
The Role of Family Functioning in Emotional Regulation among Adolescents from Broken Homes

Lathessya Wirio¹, Jeslina², Jesslyn³, Rina Mirza^{4*}, Winida Marpaung⁵

^{1,2,3,5}Department of Psychology, Universitas Prima Indonesia

⁴PUI Mental Health Family Center, Universitas Prima Indonesia

Corresponding Author: ^{4*}rinamirza.psi@gmail.com

Abstract

Changes in family structure due to divorce and conflict have increased the number of adolescents living in broken home conditions. This condition affects not only social aspects but also adolescents' emotional development. This study aimed to examine the relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home families. The study employed a quantitative correlational approach involving 135 adolescents from broken home families as research participants. Data were collected using the Family Functioning Scale and the Emotion Regulation Scale. The results of the data analysis using the Pearson product-moment correlation technique revealed a significant positive relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation ability, indicating that better family functioning is associated with better adolescents' ability to manage emotions. Conversely, poorly functioning families tend to be associated with lower emotional regulation abilities among adolescents. These findings emphasize the important role of family functioning in supporting adolescents' emotional development and may serve as a foundation for developing psychological interventions and educational programs focused on strengthening family functioning and emotion regulation skills.

Keywords: *adolescents, broken homes, emotion Regulation, family functioning*

Introduction

Emotion regulation is one of the essential abilities that should be developed during adolescence. Previous studies have consistently found that poor emotion regulation among adolescents is closely associated with various psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, aggressive behavior, and juvenile delinquency (Lin et al., 2024; Fombouchet et al., 2023). A study by Lin et al., (2024), which synthesized findings from various previous studies, emphasized that family-related factors play an important mediating role in the relationship between children's emotion regulation and internalizing behavior symptoms. This finding highlights the importance of the family environment in shaping adolescents' emotional regulation capacity. In Indonesia, data from the Health Development Policy Agency of the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2023) reported a significant increase in emotional problems among young people, marked by rising cases of depression and difficulties in emotion management, particularly among adolescents experiencing pressure from the family environment.

One of the family conditions considered most vulnerable to adolescents' emotional regulation development is a broken home family. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) on February 28, 2024, there were 463,654 divorce cases recorded in Indonesia throughout 2023. Although this figure decreased by 10.2% compared to the

previous year (516,344 cases), the number remains very high and places millions of children at psychological risk due to family disintegration (BPS, 2024). The condition of a broken home is not limited to divorce alone but also includes various forms of family dysfunction, such as prolonged conflict, emotional absence of parents, and lack of communication among family members (Detta & Abdullah, 2017; Hadi et al., 2020). Adolescents who grow up under such conditions tend to experience emotional instability, low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, and declining academic achievement (Muttaqin & Suslistyo, 2019). Various cases in society further reinforce this phenomenon, ranging from bullying behavior associated with the absence of parental figures (Musslifah et al., 2021) to aggressive behavior among adolescents at school, which is closely related to the lack of warmth and communication within the family (Putri et al., 2024).

Theoretically, emotion regulation is understood as the process through which individuals influence the type, intensity, and duration of emotions they experience and express, both consciously and unconsciously (Gross, 1998). Emotion regulation refers to a series of ways or efforts individuals use to manage and control their emotions in accordance with personal goals, whether by influencing, strengthening, or maintaining the emotions they experience (Mirza et al., 2022). Emotion regulation is also defined as an individual's ability to manage and adjust emotions flexibly according to the situations they encounter (Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih, 2019).

Emotions influence human behavior through changes in feelings, such as happiness, sadness, anger, and fear, accompanied by changes in facial expressions and physiological responses, including nervous system activity and heart rate (Dewi & Yusri, 2023). Individuals with good emotion regulation abilities are capable of controlling impulsive behavior when under emotional pressure, such as self-harm, aggressive behavior, and physical violence (Kristikanti, 2023). Conversely, poor emotion regulation abilities may cause individuals to have difficulty controlling anger, become easily involved in conflicts, and display maladaptive behavior in daily life.

Emotion regulation consists of several aspects, namely emotion monitoring (an individual's ability to recognize and become aware of the emotions being experienced), emotion evaluating (the ability to manage and balance emotions), and emotion modification (an individual's ability to modify emotions in order to motivate themselves and adapt to certain situations) (Lutfianawati et al., 2023). Emotion regulation develops and is influenced through interpersonal relationships, particularly within the family as an external factor (Widyaswara, 2022).

One of the external factors influencing adolescents' emotion regulation is family condition, particularly family functioning. The family is the first and primary environment for individuals in the process of emotional, social, and psychological development. Families function as a source of security, affection, attention, and emotional support for children (Wahid et al., 2022). Families also serve as an important foundation in shaping adolescents' mental and emotional stability, which subsequently influences later development (Farih & Wulandari, 2022). The McMaster Model explains that well-functioning families are characterized by six dimensions, such as problem solving, communication, role distribution, emotional responsiveness, affective involvement, and behavior control (Situmorang et al., 2022; Caño González et al., 2024).

Families with good functioning tend to create environments that support healthy emotional development in adolescents. In contrast, families that do not function optimally may cause children to experience difficulties in managing emotions, feelings of insecurity, and vulnerability to negative behavior (Lin et al., 2024; Widyaswara et al., 2022).

The phenomenon of poor emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home families can be observed in various cases within society. Based on observations and interviews conducted at a secondary school in Binjai City, students identified as perpetrators of bullying were found to have distant relationships with their families. Similarly, a senior high school student in Medan City who was involved in a school case for bringing a sharp weapon to school was found, through interviews, to lack a close relationship with both parents despite living in the same household. Limited family communication, indifferent attitudes among family members, and lack of guidance regarding emotion management tend to cause adolescents to display aggressive behavior, become easily angered, and experience difficulty controlling their emotions (Putri et al., 2024).

The issue of emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home families demonstrates the importance of family functioning in supporting children's emotional development. Families that are able to perform their functions optimally help adolescents feel accepted, understood, and emotionally supported, enabling them to regulate their emotions more effectively. Conversely, poor family functioning may lead adolescents to experience emotional instability and difficulties controlling their behavior.

Several studies have examined the relationship between family functioning and adolescents' emotion regulation. Widyaswara et al., (2022) found that family functioning significantly influenced emotion regulation among adolescents raised by single mothers ($p < 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.12$). Farih and Wulandari (2022) also demonstrated a significant relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation among early adolescents ($p = 0.01$). Although many studies have explored family functioning and emotion regulation, most previous research has focused on adolescents from intact families or within specific parenting contexts, such as single-parent families. Research specifically examining emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home backgrounds remains limited. Adolescents from broken home families possess more complex characteristics and emotional problems compared to adolescents in general. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to discuss emotion regulation or parenting patterns separately, thereby failing to provide a comprehensive picture of family functioning as a system influencing adolescents' emotion regulation abilities.

Based on the explanations above, the researchers were interested in conducting a study regarding emotion regulation in relation to family functioning among adolescents from broken home families. The hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a positive relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home families. The better the family functioning, the better the adolescents' emotion regulation abilities, and vice versa.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design consisting of two variables, namely emotion regulation as the independent variable and family functioning as the dependent variable.

Participants

The population in this study consisted of adolescents from broken home families at SMA Bodhicitta, totaling 181 students. The sampling method used was total sampling, in which all members of the population were included as research participants. The researchers employed total sampling because the population possessed specific characteristics that matched the research criteria, and the population size was relatively small.

Measures

In collecting the data, this study used the Family Functioning Scale and the Emotion Regulation Scale. The Family Functioning Scale consisted of 47 items with four response options. This scale was developed based on the dimensions of the McMaster Family Assessment Device, which include problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, and behavior control (Situmorang et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the Emotion Regulation Scale consisted of 40 items with four response options. This scale was developed based on the aspects of emotion monitoring, emotion evaluating, and emotion modification (Harmalis, 2022). The results of the reliability test (Cronbach's alpha) for the Family Functioning Scale showed a coefficient value of 0,949, while the Emotion Regulation Scale had a coefficient value of 0,947.

Data Analysis

Prior to data analysis, assumption tests were conducted to examine the suitability of the data. The assumption tests included normality and linearity tests. Furthermore, the collected data were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to examine the relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1.

Family functioning data categorization

Variable	Value Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Family Functioning	$X < m-1 \times s$	Low	9	6,7
	$m-1 \times \sigma \leq X \leq m+1 \times s$	Medium	72	53,3
	$X > m+1 \times s$	Height	54	40,0
Total			135	100,0

The Family Functioning Scale had an empirical mean score of 137,9298 with a standard deviation of 25,4312. When compared to the hypothetical score of 117,5, the empirical mean was higher. This indicates that family functioning among the participants was relatively high. The categorization results showed that 9 respondents

(6,7%) were categorized as low, 72 respondents (53,3%) were categorized as moderate, and 54 respondents (40%) were categorized as high.

Table 2.

Emotion regulation data categorization

Variable	Value Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Emotion Regulation	$X < m-1 \times s$	Low	12	8,9
	$m-1 \times \sigma \leq X \leq m+1 \times s$	Medium	100	74,1
	$X > m+1 \times s$	Height	23	17,0
Total			135	100,00

The Emotion Regulation Scale had an empirical mean score of 110,5789 with a standard deviation of 19,7664. When compared to the hypothetical score of 100, it can be concluded that the empirical mean was higher. Therefore, the level of emotion regulation among the research participants was categorized as high. Furthermore, the categorization results based on the scores showed that 12 respondents (8,9%) were included in the low category, 100 respondents (74,1%) were included in the moderate category, and 23 respondents (17,0%) were included in the high category.

Hypothesis Testing

The researchers conducted assumption tests prior to hypothesis testing. The results of the normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test showed a coefficient of 0,106 ($p > 0,05$) for the Family Functioning Scale, and a coefficient of 0,104 ($p > 0,05$) for the Emotion Regulation Scale. These results indicate that the data were normally distributed. Meanwhile, the result of the linearity test was 0,000 ($p < 0,05$), indicating that the relationship between emotion regulation and family functioning was linear and met the assumptions required for Pearson correlation analysis.

Table 3.

Correlation between emotion regulation and family functioning

Analysis	Pearson Correlation	Significance (p)
Correlation	0,620	0,000

Table 3 shows a correlation coefficient value of 0,620 ($p < 0,05$). This indicates a strong positive relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home families.

Table 4.

Effective Contribution Summary Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,620	0,385	0,374	15,64459

The coefficient of determination (R^2) value in Table 2 indicates that family functioning contributed 38,5% to emotion regulation, while the remaining 61,5% was influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study.

Discussion

This study focused on the hypothesis that there is a relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home families. The

results of the data analysis showed a Pearson correlation value of 0,620 ($p < 0,05$). These findings are consistent with the proposed hypothesis that there is a relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation among adolescents from broken home families. The relationship between the two variables was positively significant, with family functioning contributing 38,5% to emotion regulation. The findings of this study indicate that the better the family functioning, the better the students' ability to regulate their emotions in daily situations (Yasa & Fatmawati, 2020).

The findings of this study are consistent with research conducted by Widyaswara et al., (2022), which showed that family functioning plays a significant role in emotion regulation among adolescents raised by single mothers. These findings indicate that families that are still able to perform their basic functions optimally, despite having a non-intact structure, can remain supportive environments for adolescents' emotional development. Dynamically, family functioning provides an interactional space that enables adolescents to learn to recognize, understand, and appropriately express emotions through communication processes, emotional behavior modeling, and affective support from family members. When families are able to create warm and responsive relationships, adolescents will more easily internalize adaptive emotion regulation strategies.

The results of this study also support the findings of Uci and Savira (2019), who found that family functioning plays a positive role in improving individuals' ability to manage emotions. Theoretically, well-functioning families provide a consistent environment in terms of rule-setting, emotional validation, and healthy conflict resolution, allowing children to acquire social learning models regarding how emotional responses should be controlled. In other words, through daily interactions within the family, individuals learn how emotions are responded to, expressed, and managed adaptively.

Margaretta and Risnawaty (2021) explained that family functioning has a positive and significant role in emotion regulation among university students. These findings demonstrate that the influence of family functioning on emotion regulation is not only relevant during adolescence but also continues into early adulthood. This suggests that emotional interaction patterns formed within the family contribute to the long-term development of individuals' emotion regulation abilities.

Therefore, the findings of this study reinforce previous research and support the assumption that family functioning is one of the important determinants in the development of emotion regulation, both among adolescents from intact and non-intact families. The quality of family interactions, such as effective communication, emotional support, relational warmth, and the family's ability to resolve conflicts constructively, becomes a major factor in helping adolescents develop adaptive emotion regulation.

Based on the data distribution, most respondents were categorized at the moderate level for both family functioning and emotion regulation. This indicates that although the adolescents came from broken home families, not all of them experienced extreme family dysfunction. Some adolescents still had family systems that functioned relatively well, enabling them to develop moderate levels of emotion regulation abilities. These findings are consistent with the research of Andriyani and Sa'adah (2024), which stated that most individuals fall within the moderate to high categories for both variables. This

condition indicates the presence of protective factors within the family, such as the presence of a supportive parental figure or support from other family members, which may help adolescents continue to develop emotionally despite being in non-ideal family situations.

This study also strengthens the findings of Saifullah and Djuwairiyah (2019), which showed that individuals from well-functioning families tend to be more capable of recognizing, managing, and expressing emotions in healthy ways. However, the contribution of family functioning in this study was only 38.5%, indicating that 61.5% of the variance in emotion regulation was influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study. This suggests that emotion regulation is a multidimensional construct influenced not only by the family environment but also by other external and personal factors, such as the social environment, parenting style, sleep quality, traumatic experiences, personality characteristics, and individual developmental maturity.

Overall, this study reinforces previous findings that family functioning plays an important role in shaping emotion regulation abilities among adolescents, particularly those from broken home families. Families that are able to perform their functions effectively, such as by building open communication, providing emotional support, and creating a safe environment, will help adolescents recognize, manage, and express emotions adaptively. Conversely, family dysfunction may become a risk factor that increases the likelihood of difficulties in emotion regulation, which may ultimately lead to maladaptive behavior. Therefore, efforts to improve family functioning represent an important strategy for supporting adolescents' emotional development optimally.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study conducted among students from broken home family backgrounds, it was found that there is a significant positive relationship between family functioning and emotion regulation ability. This finding indicates that the better the family functioning, the better the adolescents' ability to manage their emotions in daily life. The results of this study provide theoretical contributions by strengthening the understanding of the important role of family functioning in adolescents' emotional development and may serve as a consideration for parents, educators, and counselors in designing efforts to improve the quality of family interactions, such as building effective communication, providing emotional support, and creating a conducive family environment.

This study also suggests that interventions should not only focus on adolescents as individuals but should also involve the family as the primary system that plays a role in the development of emotion regulation abilities. Future research is expected to examine other factors that may influence emotion regulation in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of adolescents' emotional development across various family backgrounds.

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