The Influence of Emotion Regulation and Social-Ecological Influence on Suicidality Among Filipino Youth

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Abstract *– Suicide remains a leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults worldwide, and recent surveillance reports show a worrisome uptick in self-harm among Filipino youth despite national mental-health legislation. Grounded in the dual-process model of emotion regulation and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, this descriptive correlational study investigated how emotion regulation (ER) strategies and social ecological influences (SEI) relate to suicidality (SUI) in a sample of 653 students randomly selected from four state universities in CALABARZON, Philippines. Participants reported generally high cognitive reappraisal (M = 3.98, SD = 0.57) and perceived social support (M = 3.89, SD = 0.77) alongside low suicide ideation (M = 1.71, SD = 0.75) and hopelessness (M = 2.02, SD = 0.49). Pearson correlations showed that overall ER (r = –.379, p < .001) and SEI (r = –.342, p < .001) were inversely associated with suicidality, whereas emotional suppression correlated positively (r = .205, p <*
.001). ANOVA revealed that current mental-health problems (p < .001) and gender (p < .01) significantly elevated SUI, but age and socioeconomic status did not. In multiple regression, emotional suppression emerged as a risk factor (β = .135, p < .001), while cognitive reappraisal (β = –.113, p = .001) and family support (β = –.303, p < .001) predicted lower suicidality. The findings validate the proposed integrative framework linking ER and SEI to SUI and underscore the protective value of adaptive regulation and strong familial ties. Implications include prioritizing family-centered, culturally congruent interventions that teach cognitive reappraisal and enhance social support networks in school-based counseling and community mental-health programs, thereby equipping Filipino youth with person-specific resources to counter suicidality.

Keywords: Suicidality, emotion regulation, social-ecological influence, Filipino youth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Suicidality—including suicidal thoughts, behaviors, and potential—remains a global public health crisis, accounting for 1.5% of all worldwide deaths. Approximately 804,000 people die by suicide each year, with adolescents and young adults being particularly at risk (Gill et al., 2023; Yip et al., 2021). In the U.S., suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth (Dobbertin

et al., 2024), and similar patterns are reported across Europe (Lantos & Nyári, 2024), Africa (Babajani et al., 2024), and Asia (Wu et al., 2024). In the Philippines, while official suicide rates remain low (2.5 per 100,000), recent studies report an increase in suicidal ideation among Filipino youth (Bangalan et al., 2023; Casamorin et al., 2023).

Despite intensified prevention efforts, global suicide rates have remained relatively stable (Ali & Rehna, 2022; Ilic & Ilic, 2022). Research has largely emphasized risk factors such as mental distress and substance use (Silke et al., 2023), but protective factors like emotion regulation and social-ecological influence are underexplored—particularly in culturally diverse and non-clinical populations (Bakken et al., 2024; Kirtley et al., 2022). In the Philippines, there is a limited of local literature and studies on suicidality among Filipino youth, despite the increasing number of suicide occurrences. This issue needs to receive much attention in terms of study and prevention (Advincula, 2019).

In response to these gaps, this study aims to determine the correlation between emotion regulation, social-ecological influence, and suicidality. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions (1) What is the extent of the respondents' emotion regulation in terms of cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression; (2) What is the extent of the respondents' social-ecological influence in terms of family support, social support, and common humanity; (3) What is the extent of the respondents' suicidality in terms of hopelessness, negative self-evaluation, suicide ideation, and hostility; (4) Is there a significant relationship between the following variables: emotion regulation and suicidality, and social- ecological influence and suicidality; (5) Is there a significant difference on suicidality among Filipino youth considering the following moderating variables: age, gender, socioeconomic status, mental health issues; Finaly, (6) Which of the following variables such as emotion regulation and social-ecological influence significantly predict suicidality among Filipino youth. Correspondingly, adopting an idiographic, person-specific approach, this study aims to uncover nuanced protective patterns that could inform culturally sensitive, person-centered suicide prevention strategies for Filipino youth. The present research is timely, as suicidality and
suicide rates skyrocket.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Perspective on Emotion Regulation

James Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (1998, 2015) also mentioned in the study of Pico et al (2024) explains how people influence their emotions—what they feel, when they feel it, and how they express them. The model includes antecedent-focused strategies like cognitive reappraisal, and response-focused strategies like emotional suppression. Emotion regulation refers to the utilization of strategies and skills to proficiently regulate emotions, navigate diverse circumstances, and attain desired emotional states (Gupta et al., 2024; Hassan & Saber, 2024; Vitale & Bonaiuto, 2024). The model includes antecedent-focused strategies like cognitive reappraisal, and response-focused strategies like emotional suppression (Willner et al., 2022; Nasso et al., 2022; Riepenhausen et al., 2022). Moreover, further investigation is necessary to gain a more comprehensive comprehension of the specific impact that emotion regulation has on

suicide behavior as a whole (Tong et al., 2024). There is a scarcity of studies available to assess the extent to which adaptive emotion regulation can offer protection against suicidality (Carvalho et al., 2023; Wastler & Núñez, 2022).

Theoretical Perspective on Social-Ecological Influence

Within the literature on self-regulation, there is a single theory that is explicitly referred to as self-regulation theory (Masaki, 2023): Baumeister's (1981) self-regulation theory (Baumeister et al., 2007). Such theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals and their environment in shaping psychological development. Braund & Timmons (2021) propose that human behavior is influenced by reciprocal interactions within a layered system of ecological levels, from the individual (microsystem) to broader societal influences (macrosystem). Accordingly, self- regulation refers more to the capacity to observe, assess, and modify one's actions in order to attain desired results and prevent undesirable consequences (Buffie, 2022). Being said, self- regulation refers to the systematic process of attaining a specific desired result, which involves establishing objectives, acting, and monitoring one's progress towards those objectives (Saks, 2024). Consequently, the absence of self-regulation can be resulted in a decline in self-discipline and has triggered a range of harmful actions (Billore et al., 2023).

Theoretical Perspective on Suicidality

Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (2009) also mentioned in the study of Robison et al. (2024) posits that suicidal desire arises from feelings of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, with lethal attempts occurring when these feelings are combined with acquired capability. Perceived burdensomeness involves believing one's death would benefit others, while thwarted belongingness stems from social disconnection. The theory highlights the distinction between suicidal ideation and action, with capability for suicide developing through exposure to physical or psychological pain (Zullo et al., 2021; Calear et al., 2021) Having said, the evaluation of suicidality includes 3 aspects: suicidal ideation, which refers to thoughts related to a wish to end one's life; suicidal planning, a specific method to perform the act; and a suicide attempt, or the enactment of a plan (Tonkuş, 2022). These are distinguished from a completed suicide. Furthermore, the presence of suicidality is a significant indicator of suicide action across all age groups (Bakken et al., 2024).

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. **Research Design**: This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design. Descriptive statistics assessed levels of emotion regulation, social-ecological influence, and suicidality. Pearson correlation examined relationships among variables, while multiple regression identified significant predictors of suicidality. ANOVA tested group differences based on gender, age, socioeconomic status, and mental health issues. These methods provided a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing suicidality among Filipino youth.

2. **Participants/Data Sources**: The study was conducted in state-funded institutions across CALABARZON (Region IV-A), covering Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon. Using random sampling, college students aged 18 to 24 were selected with equal probability. State universities in each province were identified, and half were randomly chosen through the fishbowl or lottery method to ensure fair selection.

3. **Tools and Instruments**: This study used several adapted questionnaires. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross and John (2003) measured emotion regulation through cognitive reappraisal and suppression. And, the Social-Ecological Resilience Scale (SERS) by Wong et al. (2023), grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (2007) theory, evaluated social- ecological influences. Finally, the Suicidal Potential Scale (SPS), modified according to Joiner's (2007) Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, assessed suicide risk.

4. **Procedures**: First, ethical permission for the research study was obtained from the University Ethics Review Committee of Adventist University of the Philippines. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and their signed consent was secured after confirming their willingness to participate. The data gathering involved modifying and validating the adapted survey through expert review, followed by revisions and a pilot test. Ethics approval was obtained before implementation. Sampling covered five state- funded universities across CALABARZON, with 15 groups. Of the 814 questionnaires distributed, 809 were returned, and 653 (80.71%) were validated after excluding incomplete or duplicate responses to ensure data reliability.

5. **Analysis Techniques**: The research utilized SPSS for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics summarized levels of emotion regulation, social-ecological influence, and suicidality. Pearson's correlation assessed the strength and direction of variable relationships. ANOVA examined group differences in suicidality based on gender, age, socioeconomic status, and mental health status. Multiple linear regression identified significant predictors of suicidality from emotion regulation and social-ecological sub-dimensions.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Descriptive Analysis

This subsection explored the level of emotion regulation, social-ecological influence and suicidality as an answer to the question: What is the extent of the respondents' emotion regulation, social-ecological influence, and suicidality in terms of the following sub-dimensions.

Table 1
Mean, Standard Deviation, Scaled Response, and Verbal Interpretation

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Emotion Regulation	*Agree / Frequently Used*	
Cognitive Reappraisal	3.9796	.57014

	Emotional Suppression	3.7672	.61934
2.	**Social-ecological Influence**	*Agree / Important*	
	Family Support	3.5665	.76625
	Social Support	3.8876	.77159
	Common Humanity	3.8631	.59350
3.	**Suicidality**	*Disagree / Low Risk*	
	Hopelessness	2.0235	.49887
	Negative Self-evaluation	2.3493	.44987
	Suicide Ideation	1.7171	.74948
	Hostility	1.7583	.68300

Table 1 reveals that respondents reported high levels of emotion regulation, particularly cognitive reappraisal (X = 3.98, SD = 0.57) which may indicate that respondents frequently use cognitive reappraisal to regulate emotions, particularly to reduce negative feelings like sadness, anger, and stress. This consistent use suggests it is a preferred and effective strategy for maintaining emotional well-being and managing stress. In connection, cognitive reappraisal is a key emotion regulation strategy among college students, helping manage stress and enhance well-being (Abbasi et al., 2024; Wang & Yin, 2023). Though less predictive than cognitive fusion in some cases, it remains effective for reducing distress and promoting adaptive coping (Sun & Nolan, 2021).

In terms of social-ecological influence—especially social support (X = 3.89, SD = 0.77) and common humanity (X = 3.87, SD = 0.59)—were also rated highly, indicating a supportive external environment. This suggests that students benefit from social networks and collective mindset reinforcing the idea that individuals do not face their difficulties in isolation, may help them to cope with challenges that enhance overall mental well-being. Having said, external social-ecological influence, such as empathy and environmental affirmation—positively impact attitudes and behaviors (Li et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, suicidality indicators such as hopelessness (X = 2.02, SD = 0.49), negative self- evaluation (X = 2.34, SD = 0.45), suicide ideation (X = 1.71, SD = 0.75), and hostility (X = 1.75, SD = 0.68) remained low, which may indicate that respondents have low risk in suicidality due to protective role of personal and social resources. Accordingly, the combination of emotional regulation, supportive relationships, and reduced exposure to negative life experiences contributes to their low-risk status, fostering a more stable and healthy college experience with fewer interpersonal and mental health issues. which may indicate that respondents have low risk in suicidality (Guidotti et al., 2024; Landinez et al., 2021).

Summary of Correlational Analysis

This subsection explored the relationships between emotion regulation, social-ecological influence, and suicidality as an answer to the question: Is there a significant relationship between the following variables:

a. Emotion regulation and suicidality
b. Social-ecological influence and suicidality

Table 2
Relationship Between Variables

Variables	Suicidality *r*	*p*-value	Verbal Interpretation
1. Emotion Regulation	-.379**	.000	Significant
Cognitive Reappraisal	-.207**	.000	Significant
Emotional Suppression	.205**	.000	Significant
2. Social-ecological Influence	-.342**	.000	Significant
Family Support	-.418**	.000	Significant
Social Support	-.172**	.000	Significant
Common Humanity	-.170**	.000	Significant

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Table 2 reveal significant correlations: emotion regulation (r = –.379**, p = .000) and cognitive reappraisal (r = -.207**, p = .000) are negatively correlated with suicidality, highlighting the importance of adaptive emotion regulation in lowering suicidality, with cognitive reappraisal linked to reduced risk. Conversely, emotional suppression shows a positive correlation (r = .205**, p = .000), suggesting emotional suppression is associated with increased psychological distress and higher suicidality. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Having said, a recent study by Bress & Kiosses (2024) found that using state cognitive reappraisal to manage unpleasant thoughts reduces the severity of current suicidality. As regards to emotional suppression and suicidality, a meta-analysis revealed that suppression along with other maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, is significantly linked to suicidality (Rogier et al., 2024).

Furthermore, social-ecological influence shows a significant negative correlation with suicidality (r = –.342**, p = .000). The result implies that family support (r = –.418**, p = .000), social support (r = –.172**, p = .000), and common humanity (r = –.170**, p = .000) is associated with lower suicidality risk. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. The findings are supported by recent studies, concluding that Recent research highlights the importance of social-ecological factors in reducing suicidality among youth. Studies have found that social support at family, school, and community levels is associated with lower suicidality scores, with family support significantly mitigating the relationship between marginalized identities and suicidality (Standley & Foster-Fishman, 2021). School connectedness has been shown to moderate the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and suicidal ideation in adolescents (Lee et al., 2021).

Degree of Differences Between Suicidality and the Moderating Variables

This subsection explored the predictors of suicidality as an answer to the question: Is there a significant difference on suicidality among Filipino youth considering the following moderating variables:
a. age

b. gender
c. socio-economic status
d. mental health issue

Table 3
Analysis of Variance Showing Comparisons Between Suicidality Dimensions

	Age.		Gender		Socioeconomic Status		Mental Health Issue	
Variables	20 & below	21 & above	Male	Female	16,443 below	16,444 above	Yes	No
Hopelessness	$p > .838$		$p > .364$		$p > .300$		$p < .000$	
Negative Self-evaluation	$p > .121$		$p > .271$		$p > .442$		$p < .000$	
Suicide Ideation	$p > .121$		$p < .006$		$p > .692$		$p < .000$	
Hostility	$p > .786$		$p < .000$		$p > .406$		$p < .000$	
Suicidality	$p > .811$		$p < .002$		$p > .457$		$p < .000$	

**. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level*

Table 3 shows that students with mental health issues are more likely to experience higher levels of hopelessness, negative self-evaluation, suicide ideation, hostility, and suicidality, highlighting the strong influence of mental health on emotional and behavioral outcomes. Gender also appears to play a role, with females showing greater vulnerability to suicide ideation and suicidality. In contrast, age and socioeconomic status do not show notable differences, indicating that mental health and gender are more critical factors in understanding these risks among college students.

Suicide risk is present across all age groups, though differences in risk factors, methods, and patterns exist depending on age (Owsiany et al., 2021). Gender also plays a critical role, with the well-documented paradox showing that while women attempt suicide more often, men are more likely to die by it (Honea et al., 2022). Socioeconomic status contributes to suicide vulnerability as well, with both low- and high-income individuals affected by different contextual triggers (Madigan & Daly, 2023; Park & Lee, 2022). Most significantly, self-perceived mental health issues are consistently linked to heightened suicidality, reinforcing the urgent need for mental health support and intervention (Dizon & Mendoza, 2022). Dimensions of Emotion Regulation and Social-Ecological Influence as Predicting Suicidality

This section of the study investigates the research questions related to the predictors of suicidality, considering the dimensions of each endogenous variable. Specifically, to answer the question: Which of the following variables significantly predict suicidality in terms of the following:

a. Emotion regulation
b. Social-ecological influence

Table 4
Predictors of Suicidality Based on the Dimensions of Emotion Regulation and Social-ecological Influence

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
Predictors	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error	β	t	R^2 Change	p (Sig. F Change)
Emotion Regulation						
Emotional Suppression	.356	.025	.135	4.280	1.8%	.000
Cognitive Reappraisal	.375	.028	-.113	-3.394	1.1%	.001
Social-Ecological Influence						
+ Family Support	.348	.021	-.303	-9.258	8.6%	.000

***. F Change is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
**. F Change is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Table 4 reveal that different dimensions within emotion regulation and social-ecological influence play significant roles in predicting suicidality among Filipino youth. Specifically, emotional suppression positively predicts suicidality, while cognitive reappraisal and is negatively associated with suicidality, indicating its potential protective effects. Moreover, family support negatively predicts suicidality underscoring its protective factor as well. These results emphasize the nuanced influence of individual and contextual variables in shaping youth mental health outcomes. Accordingly, emotion regulation difficulties increase suicidal ideation over time (Brás et al., 2024). Moreso, studies have shown that cognitive reappraisal can improve decision-making performance in suicide attempters (Wang et al., 2024) and is associated with lower levels of suicidality (Rogier et al., 2024). Additionally, strong social support from family, schools, and communities is associated with lower suicide risk among adolescents (Standley & Foster-Fishman, 2021). Social-ecological factors—such as parental expectations, teacher support, and peer relationships—enhance school motivation and a hopeful future outlook (Rydell & Brocki, 2024).

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study strongly validate the theoretical framework underpinning the research, emphasizing the influential roles of emotion regulation and social-ecological influence in shaping suicidality among Filipino youth. The study provides strong support for emotion regulation theory, affirming that cognitive reappraisal reduces suicidality by fostering a positive future orientation, whereas emotional suppression is associated with an increased suicidality risk. These findings underscore the importance of balanced emotional management, as effective regulation enhances resilience and mitigates psychological distress.

In alignment with social-ecological system theory, the study highlights the critical role of social support, family, and the recognition of shared humanity in reducing suicidality and enhancing future orientation. The findings suggest that supportive environments and interpersonal connections are fundamental to individual resilience, reinforcing the need to cultivate robust support systems as part of mental health interventions.

Additionally, the study identifies the moderating effect of mental health status on the relationship between social-ecological influences and suicidality, suggesting that individuals who perceive themselves as having mental health issues experience enhanced benefits from social support. This emphasizes the importance of addressing mental health vulnerabilities within intervention strategies.

Overall, the study's findings align with Emotion Regulation Theory, Social-Ecological System Theory, and Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, and support the application of a tailored, person- specific approach in suicide prevention efforts. This approach is critical in addressing the complex and diverse factors influencing suicidality, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of preventive strategies.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Suicide prevention may focus on enhancing protective factors like emotion and social-ecological influence. Programs should teach cognitive reappraisal while discouraging over- reliance on emotional suppression. Strengthening family, peer, and community connections helps reduce isolation and build resilience.

2. Prevention efforts may be tailored to individual needs, considering factors like gender, socioeconomic status, and mental health. Culturally relevant strategies incorporating Filipino values and practices can enhance engagement. Reducing stigma and improving access to care is vital for those lacking a formal diagnosis.

3. A collaborative approach involving schools, families, communities, and health providers is crucial. Partnerships can facilitate coordinated care and shared resources. Digital tools like mental health apps and hotlines expand reach and support.

4. Regular program assessments using validated tools ensure ongoing effectiveness. Collecting participant feedback helps refine strategies and interventions. Long-term follow-ups maintain support and track sustained improvements.

5. Government support is essential through funding, school-based mental health education, and increased counseling access. Training for educators, healthcare workers, and LGUs builds capacity for early intervention. Policy alignment ensures sustainability and reach.

6. Future studies must include marginalized youth to understand their unique challenges and protective factors. Community-based research ensures cultural relevance and inclusivity. This approach supports the development of equitable, person-specific interventions.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Sheryll Ann provided overall supervision of the study as the research adviser, while Rosdy was primarily responsible for writing the original draft, revising the manuscript, collecting data, and securing funding for the research. All remaining tasks—including conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data analysis, and interpretation of results—were collaboratively undertaken by both authors. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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