Attachment Styles and Emotion Regulation: 
Mediating Effect of Personality 

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Emotions and Emotion Regulation are central aspects of an individual’s life. There are several factors which influence the development and regulation of emotions (DER). This study investigated the mediating role of personality amid attachment styles and difficulties in emotion regulation. Sample of the study were adolescents (N=293) studying in different schools of Delhi. The tools used were Measure of Attachment Styles (Ahmed, Jahan, & Imtiaz, 2016), Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale Short Form by Kaufman, et al. (2015) and Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). Obtained scores were analysed using parallel mediation analysis, results revealed that only the agreeableness dimension of big five personality mediates the relationship between secure attachment style and difficulties in emotion regulation. On the other hand, ambivalent attachment style was directly related to difficulties in emotion regulation and indirectly through neuroticism. The finding not only adds to the literature but suggests the importance of parent-child relationship and of early childhood experiences.

Keywords: Attachment styles, Emotion Regulation, Personality.

Emotion regulation fundamental to human development and relationships. (Langlois, 2004). Adolescents is a crucial stage in an individual life and is marked by major physical and psychosocial changes as the individual makes a transition from child to adult and one of important aspect of development during this period is ones abilities to appropriately regulate positive and negative emotions in social, educational, and professional milieu as emotional experiences play a crucial role in an person’s life. Priorly, there has been emotion regulation has emerged as an important factor, it refers to individuals’ deliberately instigating, escaping, constraining, keeping, or balancing the event, structure, amount, or period of inner sentiments, emotionally allied bodily states, attentiveness, and impulsive circumstances of emotion to accomplish one’s ambitions. (Eisenberg, Morris, & Spinrad, 2005).

As posited in the classic attachment theory by Bowlby (1969), the relationship between parent/caregiver and child serves as a building block for socioemotional and behavioural development patterns throughout life. Based on this theory, Ainsworth and her colleagues (1978) developed a system for identification of the individual differences in mother-child relationship by conducting laboratory experiment called strange situation the findings of this experiment resulted in two broad forms attachment styles namely securely attached and insecurely attached (further classified into anxious-ambivalent and avoidant). Attachment especially during adolescents is regarded as a key phase as children grow, they gain more autonomy, communal interactions increases and peers play a more salient role leading to an increased need for self-regulation and relying on efficient regulation of emotions, though the caregivers/parents still remain to serve both as safe havens and secure bases in the phases of stress promoting the child’s need for exploration (Bowlby, 1988). Initial interactions (level of closeness to, protection and support from parents, and parent’s reciprocity and engagement) provides the cognitive framework for later social relationships this framework eventually influences the development of inner working models, which includes views about coping abilities, distress, emotion regulation strategies and representations about worlds safety (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002).