

# EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES AMONG EFL MASTER'S STUDENTS AT SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY: NAVIGATING ACADEMIC CHALLENGES AND STRESS

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## ABSTRACT

*Emotions are physiological states that significantly influence the learning process. Students must regulate their emotions when confronted with challenges in higher education. This study will answer the research questions: (1) How do Masters students regulate their emotions in academic life? and (2) What are the perceived effects of emotion regulation in their academic life? This study used an explanatory sequential mixed method with 21 participants from the first semester of the English education master's program at Sanata Dharma University batch 2024. Observation, questionnaire, and interview were used to collect the data. This study used the process of recognition, coding, data reduction, data display, and triangulation techniques. The results showed that students had varied perspectives of emotional regulation towards their academic life. It was influenced by their thoughts, environment, and personal jobs. They faced challenges such as heavy workloads, time constraints, nervousness, stress, anxiety, and personal issues. To overcome this, the students seek help from friends, family, and lecturers, choose relaxing activities, and shift their mindsets. It was found that students' emotional regulation varied depending on their academic situation during the semester. On the other hand, students perceived the effect of emotional regulation, which is knowing themselves better, boosted confidence, better understanding of the materials, improved time management, and healthy relationships. This research highlights the importance of emotional regulation for first-semester master's students adapting to a new environment, aiding their academic success.*

**Keywords:** *emotional regulation, academic challenges, academic life*

## INTRODUCTION

The transition from undergraduate to master education frequently entails a complex interplay of emotional and academic challenges for students. Willems et al. (2021) posit that students' experiences during their first year of higher education are pivotal to their subsequent academic trajectories, with implications for further progress, retention, and graduation. It is common for students to adjust their learning strategies in response to the high

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expectations associated with independent learning in higher education. However, students will change their pace of learning in order to understand the material, complete their Master's degree more quickly, and achieve the highest possible academic standards.

Students often face challenges that significantly impact their academic experience. Chang et al. (2021) found that the most common challenges were academic workload and adapting to changing learning styles. Furthermore, Meza et al. (2021) found that another challenge was the writing demands placed on students, which included academic papers, reflective essays, and research proposals. Achieving good academic performance is influenced by many factors, not only internal but also external, such as gender, race, and students' learning styles (Saeed & Ahmad, 2020). Then, the environment and different levels of support from peers and family members (Awang et al., 2020).

These high academic standards place considerable pressure on students. Piaget (1971) states that students must adjust and adapt to the situation. The adjustment required by first-semester students may present a significant challenge for some. The capacity to adapt to a novel environment is subject to several influences. As Ansary et al. (2023) elucidate, many psychological variables significantly shape students' adaptation capacity. Students' inability to deal with these things at this stage will harm them. Ma (2023) found that the pressure to perform well in school can lead to academic stress. Academic stress occurs when students face too many demands and do not know how to cope. With all the needs and expectations of today's students, academic stress has a negative impact and leads to additional problems, including physical, emotional, and cognitive.

Academic stress is often considered a mental health disorder characterized by difficulty concentrating, feelings of fear, anxiety, shame, anger, depression, and denial (Olivera et al., 2023). Students with low academic resilience often lack independence and motivation. Then, students are required to have emotional adjustment. Kirtania et al. (2021) state that an individual can adapt to the demands of their environment and the responsibilities inherent to their role, including the ability to interact with others, assume obligations, and regulate their emotions. It signifies that students must acquaint themselves with their new colleagues, learn to accept new responsibilities and develop the capacity to regulate their emotions. In a similar vein, Ansary (2023) posited that emotional adjustment is of paramount importance for academic achievement. Students who can regulate their feelings in a new environment will achieve positive educational outcomes.

Students must stay on track by organizing themselves to achieve their goals (Greisel et al., 2023). Emotion regulation helps them navigate their academic lives (Gross, 2003, 2014). It involves shaping emotional experiences by changing feelings and situations. Emotion regulation is an automatic process that occurs in response to emotional stimuli and affects various aspects of an individual's behavior. Thompson (1994) supports this, stating that emotion regulation (ER) is a complex process involving biological and behavioral elements that mitigate the occurrence of emotions. People use two main strategies to regulate their emotions. Cognitive reappraisal involves re-evaluating an emotional stimulus to adjust thoughts in anticipation of future situations. At the same time, expressive suppression is a response adjustment strategy to prevent the manifestation of negative expressions (Zaini & Manesh, 2020). Students who have developed these skills will cope with stressful situations when unexpected challenges arise during their final project. They will organize their thoughts and maintain a positive outlook.

In this context, previous research has definitively addressed the same issue. Saleem et al. (2021) examined novice teachers' perceptions of student behavioral challenges that trigger emotional self-regulation challenges in classroom management. Then, Doorley et al. (2021) first explored positive and negative emotion regulation in college athletes, explicitly examining daily cognitive enjoyment, acceptance, and reappraisal. Annisa et al. (2024) examined the role of emotion regulation and self-efficacy in college students' academic resilience. Kökönyi et

al. (2024) investigated the role of emotion regulation in predicting adolescent depressive symptoms. Rahmayanti et al. (2024) also investigated the role of emotion regulation as a mediator of self-compassion and stress in college students completing their final project.

This study, along with the others, focuses on emotions. However, the research results differ. Firstly, the results showed that teachers have to manage their students' behavior during classroom management. The second study revealed that reappraising and accepting adverse events were the only strategies that predicted unique variance in daily emotions. Finally, the third study demonstrated a significant relationship between emotion regulation, self-efficacy, and academic resilience. The fourth study definitively showed that the comparable prospective relationships between adaptive and maladaptive strategies and symptoms highlight the need to identify factors that can reduce the negative impact of maladaptive emotion regulation and/or promote adaptive emotion regulation to buffer the impact of daily stressors. The first study's results showed that the emotion regulation aspect of expressive suppression did not mediate the relationship between self-compassion and stress in university students.

While the above literature emphasizes ER, there is limited research on the specific experiences and ER strategies of first-year master students. Many studies combine ER with other domains, such as self-efficacy and academic resilience, self-compassion, stress, or depressive symptoms, creating a need for a focused examination of ER in this specific population. This study addresses this gap by investigating how Master's students regulate their emotions and the perceived impact of ER on their academic life. The study was conducted at a prestigious university in Yogyakarta, where first-year students experience mixed emotions and personal and academic life situations. Therefore, this study will answer the following research questions:

1. How do Masters students regulate their emotions in academic life?
2. What are the perceived effects of emotion regulation in their academic life?

In the first semester of a master's degree, students often lack knowledge on regulating emotions as they transition to a new environment; this research is significant and valuable for their academic success.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research employs an explanatory sequential mixed method to acquire valid, reliable, comprehensive, and objective data. According to Creswell et al. (2018), the explanatory sequential mixed method employs quantitative data first and qualitative data second by combining numerical and descriptive data. It will help with in-depth analysis to provide a more comprehensive perspective on research. The researchers observed the classroom, distributed questionnaires to students, and then interviewed students—related emotional regulation.

### **Setting and Participants**

This research was conducted in the Master's program of English language education at Sanata Dharma University. This university has a motto "Cerdas dan Humanis" (Intelligent and Humanistic) which emphasizes emotional regulation in education. This Master's program incorporates the motto by helping students manage emotions, build resilience, and create positive learning environments, preparing educators for the emotional challenges of teaching in every course. The participants are 21 students of the English Education Master's program batch 2024, aged 22-50 years old. The participants are from East Indonesia, West Indonesia, and foreigners. Some of them were full-time students, and others were already working. The participants for this research are chosen using purposive sampling. According to Maxwell (1996), purposive sampling involves selecting certain areas,

persons, or situations to provide valuable data that other techniques cannot obtain. The researchers choose persons or situations for participation based on criteria.

**Table 3.1 Demographic Information**

No.	Name	Age	Origin	Occupation
1	Student A	22	Central Java	Part-time English Teacher
2	Student B	23	Special Region of Yogyakarta	Freelance English Teacher
3	Student C	23	Special Region of Yogyakarta	English Teacher
4	Student D	23	West Kalimantan	Student
5	Student E	31	Republic of Rwanda	Student
6	Student F	22	Central Java	Student
7	Student G	22	East Nusa Tenggara	Student
8	Student H	25	Central Java	Freelance English Teacher
9	Student I	25	Bangka Belitung	Student
10	Student J	23	Special Region of Yogyakarta	English Tutor
11	Student K	28	Special Region of Yogyakarta	Edupreneur
12	Student L	23	North Sulawesi	Assistant Lecturer
13	Student M	24	South Kalimantan	Student
14	Student N	23	Special Region of Yogyakarta	Student
15	Student O	50	Republic Democratic of Timor Leste	Catholic Nun
16	Student P	22	West Java	Student
17	Student Q	25	West Papua	Freelance Entrepreneur
18	Student R	30	Special Region of Yogyakarta	Entrepreneur
19	Student S	28	West Papua	Art Designer
20	Student T	32	Central Java	Edupreneur
21	Student U	26	Central Java	Content Creator

### Data Collection

The Researchers collected data through observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Observation gathered detailed information. According to Cresswell (2012), it is a technique for gathering direct, open-ended information by observing people in the setting. Researchers observed students' immediate emotional responses to activities and interactions with friends in class. Notes were taken to analyze students' emotional regulation. A questionnaire is a list of questions used to collect information from participants. Taherdoost (2021) describes it as a standard data collection tool. The questionnaire used in this study is closed-ended and includes the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross, 2003) and the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1983). The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire uses a Likert scale with 12 statements representing levels of agreement. The Perceived Stress Scale consists of 10 questions with frequency levels.

Researchers created the questionnaire using Google Forms and distributed it via WhatsApp to collect quantitative data on students' emotions. Researchers also used semi-structured and face-to-face interviews. Creswell (2012) defines face-to-face interviews as ideal for confident, articulate participants. This method allowed interviewees to comfortably share their thoughts on coping with the university workload and managing emotions. Participants (students A, B, C, D, E, and F) were purposively selected. Interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded for transcription. The researcher arranged interviews with the participants. The interview was about an hour and a half long. Some interviewees answered questions too long and went off topic, but the interviewer could deal with this so that all questions could be answered in about 15 minutes. The questions for the interview were

developed from the questionnaire, and some important sections related to emotion regulation in the academic setting were added. There were nine questions about how they change their emotions from positive to negative or vice versa in general. They also asked whether they had experienced academic pressure, academic challenges, and stress, how they dealt with it, and whether they had sought help from friends or lecturers to regulate emotions. Finally, they asked whether the ability to regulate emotions changes throughout the semester, whether this ability is useful and what impact it has when successfully regulating emotions.

### **Data Analysis**

Research relies on data analysis to improve understanding and communication. According to Ary et al. (2009), researchers use familiarisation, coding, data reduction, and data display methods. Familiarisation involves reviewing notes, transcripts, video and audio recordings to understand the data. The researcher observes, analyses, and examines data in a way that shows how each person involved in the research views it. The focus here is on getting comfortable with the information. This is done by doing regular reading and active listening.

This general approach is important to improve how researchers understand their study and help them communicate their results. Coding is the second stage of analyzing the data. Coding means classifying information into sections to create meaning. Data coding involves using names to identify patterns in data. Coding divides data into categories to reduce the volume of data and obtain accurate results. The third stage is data reduction. Data reduction summarises and removes unnecessary information to organize data for conclusions—involvement in data reduction benefits data summarization, revision, and presentation (Mezmir, 2020). The final stage is data display, which makes it easier to understand and organize the next steps. Data display can be the subject of the report. It can be presented in text, tables, graphs, or maps (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). This research presents the data as narrative text as a graph or a table.

### **Data Validity**

In this research, the researchers utilize a triangulation technique to determine the data validity. There are various widely used triangulation techniques, such as time, technique, source, theories, and investigator triangulation (Sugiyono, 2012). Meanwhile, in this research, a triangulation technique utilized is theoretical triangulation, which combines two or more data collections. Data are gathered using observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Furthermore, the theories are combined and examined with the acquired data. Therefore, the validity of the data can be established.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

In this part, the results of observation and interviews will answer the first research question as qualitative data, while the questionnaires will answer the second research question as quantitative data.

#### *a. Student's emotional regulation*

Table 4.1 presents results from the questionnaire the researchers conducted in November 2024. The questionnaire consisted of five answers: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA).

Table 4.1 Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

No.	Statements	Frequencies of Responses									
		1 (SD)		2 (D)		3 (N)		4 (A)		5 (SA)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about.	0	0	0	0	6	28.6	11	52.4	4	19
2.	I keep my emotions to myself.	0	0	3	14.3	6	28.6	9	42.9	3	14.3
3.	When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I'm thinking about.	0	0	0	0	8	38.1	7	33.3	6	28.6
4.	When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them.	5	23.8	1	4.8	5	23.8	10	47.6	0	0
5.	When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.	1	4.8	0	0	7	33.3	7	33.3	6	28.6
6.	I control my emotions by not expressing them.	2	9.5	5	23.8	3	14.3	9	42.9	2	9.5
7.	When I want to feel more positive emotions, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.	0	0	2	9.5	4	19	12	57.1	3	14.3
8.	I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in.	0	0	0	0	4	19	10	47.6	7	33.3
9.	When I want to feel more positive emotions, I increase their expression.	0	0	1	4.8	9	42.9	7	33.3	4	19
10.	When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them.	0	0	4	19	7	33.3	6	28.6	4	19
11.	When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.	0	0	0	0	4	19	12	57.1	5	23.8
12.	In certain situations, I increase the expression of what I am feeling (be it positive or negative).	0	0	0	0	5	23.8	11	52.4	5	23.8

Around 52.4% (n=11) of the respondents agree with the first statement that changing their cognitive focus can positively affect emotional conditions. Meanwhile, 42.9% of the nine students surveyed indicated they tended to hold their emotions. Furthermore, eight students (38.1%) indicated a neutral opinion regarding statement

number three. In addition, 47.6% of students agreed with the fourth statement. It was found that 14 students showed an even distribution of responses, with a ratio of 33.3%:33.3% between those who expressed neutrality and those who agreed with the fifth statement. Then, about 42.9% of students, or nine people, agreed with the sixth statement. Furthermore, 12 students, representing 57.1% of the total students, agreed with the seventh statement. Similarly, ten students (47.6%) agreed with the eighth statement. Meanwhile, 42.9%, with nine out of 21 students, expressed a neutral opinion on the ninth statement. In addition, 33.3% of participants expressed neutral opinions regarding the tenth statement. Around 57.1% of participants agreed with the eleventh statement. In addition, 52.4% (or 11 people) agreed with the last statement.

*b. Student perceived stress scale*

The second questionnaire discusses the perceived stress scale and consists of 10 questions. The level of frequencies is 0 = Never, 1 = Almost never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Fairly often, 4 = Very often.

Table 4.2 Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

No.	Statements	Frequencies of Responses									
		0 (N)		1 (AN)		2 (S)		3 (FO)		4 (VO)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	1	4.8	2	9.5	6	28.6	5	23.8	7	33.3
2.	How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	2	9.5	1	4.8	7	33.3	4	19	7	33.3
3.	How often have you felt nervous and stressed?	1	4.8	1	4.8	5	23.8	4	19	10	47.6
4.	How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	1	4.8	0	0	8	38.1	6	28.6	6	28.6
5.	How often have you felt that things were going your way?	1	4.8	1	4.8	8	38.1	6	28.6	5	23.8
6.	How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	1	4.8	3	14.3	5	23.8	5	23.8	7	33.3
7.	How often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	1	4.8	1	4.8	4	19	7	33.3	8	38.1
8.	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	1	4.8	2	9.5	7	33.3	6	28.6	5	23.8
9.	How often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	1	4.8	2	9.5	4	19	5	23.8	9	42.9
10.	How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	1	4.8	4	19	3	14.3	6	28.6	7	33.3

Table 4.2 shows that seven students, or 33% of the participants, often perceive the first question as reflecting their emotional state. Similarly, 33.3% of the participants, or seven students, indicated they sometimes and very often felt the second question. On the other hand, around 47.6% (10 students) often experience the third question. Furthermore, 38.1% of the participants sometimes feel the fourth question. Similarly, about 38.1% (8 students) indicated that they sometimes experienced the fifth question. In addition, about 33.3% of the participants, or seven students, often experienced the sixth question.

Furthermore, eight students (representing 38.1% of the participants) indicated that they often experienced the seventh question. Seven students also indicated that they sometimes experience the eighth question, which relates to being in control of one's circumstances. Furthermore, about nine students (42.9% of participants) often answer the ninth question. However, about 33.3% of participants also often answer the tenth question.

### *c. Interviewing Students' experience in regulating emotion*

The researchers asked six interviewees nine questions related to emotional regulation. The first interviewee answered the question about expressing or keeping emotions when feeling positive or negative. Student A said that they tried to spread positivity through smiles and greetings; however, when the negative emotions came, they tended to keep their emotions to themselves. Student A was afraid that their sadness might affect others. Student A added that they keep their negative emotions in check until they disappear. The other interviewees shared similar answers (St B, St C, St D, St E, and St F). The findings supported the theory that emotion regulation represents the process through which individuals shape their emotional experiences, influencing both the emotions they feel and the circumstances under which they feel them and how they experience and express them (Gross, 2003).

In addition to questions about emotion regulation in general, the next question is about academic pressure, challenges, stress, and anxiety. Student B and Student D described their first semester as quite pressuring and causing them mental strain. They struggle with time management, stress, and overthinking due to the coursework and lectures. They added that sometimes, they have a fear of attending lectures. Some students are interested in this new learning environment but have a hard time with other students. It can be seen from Student E said:

*"At first, I felt very young and lacked confidence because some of my classmates were more experienced and already working." (St E)*

Other students were also having difficulties speaking with others due to the differences in pronunciation. Student F expressed:

*"The first challenge that I faced was presentation. I could not express my mind and thoughts because people may not understand what I was saying, and I did not know my friends well back then." (St F)*

The situation above followed the findings of Chang et al. (2021), where the most common challenge was academic workload. Furthermore, Meza et al. (2021) found another challenge related to the writing demands placed on students.

Students can regulate their emotions in various ways. Student A stated that taking a break from responsibilities by doing relaxing activities. Student B emphasized the importance of social interaction and maintaining a positive mindset. Student C chose to manage her energy to avoid disrupting others. Student E described that she chose to avoid overthinking and overreacting. Then, Student F highlighted the emotional support from friends. The opinions of the interviewees were also in line with those of Greisel et al. (2023), who stated that students need to be able to organize themselves to navigate through challenges and stay on track to achieve their goals.



Students' emotional regulation sometimes goes smoothly, but they face various obstacles or challenges. Student A described their difficulty understanding others in a new group due to frequent collaboration. Student A stated:

*"This semester, there is a lot of group work, and I always meet different friends. This sometimes confuses me, and I lack emotional control when understanding how other friends learn. So, I take it out on others. On the one hand, I also try to control it." (St A)*

Other students say that they were struggling with both internal and external challenges. Student E:

*"Some things come from inside and outside. Sometimes, I cannot deal with my thoughts and end up blaming myself. On top of that, the environment around me is not always supportive." (St E)*

The other interviewees also shared the same opinions. Furthermore, obstacles are influenced by internal and external factors.

Both Student A and Student F highlight how they manage their emotions independently and seek support in an academic setting. They handle their negative emotions independently while discussing academic matters with their friends and lecturers. However, some students did not seek help from either friends or lecturers. These findings supported other research that showed that students' temperament, motivation, socio-economic factors, and level of support can come from peers and family (Awang et al., 2020).

Student C stated they were experiencing declining emotional stability due to increased workload, which led to difficulties managing emotions. On the other hand, Student E struggles with emotional regulation but highlighted their personal growth and improvement over the semester. Some of them feel that their emotional regulation is getting better. This aligns with Thompson's theory (1994). He posited that emotion regulation is a complex process entailing biological and behavioral elements that mitigate the emergence of emotions.

Students felt that emotion regulation was beneficial to them. One of the interviewees said:

*"I feel the benefits of being able to manage my positive emotions so that when I am not too happy, or when I am sad, I am not too sad." (St F)*

The other students also gave the same opinion that emotion regulation was beneficial to them. This aligns with Gross (2014), who states that emotion regulation (ER) is the ability to reduce harmful or increase positive emotions. This process is an essential psychological adaptation that enables individuals to cope with and reduce emotional distress.

Students felt that managing their emotions could benefit them not only in their academic life but also in their personal lives. Student D stated that they could prevent themselves from hurting others by managing emotions and practicing self-awareness. Student E emphasized improved social interaction, decision-making, and learning. Finally, Student F explained their increased confidence when giving presentations.

## Discussion

A one-month observation revealed that Master's program in English Language Education student batch 2024 experienced emotions influenced by personal lives, environment, age, and occupation. It was found that personal problems lead to declining academic performance and increasing academic pressure. However, once students could regulate the emotions that they faced, they experienced the benefits. The study results indicate that the ability to regulate emotions is crucial in helping students enrolled in EFL Master's programs navigate the academic environment and its inherent challenges.

In the context of emotion regulation, many students demonstrate emotional regulation by shifting their thoughts to improve their mood and seek positive experiences. In contrast, others suppress their emotions to maintain social harmony. This approach may be beneficial, but frequent suppression might impact well-being and

social interactions. Additionally, some students may not employ cognitive strategies due to uncertainty about the environment, limited awareness, or a preference for alternative coping methods. These findings align with Piaget's (1971) theory about adaptation or adjustment that first-semester students experience in class. These students faced a new environment, people, and learning system that affected their emotions.

The study found that students employ different emotion regulation strategies, with some reframing their thoughts for emotional well-being. In contrast, others tend to suppress their emotions due to personal or cultural factors. While suppression offers short-term relief, it can hinder genuine emotional expression, impact interpersonal relationships, and affect health over time. Additionally, some students displayed a neutral attitude, indicating uncertainty, inconsistent application, or doubts about their effectiveness. These findings align with Ansary et al.'s (2023) theory of psychological adaptation, suggesting that students' backgrounds and experiences influence their approach to handling emotions.

The study found that many students utilized cognitive reappraisal to regulate their emotions. Highlighting the importance of cognitive strategies in managing emotions effectively. However, due to uncertainty, many students did not actively use emotional expression to increase positivity. Few prefer adjustment or activities to improve mood. These findings show that the theory from Kirtania et al. (2021) is aligned. Each student has their way of dealing with their emotion towards something, and this capacity to adapt to the demands of the new environment and responsibilities inherent to their role.

The second questionnaire table indicates that ten participants reported experiencing feelings of nervousness and stress due to the pressure of the academic workload. Additionally, approximately seven participants indicated needing assistance managing their numerous responsibilities. This suggests that stress, nervousness, heavy workloads, and life pressures are prevalent among students (Zaini & Manesh, 2020). These factors can impair their ability to regulate emotions. This underscores the importance of cognitive reappraisal and problem-solving strategies in supporting students in navigating their academic lives.

Furthermore, many students struggle with academic responsibilities in their personal lives. Several students felt frustrated and angered by challenging situations beyond their control. This aligns with previous studies, which state that academic responsibility is often considered a mental health disorder characterized by difficulty concentrating, feelings of fear, anxiety, shame, anger, depression, and denial (Olivera et al., 2023). These responses suggest that emotional regulation interventions, such as relaxation techniques, mindfulness training, or psychology-related activities, may be beneficial for students in managing frustration and stress. Participating in or assisting in managing emotions related to academic and personal life can significantly impact students' ability to maintain focus and emotional balance.

The results also demonstrated that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in emotion regulation. Some students were confident in coping with personal problems, while others struggled, which affected their academics. Implementing an educational program that teaches emotional management could enhance resilience and academic performance. Interview results revealed that students experience various challenges in academic life, such as academic pressure, time management, social adaptation, and workload stress. Academic workload was identified as the most common challenge.

Students gradually improve emotional regulation, enhancing self-awareness, confidence, and relationships despite academic pressure and stress. Cohen (2009) supports this by mentioning that students' perceptions of the educational setting are essential because they are connected with various academic, socio-emotional, and educational outcomes. Some students felt that changes in emotional regulation were often unstable. The instability in regulating emotions is influenced by the burden of assignments that are sometimes too heavy, which affects the level of pressure, challenge, and stress. Thus, emotion regulation is a complex process (Thompson, 1994).

Students slowly but surely benefit after following the lectures and receiving emotional support from classmates and lecturers.

Students' environment, relationships, lecturers, and family support influence their emotional regulation. Positive emotions are expressed through smiling and friendly greetings, while negative emotions are often kept to oneself. Emotion regulation, influenced by internal and external factors, significantly impacts students' overall well-being and academic performance. Developing practical emotion regulation skills is crucial for students to navigate their academic journey successfully.

## CONCLUSION

Emotional regulation is a crucial skill in academic life. This study examined the emotional experiences of 21 first-semester Master of English Education students at Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia, facing various academic challenges and pressure. Students used emotion regulation strategies, such as seeking help, relaxation, and modifying their cognitive processes. Some students reported improved emotion regulation skills by the end of the semester, while others continued to experience difficulties. Students who regulated emotions showed increased self-understanding and happiness in their personal lives. They also showed a deeper understanding of the material, better time management, and more constructive interactions with others. As this study only focused on a single class, further research is necessary to explore the impact of external factors and the efficacy of emotion regulation interventions on students' well-being and academic performance.

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## APPENDICES

### Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003)

#### Instructions:

We would like to ask you some questions about your emotional regulation, in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions. The questions below involve two distinct aspects of your emotional life. One is your emotional experience, or what you feel like inside. The other is your emotional expression, or how you show your emotions in the way you talk, gesture, or behave. Although some of the following questions may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways. For each item, please answer using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

1. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about.
2. \_\_\_\_ I keep my emotions to myself.
3. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I'm thinking about.
4. \_\_\_\_ When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them.
5. \_\_\_\_ When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.
6. \_\_\_\_ I control my emotions by not expressing them.
7. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel more positive emotions, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.
8. \_\_\_\_ I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in.
9. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel more positive emotions, I increase their expression.
10. \_\_\_\_ When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them.
11. \_\_\_\_ When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.
12. \_\_\_\_ In certain situations, I increase the expression of what I am feeling (be it positive or negative).

### Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983)

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate with a check how often you felt or thought a certain way.

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Almost never
- 2 = Sometimes
- 3 = Fairly often
- 4 = Very often

1. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

3. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?
4. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
6. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
8. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?
10. \_\_\_\_ In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?