

ПЕДАГОГІЧНА ТА ВІКОВА ПСИХОЛОГІЯ

UDC 159.922.6:[159.942:[316.6:316.4]

Стаття поширюється на умовах ліцензії CC BY 4.0

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/psy-visnyk/2025.4.16>**Bihunov D. O.***Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor,
Postdoctoral Student at the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy
of Preschool Education
Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav
ORCID: 0000-0001-6100-7765*EMOTIONAL REGULATION, RELATIONSHIPS,
AND ADAPTATION IN EMERGING ADULTHOODЕМОЦІЙНА РЕГУЛЯЦІЯ, МІЖОСОБИСТІСНІ ВІДНОСИНИ
ТА АДАПТАЦІЯ В ПЕРІОД РАНЬОЇ ДОРОСЛОСТІ

Emerging adulthood, typically defined as the period between ages 18 and 25, constitutes a critical phase of psychological and social development characterized by identity exploration, instability, and increasing autonomy. During this transition from adolescence to adulthood, individuals encounter significant emotional, relational, and contextual challenges that require sophisticated self-regulatory capacities. The article examines the role of emotional intelligence – particularly emotional regulation – in facilitating adaptation, resilience, and interpersonal competence during emerging adulthood. Drawing upon theoretical models of emotional intelligence and emotion regulation, the study conceptualizes emotional regulation as a multidimensional process comprising intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual domains. These capacities enable individuals to manage internal affective states, negotiate emotions within social interactions, and adjust to the demands of new environments such as higher education, workplaces, and intimate relationships. Existing empirical research demonstrates that high emotional intelligence predicts greater psychological well-being, lower stress and anxiety, improved relationship quality, and stronger professional adaptation. The article further explores how emotionally intelligent coping strategies – such as reappraisal, empathy, and social support seeking – foster resilience and post-adversity growth. In educational and organizational contexts, emotional intelligence training, mindfulness practices, and social-emotional learning programs are identified as effective interventions that enhance self-regulation and promote mental health. By integrating developmental and emotional perspectives, the paper argues that emotional intelligence constitutes both a protective factor and a developmental resource in the transition to adulthood, enabling young adults to transform instability into growth and to navigate the complexities of modern life with adaptability, empathy, and psychological balance.

Key words: emerging adulthood, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, psychological well-being, resilience, interpersonal relationships.

Період ранньої дорослості, який зазвичай охоплює вік від 18 до 25 років, становить критичну фазу психологічного та соціального розвитку, що характеризується пошуком ідентичності, нестабільністю та зростанням автономії. У цей перехідний етап від підлітковості до зрілої дорослості особи стикаються зі значними емоційними, міжособистісними та контекстуальними викликами, які вимагають розвинених саморегуляційних здібностей. У статті розглядається роль емоційного інтелекту – зокрема емоційної регуляції – у забезпеченні адаптації, резильєнтності та міжособистісної компетентності в період ранньої дорослості. Спираючись на теоретичні моделі емоційного інтелекту та емоційної регуляції, роботу присвячено розумінню емоційної регуляції як багатовимірного процесу, що включає внутрішньоособистісні, міжособистісні та контекстуальні складові. Ці здатності дають змогу індивідам керувати власними емоційними станами, регулювати емоції у соціальних взаємодіях та пристосовуватися до нових середовищ, таких як заклади освіти, робочі колективи чи інтимні стосунки. Наявні емпіричні дані свідчать, що високий рівень емоційного інтелекту пов'язаний із кращим психологічним благополуччям, нижчим рівнем стресу й тривоги, вищою якістю міжособистісних стосунків та ефективнішою професійною адаптацією. У статті також аналізується, як емоційно зрілі стратегії подолання труднощів – такі як когнітивна переоцінка, емпатія та пошук соціальної підтримки – сприяють розвитку резильєнтності та посттравматичного зростання. В освітньому та організаційному контекстах програми розвитку емоційного інтелекту, практики усвідомленості та соціально-емоційного навчання розглядаються як ефективні інтервенції, що покращують саморегуляцію та підтримують психічне здоров'я. Поєднання розвитку та емоційних підходів дозволяє розглядати емоційний інтелект як захисний чинник і водночас як ресурс розвитку в період переходу до дорослості, який допомагає молодим людям перетворювати нестабільність на зростання та долати складнощі сучасного життя з адаптивністю, емпатією й емоційною врівноваженістю.

Ключові слова: рання дорослість, емоційний інтелект, емоційна регуляція, психологічне благополуччя, резильєнтність, міжособистісні стосунки.

Introduction. Emerging adulthood, the developmental phase typically spanning ages 18 to 25, represents a critical period of psychological transition marked by exploration, instability, and identity formation [1]. Dur-

ing this time, young adults face significant emotional and social challenges as they navigate educational paths, career decisions, and evolving interpersonal relationships. The ability to regulate emotions and sustain emo-

tional balance becomes a key determinant of successful adaptation to the demands of autonomy, intimacy, and personal growth.

This developmental stage has been described as a “threshold period” between dependence and self-sufficiency, in which individuals experiment with multiple roles and identities while gradually assuming responsibility for their choices [2]. The postponement of traditional adult commitments such as stable employment and long-term partnership, combined with the volatility of modern social and economic environments, amplifies the psychological complexity of this life phase. Consequently, emerging adults must rely increasingly on internal psychological resources – chief among them emotional intelligence – to navigate uncertainty and construct a coherent sense of self.

In this context, emotional regulation acquires both developmental and adaptive significance. Beyond managing transient feelings, it becomes a mechanism for maintaining continuity amid change, enabling individuals to respond flexibly to shifting circumstances without losing emotional stability or direction. The capacity to identify, to understand and to modulate emotions supports not only personal well-being but also social connectedness and resilience, forming the foundation for mature adulthood.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Numerous studies have examined the cognitive and social dimensions of emerging adulthood. For instance, Arnett [1] identified emerging adulthood as a unique life stage characterized by self-exploration and the quest for identity, distinguishing it from both adolescence and mature adulthood. Hendry and Kloep [11] extended this framework by emphasizing the contextual variability of developmental experiences and the role of life transitions in shaping psychological growth. Nelson and Barry [15] underscored the interpersonal and cultural dynamics of this stage, while Schulenberg, Maggs and Hurrelmann [18] and well as Syed [22] focused on patterns of social adaptation and behavioural change. Despite these significant contributions, the emotional dimensions of emerging adulthood remain comparatively underexplored. Only a limited number of studies, including those by Sánchez-Álvarez, Extremera, and Fernández-Berrocal [17] and Keefer, Parker, and Saklofske [12], have investigated how emotional intelligence – particularly emotional regulation – functions as a developmental resource promoting well-being and relational competence during this life stage.

Thus, **the aim of the article** is to analyse how emotional intelligence fosters resilience, relational competence, and adaptive coping strategies during early adulthood. It also highlights practical interventions that strengthen emotional skills within educational, clinical, and occupational contexts. By shifting focus from identity formation to emotional regulation and relational functioning, this study positions emotional intelligence as a bridge between inner self-management and outer social adaptation. Through effective emotion regulation, emerging adults transform instability into growth and uncertainty into opportunity,

establishing the emotional foundation for mature adult life.

Presentation of the main material. Emotional regulation – the ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions in accordance with situational demands – is a central component of emotional intelligence [9]. In emerging adulthood, it functions as both a developmental task and an adaptive resource. Young adults face unprecedented emotional demands, from academic stress and financial uncertainty to shifting social roles and romantic relationships. How they manage these experiences determines not only their immediate well-being but also their long-term psychological trajectory.

During this stage, neurobiological maturation of the prefrontal cortex enhances executive control and self-regulation capacities [21]. However, environmental stressors often outpace these developing regulatory systems, leading to heightened vulnerability to mood fluctuations and anxiety. Emotionally intelligent individuals demonstrate greater capacity to employ adaptive regulatory strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, and problem-focused coping. They are more likely to interpret emotional distress as temporary and manageable rather than overwhelming or defining [10].

Emotional regulation during emerging adulthood is multidimensional, encompassing intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual processes. This view integrates perspectives from Gross’s process model of emotion regulation [9], which emphasizes internal regulatory mechanisms, and from research highlighting the social and situational dynamics of emotion management in young adulthood [14]. Further studies highlight that emotion management operates not only within the self but also across social and situational contexts [23; 24]. Given its complexity, emotional regulation in emerging adulthood encompasses multiple, interacting dimensions that operate across personal and social contexts. Thus, emotional regulation can be viewed as comprising three interrelated domains:

- intrapersonal regulation, or the management of one’s internal emotional states through awareness and reappraisal [9];
- interpersonal regulation, or modulating emotions within social interactions to maintain harmony and authenticity [14; 24];
- contextual regulation, or adapting emotional responses to new environments such as workplaces, universities, or intimate partnerships [13; 23].

Deficits in these regulatory capacities have been linked to increased risk of depression, substance misuse, and relational instability [5]. Conversely, emotional intelligence supports emotional flexibility, fostering resilience and persistence in the face of stressors. The capacity to regulate emotions effectively transforms stress into motivation, and uncertainty into an opportunity for self-reflection and adaptive learning.

It is necessary to emphasise that relationships form a defining context of emerging adulthood. Romantic involvement, deepening friendships, and evolving family dynamics all require sophisticated emotional understanding and regulation. The ability to empathize, communicate, and manage conflict – key features of

emotional intelligence – contributes significantly to relational quality and satisfaction [14; 19].

Emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to interpret nonverbal cues, understand their partners' emotions, and respond with empathy rather than defensiveness. Such capacities foster trust and intimacy while reducing conflict escalation. Empirical studies consistently show that higher emotional intelligence predicts greater relationship stability, better conflict resolution, and more constructive communication patterns [5; 25].

In emerging adulthood emotional intelligence also facilitates the negotiation between autonomy and intimacy – a developmental tension described by Erikson as “intimacy versus isolation” [7]. Emotional regulation enables individuals to maintain closeness without losing independence, while empathy promotes mutual understanding and emotional reciprocity. Those with underdeveloped emotional skills may struggle with dependency, avoidance, or ambivalence in close relationships, impeding the development of mature intimacy.

Furthermore, emotionally intelligent communication – marked by emotional clarity, active listening, and openness – enhances social connectedness and reduces loneliness, a growing concern among young adults in digitally mediated societies [3]. In this sense, emotional intelligence serves as a relational competency that protects against isolation and fosters belonging, a psychological need fundamental to well-being [4].

It also should be noted that coping with instability and change is a defining challenge of emerging adulthood. The transition from structured adolescence to self-directed adulthood exposes individuals to multiple stressors: academic pressures, financial strain, unstable housing, and the uncertainty of career development. Emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in determining whether such experiences become sources of growth or psychological distress [12].

Emotionally intelligent individuals use adaptive coping strategies – such as positive reappraisal, problem-solving, and social support seeking – rather than maladaptive ones like avoidance or denial [6]. These strategies not only mitigate the negative effects of stress but also contribute to the formation of resilience, defined as the capacity to recover and learn from adversity.

Resilience, in this view, is not a fixed trait but an emergent outcome of repeated emotional regulation experiences. Each successful act of coping strengthens emotional efficacy and reinforces confidence in one's ability to handle future challenges. This cumulative process transforms emotional intelligence into an enduring personal resource.

Moreover, emotional intelligence facilitates meaning-making in the face of adversity. By interpreting setbacks as opportunities for learning rather than as failures, emerging adults sustain motivation and psychological balance. Recent research indicates that individuals high in emotional intelligence display greater optimism, self-efficacy, and post-traumatic growth following stressful experiences [13]. Thus, emotional intelligence supports not only resilience but also the capacity for transformation through challenge.

If to speak about emotional intelligence in professional and academic adaptation, it should be mentioned that the transition into higher education and early employment introduces complex emotional demands that test young adults' adaptability. Success in these domains increasingly depends on emotional, not merely cognitive, competencies. Emotional intelligence fosters professional growth through improved teamwork, communication, and leadership potential [25].

University students with higher levels of emotional intelligence report greater academic engagement, intrinsic motivation, and lower stress [16]. They are better able to manage performance anxiety, maintain focus, and balance social and academic responsibilities. Likewise, in professional environments, emotionally intelligent employees demonstrate enhanced interpersonal effectiveness and conflict management, traits that are strongly linked to organizational commitment and leadership emergence [8].

In a rapidly changing labour market, emotional adaptability has become a core employability skill. Employers increasingly value candidates who can navigate emotional complexity, collaborate effectively, and sustain positive morale under pressure. Training programmes that cultivate emotional intelligence – through coaching, feedback, and reflective practice – therefore represent essential investments in workforce development and long-term career adaptability.

Notably that integrating emotional intelligence development into educational and therapeutic practice offers powerful pathways for supporting emerging adults. Social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks, mindfulness training, and emotion-coaching interventions have all demonstrated significant benefits for emotional regulation, empathy, and well-being [13; 20].

In higher education, structured emotional intelligence workshops and reflective curricula promote emotional literacy and coping efficacy. Counselling programmes can apply emotion-focused and cognitive-behavioural approaches to enhance clients' awareness of emotional triggers and their ability to respond constructively. Importantly, such interventions are most effective when integrated longitudinally – embedded within academic programmes, mentoring systems, and community-based supports – rather than delivered as isolated experiences.

From a policy perspective, recognizing emotional intelligence as a developmental competency calls for systemic change. Educational institutions and workplaces should adopt emotionally intelligent cultures that value empathy, open communication, and psychological safety. Doing so not only improves individual well-being but also fosters inclusive, resilient communities. Supporting young adults in developing emotional intelligence is therefore a preventive, developmental, and societal imperative.

Conclusion. Emerging adulthood is characterized by emotional complexity, social transition, and heightened self-exploration. Within this dynamic context, emotional intelligence serves as a vital psychological resource that enables effective regulation, fosters adaptive relationships, and promotes resilience. Through emotional

awareness, regulation, and empathy, young adults transform uncertainty into insight and instability into growth.

The ability to manage emotions constructively supports both personal and relational development. Emotional intelligence enhances communication, nurtures intimacy, and protects against stress-related dysfunctions. In academic and professional settings, it underpins motivation, collaboration, and leadership potential. Ultimately, emotional intelligence bridges the inner world of feeling and the outer world of functioning, empowering

individuals to thrive amid the demands of modern adulthood.

As this paper has shown, fostering emotional intelligence through education, therapy, and workplace development yields lasting benefits not only for individuals but also for society at large. By equipping emerging adults with emotional competencies, we invest in a generation capable of empathy, resilience, and responsible engagement – qualities essential for both personal fulfillment and collective well-being.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Arnett J. J. Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 2000. Vol. 55. Issue 5. Pp. 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>
2. Arnett J. J. Emerging adulthood: What is it, and what is it good for? *Child Development Perspectives*, 2007. Vol. 1. Issue 2. Pp. 68–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2007.00016.x>
3. Barry C.T., Sidoti C.L., Briggs S.M., Reiter S.R., Lindsey R.A. Adolescent social media use and mental health from adolescent and parent perspectives. *Journal of Adolescence*, 2017. Vol. 61. Pp. 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.08.005>
4. Baumeister R. F. & Leary M. R. The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 1995. Vol. 117. Issue 3. Pp. 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
5. Brackett M. A., Rivers S. E., Shiffman S., Lerner N. & Salovey P. Relating emotional abilities to social functioning: A comparison of self-report and performance measures of emotional intelligence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2006. Vol. 91. Issue 4. Pp. 780–795. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.4.780>
6. Ciarrochi J., Deane F. P. & Anderson S. Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between stress and mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2002. Vol. 32. Issue 2. Pp. 197–209. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(01\)00012-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(01)00012-5)
7. Erikson E. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1968. 336 p.
8. Goleman D. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam, 1995. 368 p.
9. Gross J. J. The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 1998. Vol. 2. Issue 3. Pp. 271–299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.271>
10. Gross J. J. & John O. P. Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2003. Vol. 85. Issue 2. Pp. 348–362. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.348>
11. Hendry L. B. & Kloep M. How universal is emerging adulthood? An empirical example. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2010. Vol. 13. Issue 2. Pp. 169–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260903295067>
12. Keefer K. V., Parker J. D. A. & Saklofske D. H. Three decades of emotional intelligence research: Perennial issues, emerging trends, and lessons learned in education: Introduction to Emotional Intelligence in Education. *Emotional intelligence in education: Integrating research with practice* / Eds.: K. V. Keefer, J. D. A. Parker & D. H. Saklofske. London: Springer International Publishing/Springer Nature, 2018. Pp. 1–19.
13. Kotsou I., Mikolajczak M., Heeren A., Grégoire J. & Leys C. Improving emotional intelligence: A systematic review of existing work and future challenges. *Emotion Review*, 2019. Vol. 11. Issue 2. Pp. 151–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073917735902>
14. Lopes P. N., Salovey P., Côté S., Beers M. Emotion Regulation Abilities and the Quality of Social Interaction. *Emotion*, 2005. Vol. 5. Issue 1. Pp. 113–118. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.5.1.113>
15. Nelson L. J. & Barry C. M. Distinguishing Features of Emerging Adulthood: The Role of Self-Classification as an Adult. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2005. Vol. 20. Issue 2. Pp. 242–262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558404273074>
16. Parker J. D. A., Summerfeldt L. J., Hogan M. J. & Majeski S. Emotional intelligence and academic success: Examining the transition from high school to university. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2004. Vol. 36. Issue 1. Pp. 163–172. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(03\)00076-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00076-X)
17. Sánchez-Álvarez N., Extremera N. & Fernández-Berrocá P. Maintaining life satisfaction in adolescence: Affective mediators of the influence of perceived emotional intelligence on overall life satisfaction judgments in a two-year longitudinal study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2015. Vol. 6. Article 1892. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01892>
18. Schulenberg J., Maggs J. L. & Hurrelmann K. *Health risks and developmental transitions during adolescence*. Cambridge University Press, 1997. 600 p.
19. Schutte N.S., Malouff J.M., Bobik C., Coston T.D., Greeson C., Jedlicka C., Rhodes E., Wendorf G. Emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 2001. Vol. 141. Issue 4. Pp. 523–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540109600569>
20. Schutte N. S. & Malouff J. M. Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2011. Vol. 50. Issue 7. Pp. 1116–1119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.01.037>
21. Steinberg L. *Age of opportunity: Lessons from the new science of adolescence*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014. 264 p.
22. Syed M. *Emerging adulthood: Developmental stage, theory, or nonsense?* *The Oxford handbook of emerging adulthood* / Ed.: J. J. Arnett. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 11–25.
23. Thompson R. A. Emotion and emotion regulation: Two sides of the developing coin. *Emotion Review*, 2011. Vol. 3. Issue 1. Pp. 53–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073910380969>
24. Zaki J. & Williams W. C. Interpersonal emotion regulation. *Emotion*, 2013. Vol. 13. Issue 5. Pp. 803–810. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033839>
25. Zeidner M., Matthews G. & Roberts R. D. *What we know about emotional intelligence: How it affects learning, work, relationships, and our mental health*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009. 176 p.

Дата першого надходження рукопису до видання: 10.11.2025

Дата прийнятого до друку рукопису після рецензування: 05.12.2025

Дата публікації: 31.12.2025