

Factors Influencing Emotional Maturity in Early Adulthood: A Systematic Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and synthesize the factors that affect emotional maturity in early adult individuals based on empirical studies from various countries in the last five years. The method used is a systematic literature review by following the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). The article search was conducted on three databases, namely Scopus, PubMed/MEDLINE, and ScienceDirect, using a combination of keywords related to "emotional maturity" and "early adulthood"/"emerging adulthood". The results of the synthesis show that emotional maturity in early adulthood is influenced by individual factors, e.g., self-regulation, self-esteem, optimism, family factors, e.g., parenting, social support, and socio-cultural factors, e.g., cultural norms, economic and academic pressures, with variations in influence patterns between countries, especially in gender factors that indicate inconsistent findings. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive mapping of the determinants of emotional maturity in early adulthood and become the basis for the development of interventions and future research directions.

INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood is a crucial transition period in the span of human life, because in this phase individuals are faced with various new developmental tasks such as building a career, establishing serious romantic relationships, preparing for marriage, and taking on more independent social roles (Hurlock, 1980). Success in living up to these demands largely depends on the individual's ability to manage his or her emotions stably and proportionally, or known as emotional maturity. However, the global phenomenon shows that it is precisely at this age range that psychological vulnerability is at a high point. Based on the 2021 Global Burden of Disease (GBD) analysis of 204 countries, the incidence of anxiety disorders in the 10–24 age group has increased by 52% since 1990, with the sharpest spike occurring after 2019 and the most significant increase in the disease burden (DALYs) in the 20–24 age group, i.e. the group that is developmentally on the verge of early adulthood (Bie et al., 2024). Another GBD data-driven study also found that globally there were more than 278 million adolescents and young adults with mental disorders in 2021, with a consistent upward trend particularly in depressive and anxiety disorders. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2025) even reports that more than one billion people in the world are living with mental health conditions, and productivity losses due to depression and anxiety alone are estimated to reach trillions of dollars each year. These findings are relevant to the issue of emotional maturity, because immature regulation of emotions is one of the underlying risk factors for the emergence of these disorders in the transition period to adulthood.

A similar phenomenon is also illustrated in the Indonesian context. The results of the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) organized by the Health Development Policy Agency of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia show that the national prevalence of depression is at 1.4%, but the highest prevalence is actually found in the age group of 15–24 years which reaches 2%, with the prevalence in women (2.8%) much higher than in men (1.1%) (Health Development Policy Agency, 2024). This young age group is also recorded as the group with the lowest access to mental health treatment compared to other age groups. In addition, various social issues that are closely related to low emotional maturity in early adulthood in Indonesia, such as unpreparedness for marriage, marital adjustment conflicts, self-injury tendencies, and vulnerability to quarter life crises, have also been found in many local studies in recent years, including in the student population in Jombang, East Java (Mufidah et al., 2024). This data gap between global and national phenomena reinforces the urgency to understand more comprehensively what factors shape individual emotional maturity in early adulthood.

Conceptually, emotional maturity is defined by Smitson (1974) as an ongoing process in which an individual's personality continuously seeks to achieve a higher degree of emotional health, both intrapsically and interpersonally. Emotionally mature individuals are characterized by the ability to control themselves, have good self-understanding, and are able to carry out critical mental functions in the face of pressure (Mufidah et al., 2024). Other accompanying characteristics include openness to alternative viewpoints, non-

judgmental attitude, resilience to challenges, calmness, realistic optimism, and the ability to accept criticism constructively (Rozyan et al., 2022). Meanwhile, early adulthood itself is understood differently by experts; Some define it as an age range of 18 to 40 years characterized by emotional maturity, social stability, and strong self-identity formation, while other perspectives such as the concept of emerging adulthood emphasize the age range of 18–25 years as a phase of identity exploration before adult roles are fully formed. This variation in operational definitions is one of the important aspects that needs to be systematically mapped, as it also influences the way researchers measure and interpret emotional maturity in early adult populations.

Studies on the factors that affect emotional maturity in early adulthood have been conducted in various countries with diverse socio-cultural contexts, but the findings are still widespread and have not been comprehensively synthesized. In Iran, qualitative research on couples in Yasuj found that flexibility in adapting, a sense of responsibility for life choices, and an orientation to personal growth are important factors that shape emotional maturity as well as marital adjustment (Rozyan, Namdarpour, & Javadzadeh, 2022), while other studies on Iranian women highlight the role of self-compassion as an intrapersonal resource that influences the quality of marital relationships (Matin et al., 2024). In India, a study of degree college students in Belagavi, Karnataka found that male students actually have a higher level of emotional maturity than female students (D'Souza, Nadaf, & Udapi, 2023), a finding that differs from the results in Iran that actually show women are more emotionally mature in the context of marriage. In China, studies in the realm of morality and emotional cognition highlight the importance of personal responsibility and self-growth factors as predictors of emotional maturity in the context of collectivist culture (Nichols, 2022). In Turkey, the development and validation of the *Psychological Maturity Scale* in individuals aged 17 years and above identified four dimensions of psychological maturity of self-awareness, autonomy, flexibility, and ego resilience that are relevant to the transition period to adulthood (Eryilmaz & Uzun, 2024). In Russia, a longitudinal study of 2,663 young adults aged 24–28 years found that child ownership and material well-being were significantly associated with changes in *emerging adulthood* mindsets, while relationship status, education, and living with parents showed no significant association (Mikhaylova, 2025). In Malaysia, a study of medical students at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) found that emotional maturity correlates with students' adult learning skills (Bhagat, Haque, Bakar, Husain, & Khairi, 2016) although this study should be noted to be outside the range of the last five years and more relevant as a supporting context. In the Philippines, a study of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) aged 18–30 years in the Davao region found that their emotional maturity levels were in the average category, but no significant relationship was found between emotional maturity and self-reliance (Malijao, Sarvida, Torres, & Lacuesta, 2023). In Indonesia itself, research on students in Jombang found a relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional maturity in dealing with a *quarter life crisis* (Mufidah, Firmansyah, & Wigati, 2024); research on early adulthood in Pekanbaru found that emotional maturity contributed 51% to

marriage readiness, while social support contributed 24.5% (Hikmah & Rahayu, 2025).

Although these studies make important contributions, there are a number of gaps that underlie the urgency of this research. First, the findings on the factors that affect emotional maturity in early adulthood still show inconsistencies between countries and between contexts, for example in the gender factor that in one cultural context appears to benefit women but in another context actually benefits men. Second, existing research is still scattered in various specific contexts that stand alone such as marriage adjustment, parenting, academic achievement, marriage readiness, and quarter life crisis without any integrative efforts to map all factors comprehensively and across contexts. Third, from the initial search, the systematic literature review that has existed on the early adult topic cluster tends to focus on adjacent but different constructs, for example, a systematic review of the factors of quarter life crisis in early adulthood (PRBM, 2024), while a systematic literature review that specifically and comprehensively maps the factors that shape emotional maturity in the early adult population has not been found so far. Fourth, methodological variations in previous studies ranging from qualitative case studies, quantitative correlation, to cross-sectional surveys also make it difficult to draw conclusions that can be generalized across cultures and populations.

Based on these gaps, the systematic literature review (SLR) approach is seen as the most appropriate method to be used in this study. SLR allows researchers to identify, select, assess quality, and synthesize findings from various primary studies in a structured, transparent, and replicable manner, so as to be able to unravel the patterns of consistency and inconsistency of emotional maturity factors that have been spread across various countries and cultural contexts. The literature selection process in this study will follow the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to ensure transparency in the flow of searching, screening, and determining the feasibility of articles that can be accounted for methodologically, with searches conducted on three reputable scientific databases (e.g. Scopus, PubMed/MEDLINE, and ScienceDirect and Google Scholar) against publications in the last five years from various countries as comparators.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Emotional Maturity in Early Adulthood

Emotional maturity is a psychological condition that reflects an individual's ability to understand, manage, and express emotions appropriately according to situational demands. According to Smitson (1974), emotional maturity is a continuous process through which individuals strive to achieve emotional health both intrapersonally and interpersonally. Individuals with high emotional maturity are generally able to regulate emotional responses, tolerate frustration, make rational decisions, and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

In the developmental perspective, early adulthood is a critical period characterized by increasing responsibilities and complex social roles. Hurlock (1980) explains that individuals in early adulthood are expected to establish

intimate relationships, build careers, develop family roles, and achieve economic independence. These developmental tasks require adequate emotional competence because emotional instability may hinder successful adaptation to adult responsibilities.

Previous studies have shown that emotionally mature individuals tend to exhibit better psychological well-being, higher resilience, and more adaptive coping strategies. Conversely, low emotional maturity is often associated with emotional distress, interpersonal conflicts, anxiety, depression, and difficulties in adjusting to life transitions. Therefore, emotional maturity is considered one of the key indicators of successful psychological development during early adulthood.

Factors Affecting Emotional Maturity

The development of emotional maturity is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to individual characteristics that contribute to emotional development. These include emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-compassion, optimism, and emotion regulation abilities. Individuals with stronger emotional intelligence are generally more capable of recognizing and managing emotions effectively, thereby demonstrating higher levels of emotional maturity.

External factors involve influences originating from the social and environmental context. Family environment, parenting practices, peer relationships, social support, educational experiences, and socioeconomic conditions have been identified as important determinants of emotional maturity. Supportive family relationships and positive social interactions provide opportunities for individuals to learn adaptive emotional responses and develop emotional competence.

In addition, socio-cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping emotional maturity. Cultural values, social expectations, gender norms, and societal responsibilities may influence how emotions are expressed and regulated. Differences in cultural backgrounds often lead to variations in the development and manifestation of emotional maturity across populations.

Conceptual Framework of Emotional Maturity

Based on developmental and psychosocial theories, emotional maturity can be understood as the outcome of interactions between personal, interpersonal, and contextual factors. Personal factors include emotional intelligence, self-compassion, self-awareness, and emotion regulation skills. Interpersonal factors encompass family relationships, parenting patterns, social support, and peer interactions. Contextual factors include socioeconomic conditions, cultural values, educational experiences, and life responsibilities.

The interaction of these factors contributes to an individual's ability to adapt to developmental challenges during early adulthood. Therefore, understanding the determinants of emotional maturity requires a comprehensive approach that considers both internal psychological resources and external environmental influences. This perspective provides a theoretical basis for

synthesizing empirical findings regarding factors affecting emotional maturity in early adulthood.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study uses a *systematic literature review* (SLR) design by following the *guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) 2020. This approach was chosen because it allows the process of identification, screening, feasibility assessment, and synthesis of findings from various primary studies to be carried out in a structured, transparent, and replicable manner by other researchers.

Literature search strategy

The secondary data collection process was carried out electronically on the scientific databases sciendDirect, Google Scholar and pubmed. The search is strictly limited to articles published in the last four years, namely 2022 to 2025. The keyword strings applied using the Boolean operator are as follows: "emotional maturity" AND "early adulthood" AND ("factor" and "influence" and "relationship").

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The eligibility criteria for articles are compiled using **the PICOS** framework as follows:

To maintain the relevance and quality of the articles reviewed, strict selection criteria are set. Articles are included when: (1) published in the 2022–2025 range; (2) test internal or external factors that are directly related to emotional maturity; (3) using the subject of an early adult or emerging adulthood aged 18–40 years; and (4) written in Indonesian or English in indexed national scientific journals. On the other hand, articles are excluded if they are in the form of unpublished thesis/thesis, in the form of textbooks, seminar proceedings, or focusing on the subject of children and adolescents.

Article Screening Protocol (PRISMA)

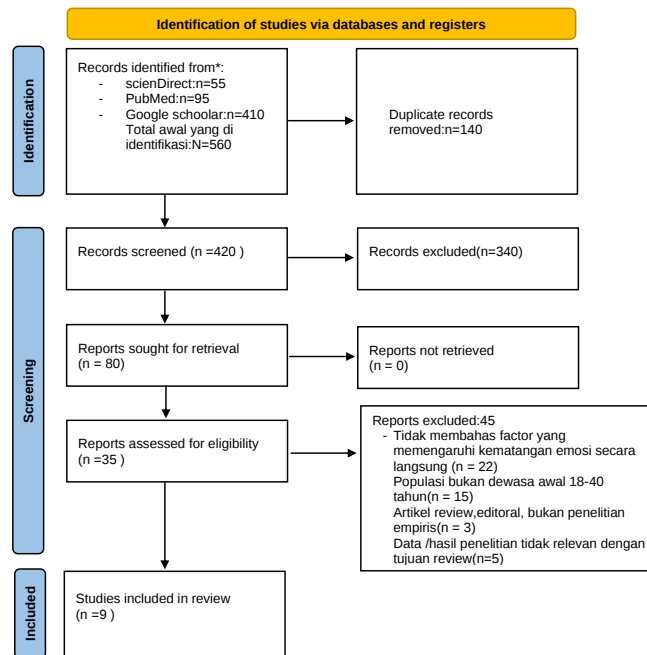


Figure. 1 Article Screening Protocol (PRISMA)

RESULTS

Literature searches were conducted through three electronic databases, namely Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and PubMed. The search process uses the keywords "emotional maturity", "early adulthood", "young adulthood", "factors", "determinants", and "predictors" combined using the Boolean operator "AND". The search is limited to articles published in the 2022–2025 range and written in Indonesian and English.

Based on the initial search results, 560 articles were obtained. After the removal of 140 duplicate articles, there are 420 articles left which then enter the screening stage. At this stage, the screening is done by title and abstract. A total of 340 articles were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria, such as not discussing emotional maturity, not using early adult subjects, not being empirical research, or written in languages other than Indonesian and English.

Furthermore, the remaining 80 articles underwent an eligibility assessment process through a full text review. At this stage, 45 articles were excluded because the full text was not available, the research objectives were not in line with the focus of the study, or did not specifically address the factors that affect emotional maturity in early adulthood. Thus, 35 articles were obtained that met the eligibility requirements.

The final stage is carried out by selecting articles that specifically examine the factors that affect emotional maturity in early adulthood. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria that have been established, 9 articles were obtained that are eligible for further analysis in this systematic literature review.

The nine articles came from various countries, namely Iran, India, Turkey, Russia, the Philippines, China, and Indonesia. This diversity of cultural contexts provides a broader picture of the factors that influence emotional maturity in early adulthood. The articles analyzed in this study include research by Rozyan et al. (2022), Nichols (2022), D'Souza et al. (2023), Malijao et al. (2023), Matin et al. (2024), Eryılmaz and Uzun (2024), Mufidah et al. (2024), Mikhaylova (2025), and Hikmah and Rahayu (2025).

Table 1. Systematic Literature review results table

Ye s	Author, Year	Country	Sample	Design	Factors Studied	Key Findings
1.	Rozyan et al., 2022	Iran	Married couple	Qualitative	Self-adjustment	Self-adjustment and personal responsibility increase emotional maturity
2.	Matin et al., 2024	Iran	Married women	Qualitative	Self-compassion	Self-compassion contributes to emotional stability
3.	D'Souza et al., 2023	India	Student	Quantitative	Gender	Female students have higher emotional maturity
4.	Eryılmaz & Uzun, 2024	Turkey	Adult ≥17 years old	Scale expansion	Self-awareness, autonomy, flexibility	Four dimensions of psychological maturity identified
5.	Nichols, 2022	Turkey	Early adulthood	Literature	Morality and emotion	Personal responsibility and self-growth affect emotional maturity
6.	Mikhaylova, 2025	Russia	2,663 young adults	Longitudinal	Material welfare	Material welfare and child ownership have a significant effect

7.	Malijao et al., 2023	Philippines	OFW children aged 18-30 years old	Quantitative	Self-reliance	No significant association found
8.	Mufidah et al., 2024	Indonesia	Students	Quantitative	Emotional intelligence	Emotional intelligence is positively related to emotional maturity
9.	Hikmah & Rahayu, 2025	Indonesia	Early adulthood	Quantitative	Social support	Social support and emotional maturity affect marriage readiness

Thematic Synthesis of Factors Affecting Emotional Maturity

Based on the analysis of 10 articles that met the inclusion criteria, four main themes were found that affect emotional maturity in early adulthood

1. Intrapersonal Factors

Intrapersonal factors are the most dominant factor found in the literature. These factors include emotional intelligence, self-compassion, self-awareness, self-reflection skills, and personal growth. Research by Matin et al. (2024) shows that self-compassion helps individuals accept their own shortcomings and manage emotions more adaptively. Meanwhile, research by Mufidah et al. (2024) found that emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with emotional maturity in dealing with a quarter life crisis.

2. Interpersonal Factors

Interpersonal factors include the individual's relationship with family, partner, and social environment. Social support was found to be a consistent factor in increasing emotional maturity. Hikmah and Rahayu (2025) found that social support makes a significant contribution to marriage readiness through increased emotional maturity. In addition, parental parenting also has an influence on the development of emotional maturity in early adulthood.

3. Contextual Factors

Contextual factors include economic conditions, life experiences, and social demands faced by individuals. The Mikhaylova study (2025) shows that material well-being and child ownership are related to a change in mindset towards adulthood. These results suggest that life experiences and social responsibility play a role in shaping emotional maturity.

4. Moral and Spiritual Factors

Nichols' research (2022) shows that personal responsibility, morality, and orientation to self-development are factors that support emotional maturity. This

factor is more commonly found in collectivist cultures that emphasize social values and responsibility towards groups.

DISCUSSION

The results of a literature review show that emotional maturity in early adulthood is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Intrapersonal factors such as emotional intelligence, self-compassion, self-awareness, and emotion regulation ability were the most frequently found factors in the study. These findings are in line with the theory of emotional development which states that the ability to understand and manage emotions is the main foundation of emotional maturity.

In addition to internal factors, social support and family parenting also play an important role in the formation of emotional maturity. Individuals who obtain emotional support from the social environment tend to have better adaptability in the face of the pressures of early adulthood. These findings support a developmental ecological perspective that emphasizes the importance of interactions between individuals and the social environment.

The study also found that contextual factors such as economic conditions and life experience contribute to the development of emotional maturity. Individuals who face greater social responsibility tend to show higher levels of emotional maturity because they gain opportunities to develop decision-making and self-control abilities.

However, there are some inconsistencies in the literature. For example, the gender factor shows different results between countries. Additionally, not all studies have found a significant link between independence and emotional maturity. These differences may be influenced by cultural variations, sample characteristics, and research methods used.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This systematic literature review indicates that emotional maturity in early adulthood is shaped by a combination of internal and external factors, including family environment, parenting style, emotional intelligence, social relationships, educational experiences, and socioeconomic conditions. The findings consistently demonstrate that individuals with higher emotional maturity tend to exhibit better emotional regulation, decision-making abilities, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. These results highlight the importance of fostering supportive environments and developing emotional competencies to promote healthy personal and social development during early adulthood.

Suggestion

Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to provide a deeper understanding of the development of emotional maturity over time and across different cultural contexts. In addition, educational institutions, families, and mental health professionals should collaborate to design and implement programs that strengthen emotional intelligence, resilience, and interpersonal skills, thereby supporting the emotional development and overall well-being of young adults.

FURTHER STUDY

This study only uses articles published in the 2022–2025 range and is limited to three databases. In addition, variations in the research design and measurement instruments used in primary studies can affect the consistency of synthesis results.

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