EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT ON EMOTIONAL REGULATION, AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG FIRST GENERATION, AND NON-FIRST-GENERATION UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

Perceived social support (PSS) is essential for better managing academic stress and controlling emotions. While many studies have explored the challenges faced by students, there is a lack of focus on perceived social support, coping strategies (CS), and emotional regulation (ER). Consequently, this research examines the impact of PSS on CS and ER in First Generation (FG) and Non-First Generation (NFG) University Student population. This research is based on cross-sectional survey at Riphah International University, utilizing purposive quota sampling. Drawing on Taro Yamane's formula, 256 students were recruited, and data were collected through Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), the Coping Scale, and the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). PSS, CS, and ER are reported more in NFGS than FGS. A positive relationships is observed between PSS and both CS and ER (family support with reappraisal: $r = .73^{**}$; friend support with appraisal coping: $r = .74^{**}$). Support from family, friends, and significant others are the strong predictors for emotional regulation. Regarding coping mechanisms, appraisal coping was bolstered by support from family, friends, and significant others, whereas behavioral coping was primarily driven by family and friend support. Additional analyses uncovered gender disparities, with males showing elevated PSS scores, alongside socioeconomic patterns where upper-class students outperformed their middle- and lower-class peers in PSS and ER. Overall, these results underscore the importance of targeted support programs to bolster student mental health and academic performance.

Keywords: Social Support, Coping Strategy, Emotional Regulation, First-Generation Students and Non-First-Generation Students

INTRODUCTION

University life is among the most important periods of growth and students are able to gain academic competence, self-insight and some level of responsibility at this age. Nonetheless, this stage is also followed by emotional, social, and intellectual barriers (Regehr et al., 2012). These issues are more evident in the case of first-generation students. Studies show that having a balance between school and personal lives raises mental pressure to a higher extent; this is evident when they do not have good support (Eisenberg et al., 2007; Rodgers and Tennison, 2009). Without proper social, emotional, and educational support, students would worry, fail to succeed, and they do not even adapt to university life (Bolger and Eckenrode, 1991). All this brings into the advantage of exploring how the perceived social support can work towards overcoming these barriers and positively dealing with emotions. However, the effect of PSS on coping skills and emotional regulation might not necessarily be similar in the first-generation students and non-first-generation students. The current study, in this regard, explores the role of PSS in the definition of coping mechanisms and emotional regulation in the two categories of students.

The perceived social support is the feeling of assurance of the family, close friends or significant people in the life of an individual to turn around and be there during the time of hardship. This kind of support is also used to help people overcome stress because it leads to an increase in mental health in general (Berkman and Glass, 2000; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2021). Good network fosters emotional toughness and encourages constructive ways of resolving problems (Azmitia et al., 2013). Having stated that, how differently people see this support can vary between FGS and NFGS this is because FGS parents never even had the chance to attend educational institution themselves whereas NFGS families already know how higher education works inside and out. University, in the case of FGS, can be accompanied by other issues like academic stress, financial issues, emotional doubts, and the lack of parental guidance as a factor that can provoke the development of isolation and make the process of persistence more complex (Poudel et al., 2020; McFadden, 2016). NFGS, on the other hand, are more likely to use the savvy family input and they are able to better cope with course work and develop more sound coping strategies.

Concept of coping strategies is actually a series of thoughts and action-oriented mechanisms by which individuals apply to address pressure (Folkman and Lazarus, 1986). These effects are particularly serves for students in colleges or universities who are overwhelmed by pressure in academics, relationship and daily life. Good coping is not only enhancing grades but inner strength (Gnilka et al., 2012). This is why the study relies on Coping Scale by Hamby et al. (2015) that evaluates both the appraisal- and behavior-based coping and provides a complete image of how various students, FGS and NFGS, cope with things (Forsblom et al., 2021). Emotional regulation, in the meantime, the art of reining in emotional responses and taming them to achieve improved outcomes. It is equally important in excelling in school (Gross, 2011). The collegegoers, and FGS, in particular, are usually struggling with self-esteem and social awkwardness (David, 2011; Boekaerts, 2011). High concentration, flex and motivation are sharpened by tight control, and weak abilities can be the root of worry or exhaustion (Mills, 2014; Zaki and Williams, 2013). Cognitive reappraisal and suppression tools are different avenues of dealing with emotions (Gross and John, 2003; Martin and Ochsner, 2016). Compared to suppression, reappraisal is more likely to be associated with the high staying power and emotional fit at school, whilst suppression may pull to burnout or decline (David, 2011; Wahid and Nashori, 2021). As the support seems insufficient, the students lose control over emotional regulation, and the

results are a lack of happiness in their lives and more time alone (Stebleton et al., 2014). This relationship supports the assumption that closer PSS relationships are associated with easier emotional processing (Marroquín, 2011; Srivastava et al., 2009).

Researchers have long inquired about the inner world of college students and narrowed down their focus to the coping mechanisms of students within the scope of school pressures, emotions-oriented challenges and group dynamics. These factors have a great influence on the adaptation skills, and the differences between FGS and NFGS only increase the difference even more, as both groups address higher starting at various points. FGS are deprived of study mentors, and they bear bigger monetary and cultural burdens, which can derail their emotional and action response. NFGS, in contrast, get supported on more stable grounds and are much more relaxed about campus life. The link between PSS and ER is tied with such coping strategies as thought and deed efforts against stress. The research concluded that they are essential to reduce psychological fatigue and especially learning conditions (Zhang et al., 2018). Such positive actions as seeking help, addressing problems directly, and re-evaluating difficult situations relate to greater emotional finesse and athletic victories (Gnilka et al., 2012; Compas et al., 2001). Conversely, unhelpful patterns like pulling back or dodging are likely to be evident in overachievers, particularly FGS short of backing (Gnilka, Ashby, and Noble, 2012). These trends support the assumption that support views and emotion steering are the ones that shape coping.

To conclude, the literature review highlights the important role of PSS in shaping how the students manage and stabilize their emotions. Besides, such characteristics as gender, family income, and position in the family contribute to stress management. In traditional environments, women may strike more touch and emotional and social barriers (Zhang et al., 2020; Poots and Cassidy, 2020), and elder children may squirm under domestic responsibilities (Canizares et al., 2024). This study bridges the gap by using the instruments such as Coping Scale developed by Hamby et al. (2015) and outlining actions to be taken to improve emotional wellbeing in campus by establishing rules. FGS address cultural and learning obstacles unlike NFGS, and hence, these relationships resonate with them particularly. But in a country, such as Pakistan, and in some areas, such as District Malakand which are not well studied, these variables are still mostly uncharted. By interweaving CS, ER, and PSS into a single tested model, this paper attempt to fill that gap and lead in the direction of customized assistance constructions and remedies of different types of learners.

Objectives of the Study

1.   To examine the differences in perceived social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation between FGS and NFGS.
2.   To analyze the relationship between social support, emotional regulation and coping strategies among FGS and NFGS.
3.   To examine the impact of social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation on FGS and NFGS.
4.   To investigate gender base, birth order and socioeconomic status base differences in social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation among FGS and NFGS.

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: FGS perceive lower level of perceived social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation compared to NFGS.
H2: There will be strong positive correlation between perceived social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation.

H3: Social support is positively predicted to coping strategies and emotional regulation in both groups.

H4: Female students will report lower level of perceived social support compared to male students.

H5: First born Students will report low social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation than second born students.

H6: Upper class exhibited higher level of social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation than middle and lower class students.

METHODS

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, having a quantitative method for data collection and analysis. Data was collected through standardized questionnaires between May and July 2025. The design was suitable for the study because it allows for the examination of the relationship between personality traits, emotional intelligence, and decision-making styles among university students at a specific point in time.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

By utilizing Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of two hundred and twenty-six participants were selected from the entire population of 713 undergraduate students at Riphah International University, Malakand Campus, Pakistan using purposive quota sampling technique. The sample consisted of 256 (52.3% were male and 47.7% were female) participants. Students from Riphah International University Malakand Campus, Chakdara, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, who were enrolled in any field of the undergraduate degree, willing to participate were included. While others, having differ qualification, and undergraduate students having any kind of mental or cognitive impairment were not part of the study.

Operational Definitions and Research Instruments

Perceived Social Support: It is a type of care that comes from family, friends, coworkers, and medical professionals, exerts profound impact on not only well-being of individuals but also on overall personality structure. Perceived social support scale was used for assessing students perceived social support level. It is a widely used instrument to measure PSS across different domains (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). It has high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from .84 to .92) and test-retest reliability ($r = .85$).

Coping Strategies: The methods individuals use to manage stressful and challenging situations. Coping Scale developed by Hamby, Grych, and Banyard (2013) a tool designed to assess cognitive as well as behavioral strategies individuals use to manage problems was used. It consists of 13 items and reliability of the scale is high, with Cronbach's alpha values of .88 (pilot study) and .91 (main sample).

Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) defined as changes associated with activated emotions. It includes emotional intensity, duration etc. Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) is an instrument used to assess individual differences in emotion regulation strategies (Gross and John, 2003). It consists of 10 self-report items and demonstrates strong psychometric properties, including high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha for subscales: Cognitive Reappraisal = .79, Expressive Suppression = .73) and test-retest reliability ($r = .69$ for Cognitive Reappraisal and $r = .73$ for Expressive Suppression).

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by ethics committee of Riphah International University. Written consent was taken from every participant. They were entirely voluntary, and their information are kept confidential. The participants were advised of their freedom and have informed about their right to withdraw at any time during the study. No physical or psychological harm was given to participants. Participants were also assured that they have the right to know the finding of the research after the study completion.

RESULTS

Table 1:   *Pearson Correlation of PSS, Coping Strategy and Emotional Regulation*

Variables	M	SD	n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
FM-SS	16.50	7.85	256	--						
FR-SS	15.37	7.71	256	.77**	--					
SO-SS	16.82	7.81	256	.79**	.77**	--				
R-ER	22.74	10.05	256	.73**	.75**	.73**	--			
S-ER	16.66	5.88	256	.63**	.61**	.57**	.76**	--		
A-CS	16.94	6.12	256	.70**	.74**	.68**	.82**	.59**	--	
B-CS	14.42	5.62	256	.64**	.68**	.63**	.82**	.63**	.89**	--

Note. FM-SS= Family Social Support, FR-SS= Friend, SO-SS = Significant Other, R-ER = Reappraisal Emotional Regulation, S-ER = Suppression, A-CS = Appraisal Coping Strategy, B-CS = Behavioral, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

Table 1 highlights the relationships among PSS, ER, and CS. Significant positive associations were observed within the social support domains: Significant Others with Family ($r = .79$, $p < .01$) and Friends ($r = .77$, $p < .01$), and Family with Friends ($r = .77$, $p < .01$), indicating strong interconnections among support sources. Reappraisal ER shows strong positive correlations with Family ($r = .73$, $p < .01$), Friends ($r = .75$, $p < .01$), and Significant Others ($r = .73$, $p < .01$), while Suppression also correlates positively, though to a lesser extent, with Family ($r = .63$, $p < .01$), Friends ($r = .61$, $p < .01$), and Significant Others ($r = .57$, $p < .01$). CS also exhibit significant associations. Appraisal CS shows high positive correlations with Reappraisal ($r = .82$, $p < .01$), Family ($r = .70$, $p < .01$), Friends ($r = .74$, $p < .01$), and Significant Others ($r = .68$, $p < .01$). Behavioral CS is strongly correlated with both Reappraisal ($r = .82$, $p < .01$) and Appraisal ($r = .89$, $p < .01$), as well as with all three sources of social support. Additionally, a substantial correlation is noted between Reappraisal and Suppression ($r = .76$, $p < .01$), reflecting the interplay between different ER.

Table 2:   *Multiple regression showing Perceived Social Support as the predictor of Reappraisal Emotional Regulation (N=256)*

Variable	B	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	
						UL	LL
Constants	4.87		.93	5.25	<.001	[6.79,	3.04]
Family	.31	.24	.19	3.68	<.001	[.49,	.14]
Friend	.49	.37	.18	5.81	<.001	[.75,	.32]
Significant Other	.32	.25	.19	3.79	<.001	[.59,	.25]
R		.80					
R^2		.64					
ΔR^2		.65					
F		150.45			<.001		

Note. $N = 256$, $***p < .001$.

Table 2 Shows the impact of PSS (Family, Friend and Significant Others) on Reappraisal ER in FGS and NFGS. The value of R^2 is .64 shows that the predictor variables explained 64% variance in the outcome variable with F (3, 252) = 150.45, $p < .001$. The findings showed that ER is positively predicted by Family Support ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$), Friend Support ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$) and Significant Others ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$).

Table 3: *Multiple regression showing Perceived Social Support as the predictor of Suppression Emotional Regulation (N=256)*

Variable	B	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	
						UL	LL
Constants	8.15		.67	11.86	<.001	[9.48,	6.71]
Family	.38	.37	.16	4.35	<.001	[.40,	.25]
Friend	.22	.28	.16	3.55	<.001	[.34,	.19]
Significant Other	.15	.16	.16	.70	.485	[.27,	-.18]
R		.66					
R²		.44					
ΔR²		.44					
F		66.34			<.001		

Note. N = 256, ***p < .001.

Table 3 Shows the impact of PSS (Family, Friend and Significant Others) on Suppression ER in FGS and NFGS. The value of R^2 is .44. It shows that the support explained 44% variance in suppression with F (3, 252) = 66.34, $p < .001$. The findings revealed that ER is positively predicted by Family ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$) and Friend ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$) whereas Significant Others has non-significant effect on ER ($\beta = .16$, $p > .05$).

Table 4: *Multiple regression showing Perceived Social Support as the predictor of Appraisal Coping (N=256)*

Variable	B	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	
						UL	LL
Constants	6.54		.59	10.98	<.001	[7.71,	5.46]
Family	.19	.25	.16	3.59	.001	[.30,	.19]
Friend	.35	.44	.15	6.52	<.001	[.46,	.24]
Significant Other	.11	.14	.15	1.97	.049	[.22,	.01]
R		.78					
R²		.60					
ΔR²		.60					
F		126.19			<.001		

Note. N = 256, ***p < .001.

Table 4 Shows the impact of PSS (Family, Friend and Significant Others) on Appraisal Coping in FGS and NFGS. The value of R^2 is .60 which shows that the predictor variables explained 60% variance in the outcome variable with F (3, 252) = 126.19, $p < .001$. The findings indicate that Appraisal CS is positively predicted by Family ($\beta = .25$, $p = .001$), Friend ($\beta = .44$, $p < .001$) and Significant others ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$).

Table 5: *Multiple regression showing Perceived Social Support as the predictor of Behavioural Coping (N=256)*

Variable	B	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	
						UL	LL
Constants	5.68		.61	9.39	<.001	[6.89,	4.48]
Family	.14	.20	.16	2.51	.013	[.31,	.03]
Friend	.30	.41	.15	5.56	<.001	[.41,	.19]
Significant Other	.11	.15	.16	1.85	.065	[.22,	-.01]
R		.71					
R²		.50					
ΔR²		.49					
F		84.66			<.001		

Note. N = 256, ***p < .001.

Table 5 Shows the impact of PSS (Family, Friend and Significant Others) on Behavioral Coping in FGS and NFGS. The R^2 value of .50 shows that the support explained 50% variance in the behavioral coping with $F (3, 252) = 84.66$, $p < .001$. The findings indicated that behavioral CS is positively predicted by Family ($\beta = .20$, $p = .05$) and Friend ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$) whereas Significant Others has non-significant effect ($\beta = .15$, $p > .05$).

Table 6: *Mean Comparison Between First Generation and Second Generation University Students*

	FGS		NFGS				
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t(254)	p	Cohen's d
PSS	33.67	16.53	62.64	15.41	-14.50	<.001	3.26
CS	24.83	9.47	37.90	9.27	-11.16	<.001	1.33
ER	30.80	12.53	48.02	12.10	-11.19	<.001	1.49

Table 6 revealed significant mean difference differences on PSS with $t (254) = -14.50$, $p < .05$. Findings showed that NFGS exhibited higher score on PSS (M = 62.64, SD = 15.41) compared to FGS (M = 33.67, SD = 16.53). The effect size for this analysis (d = 3.26) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a large effect (d = .80). Findings revealed significant mean differences on CS $t (254) = -11.16$, $p < .05$ and ER $t (254) = -11.19$, $p < .05$. Results showed higher score of NFGS on CS (M = 37.90, SD = 9.27) compared to FGS (M = 24.83, SD = 9.47). Similarly, on ER, NFGS exhibited higher score (M = 48.02, SD = 12.10) compared to FGS (M = 30.80, SD = 12.53). The value of Cohen's d for CS was 1.33 (d > .80) and ER was 1.49 (d > .80) indicated large effect size.

Table 7: *Independent Samples T Test for Comparing Perceived Social Support, Coping Strategies and Emotional Regulation among Male and Female*

	Male		Female				
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t(254)	p	Cohen's d
PSS	51.42	22.40	44.57	20.19	2.57	.011	0.3
CS	33.24	11.49	29.30	11.02	2.79	.006	0.3
ER	40.30	16.18	38.43	13.62	1.00	.316	0.3

Note; M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 7 shows significant mean difference differences on PSS with $t (254) = 2.57$, $p < .05$. Findings indicates that Male exhibited higher score on PSS (*M = 51.42, SD = 22.40*) compared to Females (*M = 44.57, SD = 20.19*). The value of Cohen's d was 0.3 (d < .80) for

all variables indicated medium effect size. Furthermore, coping strategies and emotional regulation has non-significant results.

Table 8: *Independent Samples T Test for Comparing Perceived Social Support and Emotional Regulation among First Born and Second Born Child*

	First		Second				
Variables	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***t(254)***	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
PSS	37.71	18.74	65.28	13.43	-12.64	<.001	1.6
CS	26.57	9.99	39.22	9.03	-10.43	<.001	1.3
ER	32.86	12.89	50.13	11.93	-10.85	<.001	1.4

Table 8 shows significant mean differences on PSS t (254) = -12.64, p < .05, Coping strategies t (254) = -10.43, p < .05, and emotional regulation t (254) =-10.85, p < .05. Findings showed that First born students exhibited lower score on perceived social support (M = 37.71, SD = 18.74) compared to Second born students (M = 65.28, SD = 13.43). Moreover, first born students shows lower score on coping strategies (M = 26.57, SD = 9.99) compared to second born (M = 39.22, SD = 9.03). Similarly, first born students score lower on emotion regulation (M =32.86, SD = 12.89) compared to second born (M =50.13, SD = 11.93). The value of Cohen's d was 1.6 for social support, 1.3 for coping strategies and 1.4 for emotion regulation (d > .80) indicated excellent effect size.

Table 9: *Mean difference Across Socioeconomic Status in terms of Perceived Social Support, Coping Strategies and Emotional Regulation*

			Planned Contrast Comparison	
Variables	***F* (2,253)**	**η²**	**Socioeconomic Status (M, SD)**	**Socioeconomic Status (M, SD)**
PSS	8.05***	.49	Lower Class (42.42, 21.02)	Middle Class** (47.05, 21.43) Upper Class*** (60.47, 18.57)
			Middle Class (47.05, 21.43)	Upper Class** (60.47, 18.57)
CS	2.84	NS	Lower Class (29.58, 10.27)	Middle Class (30.99, 11.43) Upper Class (35.33, 12.05)
			Middle Class (30.99, 11.43)	Upper Class (35.33, 12.05)
ER	5.78**	.44	Lower Class (35.93, 13.97)	Middle Class** (38.78, 15.29) Upper Class** (46.64, 13.30)
			Middle Class (38.78, 15.29)	Upper Class** (46.64, 13.30)

Note; NS = Not Significant

Table 9 presents statistically significant difference for PSS, F (2, 253) = 8.05, p < .001, η² = .49. Planned contrast comparisons revealed that upper-class students reported significantly higher levels of PSS than both middle- and lower-class students. Both middle- and upper-class students were significantly different, with the direction of difference

following the trend: Lower < Middle** < Upper***. Similarly, ER showed significant differences among SES groups, F (2, 253) = 5.78, p < .01, η^2 = .44. Contrast tests indicated that students from the upper class had significantly higher ER scores than other two groups. Specifically, middle-class students differed significantly from the upper class (Middle** < Upper**), with the pattern again progressing from lower to upper SES levels. In contrast, the differences observed in CS across SES groups were not statistically significant, F (2, 253) = 2.84, p > .05, indicating no meaningful variation based on SES.

DISCUSSION

The current study was aimed to investigate the correlations as well as the influence of sociodemographic characteristics such as gender, birth order, and socioeconomic position on perceived social support, coping strategies, and emotional regulations among FGS and NFGS. The findings for each of the hypotheses are detailed below.

H1: It was assumed that FGS will experience low perceived social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation than NFGS. The hypothesis is justified by the results of independent sample t-tests. These results are corroborated by the previous literature, which suggests that FGS often face disadvantages because their parents did not have a higher education level, and therefore the former lack in terms of sources of emotional and informational support (Dennis et al., 2005; Jenkins et al., 2013). The results corroborate the argument that NFGS are better equipped with more structured familial and peer-based supervision, which is more likely to counter academic and emotional stress than their FGS counterparts (Billson and Terry, 1982; York-Anderson and Bowman, 1991; Pascarella et al., 2004; Gibbons and Borders, 2010).

H2: It was hypothesized that the perceived social support would exhibit the strong positive correlation with emotional regulation in both first-generation (FGS) and non-first-generation students (NFGS). Pearson correlation analysis proved that there are significant positive correlations between all three variables. Specifically, family and friend support were closely correlated with reappraisal-focused emotion regulation, appraisal-focused as well as behavioral coping styles. Similar results were documented by Phinney and Haas (2003) who found that perceived assistance enhanced the capability of students to deal with academic stress. Roberts (2011) found out that individuals with a stronger social support are more apt to reappraisal-based emotion management and more beneficial coping processes (Marroquin, 2011; Gross and John, 2003). Also, perceived family support has a positive association with the knowledge of postsecondary education among students (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini, 2004; Woosley and Shepler, 2011).

H3: It was hypothesized that Social support is positively predicted to emotional regulation and coping strategies in both groups. According to regression analysis, PSS strongly predicted both emotion regulation (reappraisal and suppression) and coping methods (appraisal and behavioral). Specifically, assistance from friends emerged as the most powerful predictor across all models. Marroquín and Nolen-Hoeksema (2015) found that peer and family support plays an important role in buffering stress reactions. Srivastava et al. (2009) discovered that suppression during college transitions was adversely connected to perceived social support, whereas reappraisal was favorably related. Similarly, Lopes et al. (2005) and Butler et al. (2003) discovered that persistent and validating social connections improved emotion control abilities, corroborating the predictive association revealed in this study. Another strong positive relationship was seen between emotion-focused coping and perceived social support from colleagues (Folkman et al., 1986).

H4: It was hypothesized that Female university students will report lower level of PSS, coping strategies and emotional regulation compared to male university students. Findings support this hypothesis. These findings are comparable with those of Cage et al. (2021), who discovered that female students experience higher levels of emotional stress throughout their transition to higher education. These findings are also consistent with earlier research, which suggests that the early stages of university transition might be more difficult for female students because many factors like responsibilities and less support than for men (Cage et al., 2021; Charalambous, 2020). According to (Poots and Cassidy, 2020) study, indicated that female students had greater self-imposed standards, lower self-esteem, lower self-identity, no awareness of coping mechanism, inability to control emotions and were more sensitive to perceived lack of support (Morris, 2020).

H5: First born students will report lower level of perceived social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation than second born students. The hypothesis was accepted using independent samples t-tests. This results are consistent with previous psychological ideas on birth order, such as those mentioned by (Canizares et al., 2024; Tian et al., 2012b)), which state that first-borns frequently bear more responsibility and pressure, resulting in more stress and fewer emotional outlets. Second-born, on the other hand, may benefit from learning from their elder siblings' experiences, allowing them to develop more adaptable emotional and behavioral skills. It is important to note that there has been no prior research explicitly addressing the relationship between birth order and emotional regulation in the context of generational student status. Although birth order has been extensively examined in relation to different psychological (Colorado, Garcia, & Carballo, 2024) and behavioral characteristics (Czyz, Liu, & King, 2012; Rueger, Chen, & Jenkins, 2014). This study contributes valuable insights to the burgeoning literature on family dynamics and student psychology.

H6: There was high level of social support, coping and emotional regulation in upper class compared to middle and lower class students. This hypothesis was found to be true in terms of the perceived social support as well as emotion regulation but the outcomes of coping techniques were not significant. These results are aligned with the fact that Wang et al. (2022) discovered that the greater the socioeconomic level of the population, the greater the access to emotional resources and educational support. Cloete (2001) found out that low socioeconomic status parents often provide less academic and emotional support. Children whose families have higher incomes do not tend to experience financial stress and more parent involvement, which can enhance their self-confidence and emotional stability as well as accessibility to a supportive environment (Bui, 2002; Kim and Sax, 2009; Inman and Mayes, 1999, Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of support in shaping students' emotional responses and stress-coping behaviors. The study's results pointed out that social support, coping strategies and emotional regulation can be discussed in upcoming studies. The study's sample size (N=256) is limited, which could impair its generalizability; therefore, if this topic is researched in the future, a larger sample size should be used.

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