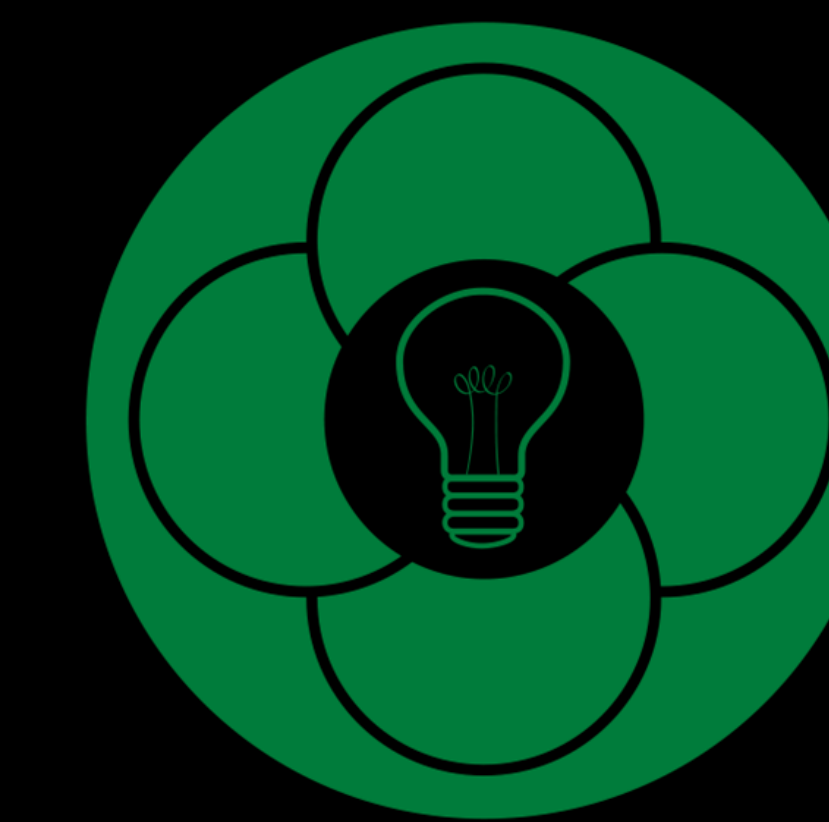


UNT[®] The Relationship Between Emotion Dysregulation, Depression, Anxiety, and Perceived Social Support

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Introduction:

- **Emotional dysregulation** refers to difficulties in managing the intensity/duration of emotional responses which cause reactions that are disproportionate to the situation at hand. This includes severe mood swings or outbursts. People with higher levels of emotional dysregulation are **more likely to experience psychological distress** because they struggle to regulate emotions. Emotional dysregulation is associated with increased depression and anxiety symptoms (Paulus et al., 2016).
- **Social support** is defined as feeling a sense of belonging from relationships with family, friends, and other helpful people. Greater emotional dysregulation has been associated with greater depressive symptoms, while greater perceived family/social support has been associated with lower emotional dysregulation and depression (Tartaro & Baptista, 2024).
 - Emotion dysregulation and depression have also been linked to loneliness and social anxiety in young adults (Eres et al., 2023).
 - Greater perceived social support has been associated with improved emotion regulation and better mental-health outcomes (Wang & Yao, 2026).
- Our study aims to explore the relationships between **emotional dysregulation, depression, anxiety, and social support**. In doing so, we hope to add to and expand on the literature that has been done previously to inform clinicians and psychologists.

Hypotheses:

Based on previous research, we hypothesize the following:

- **H1:** Emotional dysregulation will be positively associated with depression.
- **H2:** Emotional dysregulation will be positively associated with anxiety.
- **H3:** Perceived social support will moderate the relationship between emotion dysregulation, depression, and anxiety. Specifically, greater social support will weaken the association between emotional dysregulation and depression/anxiety.

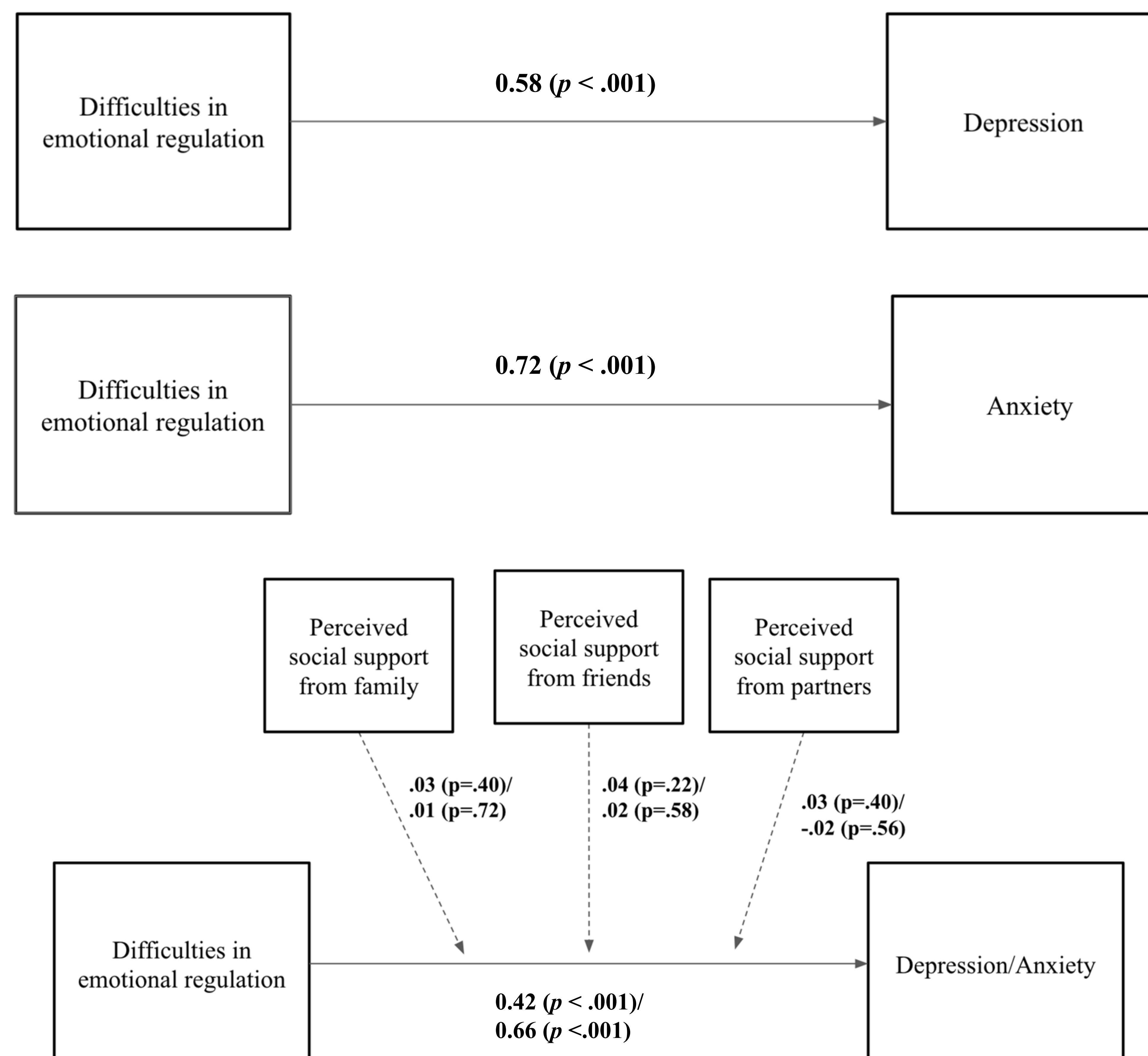
Methods:

The sample consisted of 788 adults who were recruited through Prolific and were paid \$10 upon completion of survey. Participants were racially and ethnically diverse.

- **Depression symptoms** were measured using the **PHQ-9**. Higher scores mean higher levels of depressive symptoms.
- **Anxiety symptoms** were measured using the **GAD-7**, where a higher score indicates higher reported anxiety.
- **Emotion regulation difficulties** were measured using **DERS**, where a higher score indicates more emotional dysregulation.
- **Perceived social support** was measured with the **MSPSS**, where a higher score indicates more social support specifically from family, friends or significant other.

All statistical analyses were conducted using R using linear regressions or moderation analyses.

Figures:



Note: Solid lines indicate a significant relationship, and dashed lines indicate a nonsignificant relationship

Results:

Based on our analyses, the following results were found:

- **H1:** Results from regression analysis supported the hypothesis and showed that more difficulties in emotional regulation was associated with more depression ($r^2=0.58$, $SE=0.038$, $p < .001$).
- **H2:** Results from regression analysis supported the hypothesis and showed that more difficulties in emotional regulation was associated with more anxiety ($r^2=0.72$, $SE=0.043$, $p < .001$).
- **H3:** Perceived social support from family, friends, and partners did not significantly moderate the relationship between emotional dysregulation, depression or anxiety.

Discussion:

- Findings are **consistent with previous research** showing that greater emotional dysregulation is associated with depression and anxiety.
- Contrary to previous research, **perceived social support did not moderate** the between emotional dysregulation, anxiety or depression.
- This suggests that emotional regulation plays a stronger role in reducing depression and anxiety compared to perceived social support
- These findings underline the need to develop good emotion regulation skills as well as to keep up supportive relationships.
- Future studies should research other factors that may moderate the relationship between emotional dysregulation, anxiety or depression such as the quality of relationships.
- Mental health services should look into providing treatment that focuses on emotional regulation such as DBT or CBT.

Limitations

- Self-reported data may be biased.
- Quality of relationships were not measured.
- Participant ages, religious affiliation, or other demographic information was not collected.
- A cross sectional study does not reveal cause and effect.

Future Directions

- Researchers could look at variables such as age, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation and how they influence emotional dysregulation.
- Future studies might be helped by investigating the quality of the relationships that people have with their family and friends.
- Additionally, individual interviews could give a more in depth response from participants and remove any bias from self-reported surveys.

