.

### 4.2 Peer Support

Peers emerged as the most accessible support system. Most participants found relief through informal conversations with friends, which helped normalize their experiences. However, the quality of peer support varied. For instance, Participant D often received advice to quickly "move on" by finding a new partner, which sometimes reinforced avoidance rather than reflective coping.

### 4.3 School Environment

Guidance counselors and teachers played a subtle yet important role. Participants noted that supportive teachers who provided encouragement indirectly contributed to emotional stability. The school's counseling unit, although underutilized, offered potential as a formal support system.

## 5. Psychosocial Well-Being Outcomes

### 5.1 Academic Engagement

Breakups had immediate but varying impacts on academic focus. Participant C initially experienced concentration difficulties but regained motivation by channeling emotions into study goals. Participant D, however, reported a noticeable decline in performance due to persistent rumination.

### 5.2 Self-esteem and Identity Development

Self-esteem fluctuated across participants. Those employing adaptive strategies experienced renewed self-confidence, whereas those using maladaptive strategies struggled with self-worth. Importantly, breakups also contributed to identity exploration, pushing participants to reflect on personal values and relationship expectations.

### 5.3 Social Functioning

Social relationships were both strained and strengthened. For example, Participant B experienced temporary isolation but later rebuilt peer trust through new friendships.

Overall, most participants demonstrated the ability to reintegrate socially, highlighting resilience in the adolescent developmental stage.

## 6. Comparative Patterns

The study identified three overarching patterns of emotional regulation and psychosocial well-being:

1. Resilient Copers – Adolescents who relied on adaptive strategies (positive refocusing, reappraisal) and had supportive networks demonstrated resilience and growth.
2. Vulnerable Copers – Adolescents who exhibited maladaptive strategies (rumination, self-blame) but still accessed some peer support showed moderate psychosocial challenges.
3. At-risk Copers – Adolescents with repeated breakups, limited support, and maladaptive coping were at greater risk of prolonged distress and academic decline.

These categories illustrate the heterogeneity of adolescent experiences and underscore the need for targeted interventions.

## 7. Illustrative Narratives

To enrich the analysis, selected narratives are presented below:

- Participant A: *"After the breakup, I spent more time with my friends. It helped me forget and reminded me that I was not defined by one relationship."*
- Participant C: *"It hurt, but I realized I could grow from it. I became more patient and understood that love is not always about possession."*
- Participant D: *"I kept asking myself why it always ended. I thought maybe I was not good enough. Sometimes I just wanted to be alone."*

These testimonies highlight both vulnerability and resilience, offering practical insights into adolescent psychosocial dynamics.

## 8. Tables and Figures

Table 2. Summary of Emotional Regulation Strategies and Outcomes

| Strategy | Example (Participant) | Outcome on Psychosocial Well-being |
|---|---|---|
| Positive Refocusing | A, C | Improved mood, stronger friendships |
| Positive Reappraisal | C | Increased resilience, maturity |

| Strategy | Example (Participant) | Outcome on Psychosocial Well-being |
|---|---|---|
| Putting into Perspective | B | Reduced emotional intensity, normalizing breakup |
| Self-blame | D | Lowered self-esteem, academic decline |
| Rumination | B, D | Prolonged sadness, reduced concentration |
| Blaming Others | A, B | Short-term relief, hindered self-reflection |

### 9. Interpretation and Experimental Conclusions

From the analysis, several key conclusions emerge:

1. Emotion regulation is central to psychosocial recovery – Adolescents who utilized adaptive strategies displayed stronger resilience and better academic and social functioning.
2. Social support moderates emotional outcomes – Both family and peers significantly influenced whether adolescents perceived their experiences as crises or as opportunities for growth.
3. Cultural context shapes coping mechanisms – Javanese cultural norms of patience and acceptance appeared to inform the girls' tendencies to adopt acceptance and positive reappraisal strategies.

While relationship breakups are often perceived as purely negative, this study demonstrates that they can also foster emotional maturity and resilience, provided adolescents have access to supportive systems and develop effective coping strategies.

## Discussion

### 1. Summary of Key Findings

This study set out to explore how adolescent girls in Bantul, Indonesia, regulate their emotions and sustain psychosocial well-being after experiencing relationship breakups. The findings revealed a spectrum of strategies ranging from adaptive mechanisms such as positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting experiences into perspective, to maladaptive tendencies including self-blame, rumination, and blaming others. Family and peer support emerged as critical moderating factors, shaping whether breakup experiences resulted in resilience or vulnerability. Furthermore, cultural values emphasizing patience, acceptance, and collectivism influenced how adolescents framed their breakup experiences. These findings highlight the dual role of relationship dissolution in adolescence: while it presents risks of psychosocial distress, it also provides opportunities for growth and maturity.

### 2. Linking Findings with Emotion Regulation Theories

The results align with Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation, which emphasizes strategies that can occur before or after emotional responses. Participants who engaged in positive reappraisal and positive refocusing demonstrated outcomes consistent with adaptive regulation, including improved mood and strengthened social ties. These strategies mirror cognitive reappraisal mechanisms that reduce the intensity of negative affect and promote long-term well-being (Gross & John, 2003). Conversely, maladaptive strategies such as rumination and self-blame were associated with prolonged distress, supporting Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Schweizer's (2010) findings that maladaptive regulation predicts depressive symptoms.

Interestingly, the prominence of putting experiences into perspective among participants resonates with cultural scripts in Javanese society that emphasize patience (*sabar*) and acceptance (*nrimo*). This suggests that cultural context shapes the selection of emotion regulation strategies, expanding the applicability of emotion regulation theory beyond Western settings.

### 3. Psychosocial Well-Being and Adolescent Development

The findings also intersect with Ryff and Keyes' (1995) model of psychological well-being, particularly in dimensions such as self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others. Adolescents who reframed their experiences as learning opportunities reported stronger self-acceptance and resilience. In contrast, participants who engaged in self-blame experienced compromised self-esteem and reduced academic engagement, demonstrating the interconnectedness of emotional regulation and psychosocial outcomes. These dynamics are particularly significant in adolescence, a stage defined by identity exploration and socio-emotional growth (Erikson, 1968). Breakups can act as "turning points" in identity development, offering adolescents opportunities to re-evaluate personal values, relational expectations, and self-worth. Consistent with Larson, Clore, and Wood's (1999) findings, this study shows that adolescents who effectively regulate emotions not only recover from distress but also advance in their developmental trajectories.

### 4. Comparisons with Previous Research

The results both confirm and extend previous studies. In Indonesia, Ulfah (2016) found that emotional maturity moderated happiness after breakups, a conclusion echoed by Participant C's narrative that resilience emerged from reframing painful experiences. Similarly, Sri and Agus (2016) highlighted that breakups were linked to mild depression among adolescent girls, consistent with the struggles of Participant D, who engaged in rumination and self-blame.

International research offers parallel insights. Sbarra and Emery (2005) demonstrated that romantic dissolution predicts increases in depressive symptoms, while Davis et al. (2003) found that adaptive coping reduced distress. This study supports those findings but adds a cultural dimension by showing how Indonesian adolescents draw on cultural and

religious values to contextualize their breakup experiences. Moreover, while Western studies often highlight individual coping, this study underscores the centrality of peer and family support in collectivist societies, thereby expanding the global discourse on adolescent well-being.

### 5. Cultural and Social Context in Indonesia

A distinctive contribution of this study lies in situating breakup experiences within the Javanese cultural framework. In Indonesia, adolescent dating remains a sensitive issue, often perceived through moral and religious lenses (Utomo & McDonald, 2009). Despite these societal pressures, the participants' accounts revealed that breakups are a lived reality in adolescent life. Importantly, cultural norms emphasizing patience, modesty, and collectivism influenced how girls navigated these experiences.

For example, the tendency to minimize the significance of breakups ("it was just puppy love") can be interpreted as a cultural script of normalizing hardship rather than dramatizing it. This cultural influence both protects adolescents from prolonged distress and risks invalidating their emotional experiences. Schools and families, therefore, play a dual role: they can reinforce cultural values of resilience but must also create safe spaces for adolescents to validate and process their feelings.

### 6. Implications for Practice

#### 6.1 Implications for Families

Families emerged as a primary support system. Parents who actively listened and provided emotional reassurance enhanced their daughters' resilience. For families in transition, such as Participant B's divorced household, the absence of parental support intensified vulnerability. This underscores the need for parental education programs emphasizing the role of emotional support in adolescent development.

#### 6.2 Implications for Schools

The school context significantly shapes adolescent experiences. Teachers and guidance counselors can serve as supportive figures who normalize emotional struggles and encourage healthy coping. However, this study found that counseling services were underutilized, reflecting either stigma or lack of awareness. Schools could strengthen student resilience by integrating psychoeducational programs on emotional regulation, peer mentoring systems, and confidential counseling mechanisms.

#### 6.3 Implications for Social Welfare Policy

At a policy level, the findings highlight the need for youth-centered social welfare interventions that address psychosocial well-being, not just physical or academic concerns. Social workers and welfare practitioners can design community-based programs that combine cultural values with modern psychological insights, ensuring that adolescents have multiple avenues of support.

## 7. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the small sample size (four participants) restricts the generalizability of findings. However, the qualitative design prioritized depth

over breadth, providing nuanced insights. Second, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, including selective memory or social desirability. Third, the study was limited to female participants; male adolescents may employ different regulation strategies that merit exploration. Finally, the cultural specificity of the setting means that findings may not be directly transferable to other Indonesian regions with distinct cultural dynamics.

The study reinforces that adolescent breakups are not trivial episodes but meaningful developmental experiences with lasting implications for emotional and social growth. Emotional regulation strategies serve as critical determinants of whether adolescents emerge resilient or vulnerable from these experiences. Family, peers, and cultural norms significantly shape these processes, demonstrating the need for multi-level support systems.

By situating the findings within the broader literature and cultural context, this study contributes to social welfare research by advocating for interventions that are developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, and socially inclusive. Ultimately, the study calls for a shift in how adolescent romantic experiences are perceived—from risks to opportunities for resilience and psychosocial growth.

## Conclusion

This study set out to examine the emotional regulation strategies and psychosocial well-being of adolescent girls after experiencing relationship breakups in Bantul, Indonesia. Guided by emotion regulation theory and psychosocial well-being frameworks, the research revealed that adolescent breakups, while often dismissed as trivial in public discourse, are in fact significant developmental experiences that shape identity, resilience, and social functioning. The study highlighted three main conclusions. First, emotional regulation is a pivotal determinant in how adolescents navigate the aftermath of romantic dissolution. Adaptive strategies—such as positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting experiences into perspective—were consistently associated with improved resilience, stable self-esteem, and continued academic engagement. In contrast, maladaptive strategies—such as rumination, self-blame, and blaming others—led to prolonged distress, lowered self-confidence, and difficulties in maintaining social relationships. Second, social support systems, particularly family and peers, played a crucial moderating role. Adolescents with supportive families and friendships demonstrated a stronger capacity to regulate their emotions and reframe their experiences constructively, while those with limited support networks struggled to recover. Third, cultural context shaped coping styles, with Javanese values of patience (*sabar*) and acceptance (*nrimo*) informing the tendency to minimize distress and normalize breakups as part of growing up.

From a theoretical perspective, this research extends Gross's (1998) emotion regulation model by demonstrating how cultural values intersect with cognitive strategies in shaping adolescent outcomes. The findings suggest that emotion regulation is not solely

an individual cognitive process but is also embedded within cultural scripts and social expectations. In the context of Indonesia, collectivist orientations and religious norms significantly influenced how adolescents interpreted and responded to emotional distress. This underscores the need for culturally sensitive adaptations of psychological theories when applied in non-Western settings.

Practically, the study provides important implications for families, schools, and social welfare practice. Families should be encouraged to view adolescent breakups not as trivial matters but as opportunities for growth and learning. Parental emotional support, open communication, and nonjudgmental listening can buffer distress and foster resilience. For schools, the findings highlight the need to strengthen counseling services and psychoeducational programs that teach students practical emotion regulation skills. Teachers and counselors should work collaboratively to create safe environments where adolescents can express emotions without stigma. At the policy level, the study calls for youth-centered social welfare interventions that integrate psychosocial well-being into broader adolescent health and education agendas. Such interventions could include community-based mentoring, peer-support groups, and workshops that blend cultural values with evidence-based practices.

Despite these contributions, the study is not without limitations. The small sample size, restricted to four adolescent girls in one school, limits the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported narratives may have introduced selective memory or social desirability bias. However, the strength of the study lies in its qualitative depth, providing rich, contextualized insights into adolescent experiences often overlooked in mainstream discourse. These limitations also point to opportunities for future research.

Future studies should consider adopting larger and more diverse samples, including male adolescents, to explore gender differences in emotional regulation strategies. Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable in tracking how breakup experiences influence emotional and relational development over time. Additionally, cross-cultural comparative studies could shed light on how cultural values differentially shape adolescent coping in collectivist versus individualist societies. In the contemporary context, it is also essential to explore the role of digital platforms and social media in shaping breakup experiences, as online interactions have become integral to adolescent relationships and emotional processing. Finally, intervention-based studies evaluating the effectiveness of school-based or community-based programs would provide practical strategies for promoting adolescent resilience.

In conclusion, this research underscores that adolescent breakups, while often regarded as fleeting or insignificant, are deeply meaningful events with lasting implications for emotional development and psychosocial well-being. The way adolescents regulate their emotions after such experiences determines whether they emerge as resilient individuals capable of growth or remain vulnerable to prolonged distress. Supportive families, peers, and schools—embedded within cultural frameworks—play a decisive role in shaping these outcomes.

By situating adolescent breakup experiences within the broader field of social welfare research and practice, this study makes a dual contribution. Theoretically, it highlights the

interplay between cognitive regulation strategies and cultural scripts. Practically, it advocates for holistic interventions that combine individual coping mechanisms with systemic support structures. Ultimately, the findings call for a paradigm shift: rather than dismissing adolescent relationships as trivial or risky, families, educators, and policymakers should view them as important developmental milestones that, when supported effectively, can foster resilience, emotional maturity, and psychosocial well-being.

## Declarations

### Author contribution statement

The author solely designed the research, collected and analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. All aspects of the study, including conceptualization, methodology, analysis, interpretation, and final approval of the article, were undertaken independently by the author.

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### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request. Due to ethical considerations and the need to protect the confidentiality of participants, raw interview transcripts cannot be made publicly available. However, anonymized excerpts and coded data can be provided upon request.

### Declaration of interests statement

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

### Additional information

No additional information is available for this study.

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