

Parental Emotion Regulation and Parenting Stress in Early Childhood: The Moderating Role of Social Support

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Article Information

ABSTRACT

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Background: Early childhood parenting represents a crucial phase in family development that requires a high level of emotional involvement from parents. During this period, parents face various parenting demands related to meeting children's physical needs as well as supporting their emotional and social development. Such conditions may increase the risk of parenting stress, particularly when parents experience difficulties regulating their emotions or lack adequate support from their social environment. **Aim:** Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of emotion regulation on parenting stress among parents of young children and to examine the moderating role of social support in this relationship. **Method:** This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey parents of students at RA Muslimat NU 07 as research participants. Data were collected using three standardized psychological instruments: the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) to measure parents' emotion regulation, the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA) to assess the level of parenting stress, and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) to measure perceived social support. Data analysis was conducted using simple regression to examine the direct effects of emotion regulation and social support on parenting stress. **Result and Discussions:** The results indicate that emotion regulation and social support do not have a significant simultaneous effect on parenting stress ($F = 0.357$; $p = 0.701$; $R^2 = 0.011$). Partially, emotion regulation ($p = 0.866$) and social support ($p = 0.486$) also do not show a significant effect on parenting stress. Furthermore, the moderation test reveals that the interaction between emotion regulation and social support is not significant ($p = 0.387$), indicating that social support does not function as a moderating variable in this relationship. **Conclusion:** These findings suggest that emotion regulation and social support are not the main determinants of parenting stress among parents of young children in this study, indicating that other factors may play a more dominant role in influencing parenting stress beyond the variables examined.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Emotion Regulation, Parenting Stress, Parents, Social Support



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INTRODUCTION

The early stage of a child's life, particularly between the ages of 0 and 6 years, represents a fundamental period that forms the foundation of individual development. This phase is characterized by rapid growth in motor, language, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral abilities; therefore, appropriate guidance and support are required to ensure that children's potential develops optimally (Al Munawaroh et al., 2023). Parents play a central role in shaping the personality of young children. Parenting experiences provided from the early stages of life significantly influence the development of children's character, both within the family environment and in their future social contexts (Salsabila et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the demands of parenting young children often become a source of psychological pressure for parents. This pressure is generally triggered by heavy caregiving demands, limited time for rest, and perceptions of inadequacy in meeting children's needs optimally. (Maula et al., 2025). Such pressure may lead to parenting stress, defined as

a psychological condition that arises when parents perceive that the demands of the parenting role exceed their personal capacity and the available social support (Masyito, 2021). According to Abidin (1990), parenting stress arises from the complex and demanding tasks involved in raising children, while parents often experience limitations in personal and physical resources and must cope with child characteristics that may present challenges in the parenting process (Choiriyah et al., 2020).

Parenting stress has become an increasingly relevant issue in the context of family life. Parents' perceptions of their parenting roles, the availability of personal resources such as income and knowledge, limited social support, the magnitude of life demands, and overall family well-being may make parents more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion. Parenting stress that is not managed properly can reduce the quality of parent-child interactions, thereby increasing the risk of negative parenting practices, which may ultimately affect children's well-being (Aisha et al., 2022). This condition may trigger excessive

emotional reactions, causing parents to become less patient, more easily angered, and more vulnerable to experiencing conflict with their partners. In the long term, such emotional exhaustion may reduce the quality of parenting and ultimately affect the well-being and development of children (Khasanah, 2024).

Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that may help parents manage and reduce levels of parenting stress. One internal factor that plays a role in parents' ability to cope with parenting stress is emotion regulation. Emotion regulation refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage experienced emotions in order to adapt more effectively to their environment (Khasanah, 2024). Gross defines emotion regulation as the process of modifying the intensity and quality of emotions, both before and after the emotions arise (Palmieri et al., 2022). Proper emotional management is necessary to ensure that negative emotions are not expressed excessively and do not disrupt an individual's adaptive functioning (Rusmaladewi et al., 2020). Emotion regulation strategies include cognitive reappraisal, which refers to the individual's ability to change their perspective toward emotion-eliciting situations, and expressive suppression, which refers to efforts to control or inhibit emotional expressions (Kumala et al., 2022).

Rini and Weny (2023) suggest that factors influencing emotion regulation can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors originate from within the individual, such as the ability to control and manage thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Meanwhile, external factors relate to conditions outside the individual, including childcare demands, received social support, and the economic or financial condition of parents (Khasanah, 2024). In the context of parenting, effective emotion regulation enables parents to implement more positive and responsive parenting practices and supports the adaptive development of children's emotion regulation (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2017). Conversely, difficulties in regulating emotions may intensify psychological pressure and increase the risk of harsh, less responsive, or less affectionate parenting behaviors, which may ultimately heighten parenting stress (Masyito, 2021).

In addition to internal factors, external factors such as social support also play an important role in determining levels of parenting stress. According to Sarafino (2011), social support refers to forms of comfort, care, appreciation, and assistance received by individuals from others or groups around them (Nurmalasari, 2019). In the context of early childhood parenting, social support can serve as a protective resource that helps parents manage pressure, share responsibilities, and obtain emotional validation. The most important source of support is often perceived to come from a significant other, particularly the husband. Support from a partner not only directly reduces stress levels but also contributes to improving mothers' emotional well-being (Dwinadia et al., 2021).

Social support can also be understood as assistance or resources obtained from trusted others. Through such support, individuals feel that they are cared for, valued, and accepted within their social environment. Social support may take the form of emotional, informational, or companionship assistance provided by people around the individual to help cope with various challenges in everyday life. These sources of support may come from different parties, including partners, family members, friends, neighbors, and the broader social environment (Kusnadi et al., 2022). Consequently, emotion regulation may become more effective in reducing parenting stress when individuals are situated within environments that provide high levels of social support, offering a sense of security as well as assistance in identifying adaptive problem-solving strategies (Meishinta, 2025)

Theoretical studies on parenting stress indicate that this condition emerges from the interaction between parental characteristics, child characteristics, and environmental contexts. The stress experienced by parents is not only derived from the demands of raising children but is also influenced by social and environmental conditions, multiple responsibilities that must be fulfilled, and pressures arising from daily activities and life dynamics (Fahriza, 2024).

Previous studies have shown that effective emotion regulation and adequate social support contribute to lower levels of parenting stress. Support from partners, family members, and the broader social environment not only helps alleviate caregiving burdens but also enhances individuals' ability to regulate emotions adaptively. Although both variables have been widely examined separately as factors influencing parenting stress, the dynamic relationship between them still requires further investigation. This understanding becomes increasingly relevant in the context of families with young children in Indonesia, which possess unique social and cultural characteristics.

Previous studies have shown that emotion regulation plays a role in influencing the level of parenting stress. However, most of these studies have primarily focused on the direct relationship between the variables. Research examining how social support may strengthen or weaken the influence of emotion regulation on parenting stress remains limited, particularly among parents of young children in Indonesia. Moderation studies involving social support variables are generally conducted in the context of work stress or general family stress rather than specifically in early childhood parenting contexts. This gap highlights an important research opportunity to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which emotion regulation influences parenting stress.

Examining the moderating role of social support is essential because the influence of emotion regulation on parenting stress may differ between parents with high and low levels of social support. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by expanding the relational model between

internal and external factors in parenting. Furthermore, the findings of this study also have practical implications for family counselors and parenting support programs in designing more targeted interventions to strengthen parental roles.

Based on the background, literature review, and analysis of the research gap, the primary objective of this study is to analyze the effect of emotion regulation and social support on parenting stress among parents of young children and to examine the moderating role of social support in this relationship. The theoretical hypotheses of this study are as follows: (1) emotion regulation negatively affects parenting stress, (2) social support negatively affects parenting stress, and (3) social support strengthens the negative effect of emotion regulation on parenting stress, such that the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting stress becomes stronger among parents with higher levels of social support.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. Data were collected at a single point in time without follow-up measurement, allowing the relationships among variables to be analyzed simultaneously. This design was selected to examine the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting stress, as well as to analyze the role of social support as a moderating variable in this relationship.

The participants in this study consisted of 66 biological mothers of children aged 0–6 years who were actively enrolled as students at RA Muslimat NU 07 in the 2025/2026 academic year. Given the relatively small and accessible population size, this study employed a total sampling technique, in which all members of the population were included as research participants ($N = 66$). The study focused on mothers because, within the context of Indonesian families, mothers generally serve as the primary caregivers and tend to have higher levels of emotional involvement and more intensive daily interactions with their children. Therefore, selecting mothers as respondents was considered appropriate for analyzing the relationship between emotion regulation, social support, and parenting stress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table I. Validity and Reliability Values

Instrument	Number of Items	r	Valid Items	α	Category
Emotion Regulation Questionnaire	10	0,524–0,760	10	0,824	Acceptable
Parental Burnout Assessment	23	0,388–0,790	23	0,918	Acceptable
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	12	0,573–0,774	12	0,895	Acceptable

The validity and reliability of the research instruments were assessed before the main analysis. The results showed that all items on the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) were valid, with corrected item–total correlation coefficients

Emotion regulation was measured using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which consists of 10 items designed to assess individuals' ability to manage and regulate their emotional responses in various situations. Participants rated each statement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a greater tendency toward adaptive emotion regulation strategies, including cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression, which are the two main dimensions captured by the scale.

Parenting stress was measured using the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA), comprising 23 items aimed at evaluating the level of stress and emotional exhaustion experienced by parents in the process of raising young children. Responses were recorded on a scale from 0 (never) to 6 (every day), with higher scores reflecting higher levels of parenting stress.

Social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which consists of 12 items assessing the perceived social support from three sources: family, friends, and significant others. Participants rated each item on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger perceived social support.

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 20. Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were performed, including tests of residual normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and linearity, to ensure that the data met the assumptions required for regression analysis. Hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple linear regression to examine the effects of emotion regulation and social support on parenting stress. Furthermore, to test the role of social support as a moderating variable, Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) was applied by including an interaction term between emotion regulation and social support. The moderating effect was considered significant when the interaction coefficient showed a value of $p < 0.05$.

ranging from 0.524 to 0.760 ($r > 0.2423$, $p < 0.05$). The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.824, indicating high reliability.

For the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA), all items met the validity criteria, with coefficients ranging from 0.388 to 0.790 ($r > 0.2423$, $p < 0.05$). The reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.918, indicating very high reliability.

Similarly, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) demonstrated valid items, with coefficients

ranging from 0.573 to 0.774 ($r > 0.2423$, $p < 0.05$). Its reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.895, indicating high reliability.

These results confirm that all instruments used in this study were both valid and reliable.

Table II. Residual Normality Test

N	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
66	1,203	0,111

Based on the test results, the significance value obtained was 0.111 ($p > 0.05$). This value indicates that the residuals in the research model are normally distributed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the normality assumption in the regression

analysis has been satisfied. A normal distribution of residuals is important because it indicates that the prediction errors in the regression model are proportionally distributed and do not show substantial deviations from a normal distribution.

Table II. Multicollinearity Test

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Emotion Regulation (X)	0,853	1,173
Social Support (Z)	0,853	1,173

The results of the multicollinearity test show that the Tolerance values for the emotion regulation and social support variables were 0.853 (greater than 0.10), and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were 1.173 (less than 10). These

values indicate that there is no strong correlation between the independent variables in the research model. Thus, it can be concluded that the regression model is free from multicollinearity problems.

Table IV. Heteroscedasticity Test

Variable	Sig.
Emotion Regulation (X)	0,244
Social Support (Z)	0,907

Based on the results of the Glejser test, the significance value for the emotion regulation variable was 0.244, while the significance value for the social support variable was 0.907. Both values are greater than 0.05, indicating that

heteroscedasticity is not present in the research model. This means that the variance of the residuals is relatively constant across all levels of the independent variables.

Table III. Linearity Test

Variable Relationship	Deviation from Linearity (Sig.)
Parenting Stress (Y) – Emotion Regulation (X)	0,230
Parenting Stress (Y) – Social Support (Z)	0,079

The results of the linearity test show that the significance value for Deviation from Linearity in the relationship between parenting stress and emotion regulation was 0.230, while the value for the relationship between parenting stress and social support was 0.079. Both values are greater than 0.05, indicating that the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable are linear.

Overall, all regression assumptions were satisfied, including residual normality, the absence of multicollinearity, the absence of heteroscedasticity, and linear relationships

among variables. Therefore, the regression model was deemed appropriate for further analysis.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis conducted to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 regarding the effects of emotion regulation and social support on parenting stress, the following results were obtained.

Table VI. Hypothesis Testing of the Regression Model (F Test)

Model	F	Sig.
Regression	0,357	0,701

Based on the results of the F test in Table VI, the value of $F = 0.357$ was obtained with a significance level of $p = 0.701$ ($p > 0.05$). These results indicate that the regression model is not statistically significant. Thus, simultaneously, emotion

regulation and social support do not have a significant effect on parenting stress. Therefore, the research hypothesis is not supported.

Table IV. Regression Coefficient Test (t Test)

Variable	B	T	Sig.
Constant	31,974	1,945	0,056
Emotion Regulation	-0,044	-0,169	0,866
Social Support	-0,316	-0,700	0,486

Based on the results of the t test in Table VII, the emotion regulation variable has a coefficient value of $B = -0.044$, a t value of -0.169 , and $p = 0.866$ ($p > 0.05$). These results indicate that emotion regulation does not have a significant effect on parenting stress.

These results also indicate that social support does not have a significant effect on parenting stress.

Although both variables show a negative direction of relationship, which theoretically indicates that higher levels of emotion regulation and social support tend to be associated with lower parenting stress, the relationship is not statistically significant.

Meanwhile, the social support variable has a coefficient value of $B = -0.316$, a t value of -0.700 , and $p = 0.486$ ($p > 0.05$).

Table VIII. Coefficient of Determination

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
I	0,106	0,011	-0,020	19,238

Based on the analysis results in Table VIII, the value of $R = 0.106$ indicates that the relationship between emotion regulation, social support, and parenting stress is very weak. The value of $R^2 = 0.011$ indicates that the two independent variables explain only 1.1% of the variance in parenting stress, while the remaining 98.9% is influenced by other factors outside the research model.

Moderated Regression Analysis

Based on the results of the moderated regression analysis conducted to test Hypothesis 3 regarding the role of social support as a moderating variable in the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting stress, the following results were obtained.

Table IX. Hypothesis Testing of the Moderated Regression Model (F Test)

Model	F	Sig.
Regression	0,491	0,690

Based on the results of the F test in Table IX, the value of $F = 0.491$ was obtained with a significance level of $p = 0.690$ ($p > 0.05$). These results indicate that the moderated regression model is not statistically significant. Thus,

simultaneously, emotion regulation, social support, and their interaction do not have a significant effect on parenting stress. Therefore, the research hypothesis is not supported.

Table X. Moderated Regression Coefficient Test (t Test)

Variable	B	t	Sig.
Constant	4,757	0,135	0,893
Emotion Regulation (X)	0,573	0,760	0,450
Social Support (Z)	0,629	0,535	0,594
Interaction (X×Z)	-0,021	-0,872	0,387

Based on the results of the t test in Table X, the interaction coefficient between emotion regulation and social support (X×Z) has a value of $B = -0.021$, a t value of -0.872 ,

and $p = 0.387$ ($p > 0.05$). These results indicate that the interaction effect is not statistically significant. Therefore,

social support does not act as a moderating variable in the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting stress.

Table XI. Coefficient of Determination of the Moderation Model

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
I	0,152	0,023	-0,024	19,275

Based on the analysis results in Table XI, the value of $R = 0.152$ indicates a very weak relationship between emotion regulation, social support, their interaction, and parenting stress. The value of $R^2 = 0.023$ indicates that the moderation model explains only 2.3% of the variance in parenting stress, while the remaining 97.7% is influenced by other variables outside the research model.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that emotion regulation and social support do not have a significant effect on parenting stress among parents of young children. Based on multiple linear regression analysis, the research model was not significant simultaneously ($F = 0.357$; $p = 0.701$). The very low coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.011$) indicates that only 1.1% of the variance in parenting stress can be explained by emotion regulation and social support, while the remaining 98.9% is likely influenced by other factors outside the research model. These findings suggest that the two variables are not the main predictors in explaining the level of parenting stress among the respondents in this study.

These findings differ from some previous literature suggesting that better emotion regulation abilities tend to be associated with lower levels of parenting stress. However, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Vieri and Syarif (2024), who reported no significant relationship between parenting stress and emotion regulation, with a correlation coefficient of 0.146 categorized as very weak. Similar findings were also reported by Andinie (2023), who found no significant relationship between the two variables.

Theoretically, the emotion regulation model proposed by Gross (1998) explains that individuals who are able to manage their emotional responses adaptively should be better able to cope with stressful situations, including the demands of child-rearing. However, the findings of this study do not empirically support this assumption. The non-significant effect of emotion regulation may be explained by the multidimensional nature of parenting stress, which is influenced not only by intrapersonal factors but also by various contextual factors such as family economic conditions, child characteristics, role conflict, and domestic workload. Within the framework of the transactional model of stress developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress is understood as the result of interactions between individuals and their environment. Therefore, emotion regulation alone may not be sufficient to reduce parenting stress if the external demands faced by parents remain high.

Furthermore, social support in this study also did not show a significant effect on parenting stress. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Malano (2022), which reported that social support from family, partners, and friends did not have a significant effect on parenting stress. Similar findings were also reported by Pramesthi et al., who showed that social support is not always directly associated with parenting stress. These results indicate that the presence of a social network does not automatically reduce parenting stress, as the effectiveness of social support largely depends on the quality, relevance, and individuals' perceptions of the support received.

From a theoretical perspective, the stress-buffering hypothesis proposed by Cohen and Wills (1985) states that social support functions as a buffer that can reduce the negative impact of stress on individuals. However, social support will only be effective when it matches the individual's needs in dealing with stressful situations. If the support provided is general in nature or not relevant to the specific needs of early childhood parenting, it is likely to be less effective in alleviating parenting stress.

The low coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.011$) also indicates that most of the variation in parenting stress is explained by other factors that were not included in the research model. Variables such as child temperament, the child's health condition, marital conflict, economic pressure, and chronic fatigue may contribute more substantially to parenting stress than emotion regulation and social support.

The results of the moderated regression analysis indicate that the interaction between emotion regulation and social support ($X \times Z$) is not significant ($p = 0.387$). The R^2 value only increased from 0.011 to 0.023, indicating a very small and insignificant increase in explanatory power. This finding suggests that social support neither strengthens nor weakens the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting stress. From a methodological perspective, moderation effects are generally difficult to detect when the primary relationship between variables is already weak. Since emotion regulation does not have a significant direct effect on parenting stress, it is unlikely that the interaction effect would become significant.

Conceptually, these findings indicate that emotion regulation and social support operate independently and do not interact in influencing parenting stress within the context of this study. These results also imply that efforts to understand and reduce parenting stress among parents of young children cannot rely solely on improving individual emotion regulation abilities or increasing the availability of

social support. Parenting stress is likely influenced by various contextual and multidimensional factors. Therefore, future research is recommended to include additional variables such as child characteristics, family economic conditions, role conflict within the family, and daily caregiving burdens in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing parenting stress.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that parents' emotion regulation abilities and the level of social support received did not contribute significantly to the level of parenting stress among parents of young children in this study. Social support was also not found to strengthen or weaken the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting stress. These findings suggest that the dynamics of parenting stress cannot be simply explained by individual internal factors or the availability of support from the social environment alone. Rather, parenting stress may be more strongly influenced by other factors related to child characteristics, family conditions, and situational demands faced by parents. Therefore, future studies should consider incorporating additional variables that may have a greater contribution in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing parenting stress.

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