



Developmental Trajectories of Youth Emotion Regulation and Self-Control: Insights from Mothers and Teachers

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Background

- Self-control refers to an individual's ability to use appropriate emotional and behavioral responses, preventing impulsive behaviors and emotions that may result in negative consequences or outcomes.¹ Similarly, emotion regulation refers to how people manage and regulate their emotional responses.²
- Although there are various ways to understand the association between these two constructs, emotion regulation can be seen as an aspect of self-control since it involves regulating both emotional and behavioral responses.¹
- Few studies have examined the ways in which emotion regulation and self-control develop separately and concurrently across childhood.⁴
- Studies involving these constructs have also varied in reporters, limiting the ability to compare and triangulate across reporters.
 - Developmental changes in these characteristics may be perceived differently by socializers who are part of children's proximal processes yet operate in different microsystems.⁵

Aim 1: Examine the developmental trajectories of emotion regulation and self-control across childhood (from 3rd to 6th grade) according to mother and teacher perceptions

Aim 2: Test whether the developmental trajectories of each construct differ between mothers and teachers.

Aim 3: Test the associations between each construct within each reporter.

Method

Data Source & Sample

- NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (W1-W5)
- $N = 1,364$ families; 49% children female; 24% ethnic-minority
- Participants in W1: 1028 mothers and 982 teachers
 - Mothers: 11% < high school education; 14% single-parent

Emotion Regulation⁶ (10 items; 1-5 Likert Scale)

Mothers' Report: 4th-6th grades ($\alpha = .74-.78$)

Teachers' Report: 4th-6th grades ($\alpha = .83-.84$)

Self-Control⁷ (10 items; 0-2 Likert Scale)

Mothers' Report: 3rd-6th grades ($\alpha = .81-.83$)

Teachers' Report: 3rd-6th grades ($\alpha = .88-.89$)

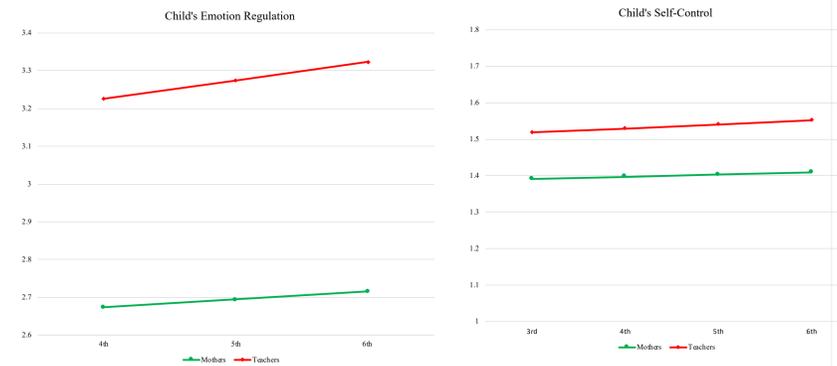
Emotion Regulation	M	SD	Items
Mothers			
4th Grade	2.64	0.54	"My child responds very emotionally to stories, movies, and events"
5th Grade	2.65	0.57	
6th Grade	2.67	0.57	
Teachers			
4th Grade	3.14	0.68	"This child is slow to become angry, nervous or upset"
5th Grade	3.16	0.68	
6th Grade	3.25	0.70	

Self-Control	M	SD	Items
Mothers			
3rd Grade	1.37	0.34	"Controls temper/conflict situation with you"
4th Grade	1.39	0.35	
5th Grade	1.39	0.33	
6th Grade	1.39	0.34	
Teachers			
3rd Grade	1.49	0.40	"Responds appropriately to teasing/peers"
4th Grade	1.50	0.39	
5th Grade	1.51	0.40	
6th Grade	1.53	0.38	

Analysis

- Latent growth curve and parallel process analyses via Mplus 8.0.

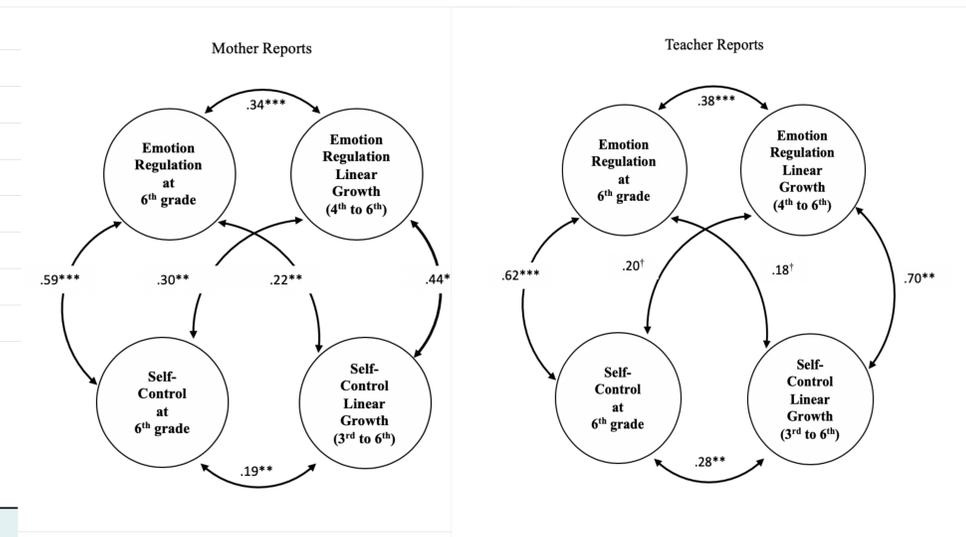
Results



Aim 1. Linear growth trajectories of mother- and teacher-reported emotion regulation and self-control. Model fit indices indicated adequate to excellent fit (RMSEA = .02 - .04; CFI .98 - .99; TLI = .98 - .99; SRMR = .04 - .07).

	Emotion Regulation	Self-Control
Mean at 6 th grade	Mother < Teacher	Mother < Teacher
Linear Growth	Mother = Teacher	Mother = Teacher

Aim 2. Results from invariance tests between mother- and teacher-reported emotion regulation and self-control.



Aim 3. Standardized results from parallel process models. Only latent intercepts, latent slopes, and covariances are shown for simplicity. [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Model fit indices indicated adequate to excellent fit (RMSEA = .01 - .03; CFI = .99 - 1.0; TLI = .99 - 1.0; SRMR = .04 - .05).

Discussion and Future Research

- The present study highlights the developmental changes in and associations between youth's emotion regulation and self-control according to two key socializers.
 - Teachers' and mothers' perceptions of youths' emotion regulation and self-control both indicated coinciding positive growth during middle childhood for both constructs, such that the rate of growth in emotion regulation coincided with the rate of growth in self-control.
 - However, mothers and teachers reported different levels of children's self-control and emotion regulation within a given time. Thus, although the rate of growth was similar across reporters, there were differences in the ways in which socializers from different microsystems viewed how youth regulate their emotions and self-control.

- The varying results across reporters suggests that researchers should consider the context they are interested in when designing research projects or addressing research questions, as reporters may have varying experiences with youth depending by the context.
- Future studies should examine the different contexts that predict these trajectories in order to further understand differences in reports of emotion regulation and self-control development.
- Future studies should also examine father and youth reports and assess how they compare to mother and teacher reports in order to understand how emotion regulation and self-control levels vary by reporters who are key members of the systems youth operate within.

Acknowledgements

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