

Research Article

Influence of Social Support on Promoting Happiness Among Adolescent Higher Secondary School Students

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Abstract: The present study examines the influence of perceived social support on happiness among higher secondary school students in Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by academic pressure, emotional sensitivity, and social transitions, making social support a vital protective factor for psychological well-being. A structured questionnaire was employed to capture data from 398 students in Grades 11 and 12 using a descriptive research design. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was employed to measure social support, and happiness was measured using the short version of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. The findings of the research indicated that the majority of students reported moderate to high levels of social support and happiness. Social support and happiness were found to be significantly positively correlated and regression analysis indicated that social support significantly predicted happiness, explaining approximately 38.6% of the variance. Differences in happiness were found based on medium of instruction and size of friendship networks, while gender, residence, and family type showed no significant variation. The study concludes that strong social support play a key role in enhancing adolescent happiness. These findings highlight the need for schools, families, and policymakers to strengthen supportive environments to promote adolescents' emotional well-being and holistic development.

Keywords: Social support, Happiness, Adolescents, Higher secondary school students, Sustainable Developmental Goals.

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INTRODUCTION

The higher secondary stage, encompassing students aged approximately 16 to 18 years, falls within the broader developmental window of adolescence a period characterized by rapid emotional, social, and psychological transformation. In the Indian education system, this phase typically corresponds to Grades 11 and 12, marking a critical juncture where students must make pivotal academic and career choices. This period is accompanied by intense academic demands, parental expectations, peer comparisons, and the pressure of competitive entrance examinations, which often place significant strain on adolescents' mental health and happiness.

Adolescence is widely recognized as a foundational period for establishing psychological patterns that may persist into adulthood. During this stage, young people experience identity exploration, heightened emotional reactivity, and increased sensitivity to social evaluations (Steinberg, 2014). In the context of Indian society, where collectivist values dominate, adolescents are often expected to align their educational aspirations with familial goals, which may intensify the stress associated with academic performance and social role formation (Rani & Nair, 2020). Consequently, their psychological health and subjective well-being have become topics of mounting concern among educators, psychologists, and policymakers.

Among the various indicators of psychological health, happiness has emerged as a vital construct, encompassing not merely momentary pleasure but a holistic sense of life satisfaction, emotional balance, and resilience. According to Lyubomirsky

et al. (2005), happiness is a combination of positive emotional experiences and a cognitive evaluation of one's existence as meaningful and fulfilling. The pursuit of happiness, once considered a philosophical ideal, is now firmly grounded in psychological research. In adolescents, happiness correlates strongly with academic engagement, interpersonal relationships, and reduced psychopathological symptoms (Holder, 2012). Moreover, a happy student is more likely to engage in learning, adapt to challenges, and contribute positively to school environments (Suldo et al., 2006).

A key external determinant of adolescent happiness is social support which encompasses practical, emotional, and informational assistance received from social networks, including family members, peers, and educators. Social support functions as a buffer against psychological stressors and is crucial in adolescence, a phase marked by vulnerability to mental health disruptions (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). In collectivist cultures like India, the role of social support is even more pronounced due to the societal emphasis on interdependence, family obligations, and communal values (Singh & Singh, 2020). Adolescents who perceive themselves as supported tend to demonstrate higher self esteem, greater sense of purpose and a better emotional regulation, (Rueger et al., 2016).

Several empirical studies reinforce the need of social support in adolescent growth. Jose et al. (2012) found in their study social support from family and peer groups positively predicted happiness and life satisfaction among high school students. Like that, Eisenberg et al. (2007) noted that perceived support is inversely related to depressive symptoms in adolescents, highlighting its potential in promoting emotional well-being. In the Indian context, Kumar and Singh (2019) discovered that students who reported stronger familial and peer support were more resilient in handling academic pressure, thereby experiencing higher level of happiness.

The COVID-19 pandemic further magnified the importance of social support and happiness among school going adolescents. Extended lockdowns, school closures, and social isolation disrupted not only academic routines but also the social fabric that sustains adolescent mental health. A study by Ghosh et al. (2021) found a marked increase in anxiety and depressive symptoms among Indian adolescents during the pandemic, with those lacking supportive relationships being most affected. The digital mode of learning, though necessary, removed many students from the peer interactions and teacher-student bonds that constitute vital sources of motivation and emotional reassurance.

Despite growing scholarly attention to adolescent mental health in India, the direct relation between happiness and social support among higher secondary school students remains underexplored. Many of the existing literature has focused on the role of academic burden, stress, or family pressure, with happiness often treated as a by-product rather than a central psychological outcome. Furthermore, studies that do investigate social support tend to do so in isolation, without considering its interplay with subjective well-being or the broader sociocultural and educational context of Indian adolescents.

Additionally, regional and socioeconomic differences in India introduce layers of complexity in how adolescents perceive and access social support. Students from rural backgrounds may rely more on familial ties due to limited peer networks, while urban students might have more diverse sources of support, including social media and institutional counselling services. Language of instruction such as English versus vernacular medium also plays a role in shaping educational experience, peer group dynamics, and potentially, psychological adjustment (Mitra, 2020).

In terms of gender, cultural norms in India often ascribe different roles and expectations to boys and girls, which could influence their access to support systems and their perception of happiness. Girls, may experience more emotional closeness with family and friends but simultaneously face greater restrictions and pressure regarding behaviour and academic choices (Kakar, 2022). These layered influences suggest the need for research that not only quantifies but also contextualizes social support and happiness among adolescents.

The National Education Policy (NEP - 2020) highlights the importance of holistic education and mental well-being, encouraging schools to focus on the socio emotional development of students along with academic excellence. This policy directive underscores the timeliness and relevance of exploring how social support mechanisms contribute to happiness, particularly at the higher secondary level where students face transitional decisions regarding higher education and careers. Given this background, the current study seeks to study the relation among social support and happiness among higher secondary students in India. By focusing on this key developmental stage, the study aims to fill a critical gap in adolescent mental health research. It investigates whether students who perceive themselves as being emotionally and socially supported also report higher levels of happiness, despite the external pressures they face.

This research is expected to offer valuable insights for educators, counsellors, and policymakers striving to enhance student happiness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Support

Social support is considered one among the most influential protective factors in the field of adolescent psychology. It plays a central role in promoting emotional stability, improving coping mechanisms, and enhancing overall well-being, especially in the face of life stressors and developmental transitions. According to Hobfoll (2002), social support is called as the informational, emotional, and tangible assistance that individuals receive through their interactions with others. House and Kahn (1985) further classified support into perceived (the subjective feeling of being supported) and actual received support. Both forms contribute significantly to psychological functioning, especially during adolescence a period marked by heightened emotional needs and vulnerability.

During adolescence, young individuals seek emotional security not only from family but increasingly from peers. The importance of parental support in adolescence is well established. Adolescents who report strong emotional bonds with their parents tend to display fewer better academic performance, behavioural problems, and higher self-esteem (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). In Indian families, where interdependence is emphasized, the presence of close parental guidance and family involvement is generally associated with low level of anxiety and higher emotional resilience (Kaur & Singh, 2021). Research has shown that peer support is just as vital, particularly in school settings. Adolescents often turn to friends for empathy, advice, and validation. Peer support has been linked to increased subjective well-being and lower depression scores among school-going adolescents (Rueger et al., 2016). The number of close friends, as captured in the demographic profile, is an important factor that influences the perceived adequacy of support. Adolescents with more than three close friends have been found to be more emotionally expressive, less lonely, and generally happier compared to those with a limited social circle (Jose et al., 2012).

Differences in gender perception and impact of social support have also been extensively examined. Studies indicate that girls tend to place more value on emotional expression in relationships and are generally more receptive to support-seeking behaviours (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). In contrast, boys are often socialized to suppress emotions and rely less on verbal forms of emotional assistance, potentially leading to different patterns in perceived support. In the Indian context, however, gender roles are further influenced by cultural expectations, with girls often expected to conform to behavioural norms that can either facilitate or restrict social expressiveness (Kakar, 2022).

Family structure whether joint or nuclear has also been found to influence social support dynamics. Adolescents from joint families may benefit from an expanded network of caregivers and role models, providing multiple sources of emotional and instrumental support (Bharat, 2013). Conversely, in nuclear families, the support system is often smaller and concentrated, relying heavily on immediate family members. While both family types offer benefits, studies suggest that joint family environments are often more conducive to fostering a sense of belonging and support, especially in Indian cultural settings (Nehra & Kaur, 2020).

Place of residence, whether rural or urban, also plays a crucial role in access to and perception of support. Rural adolescents may experience stronger familial ties due to close-knit communities but might lack access to institutional forms of support such as school counsellors or peer support programs. Urban students may benefit from greater exposure to structured support mechanisms but may also face issues like social alienation or competition, which can offset these benefits (Sinha & Mishra, 2018).

The medium of instruction can also indirectly influence social support, especially in bilingual or multilingual countries like India. Students in English-medium schools may experience more diverse peer groups, which can enhance or hinder bonding depending on social dynamics. Additionally, communication barriers or perceived status differences may impact the development of supportive relationships (Mitra, 2020).

Socioeconomic status and satisfaction with family income are strongly tied to perceived social support. Financial stability is often associated with greater parental availability, access to better schooling environments, and more opportunities for social engagement all of which contribute to enhanced perceptions of being supported (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Adolescents from lower income households, however, may experience fragmented support systems, often due to parental absence or work related stress, impacting their psychological security.

A holistic approach to understanding social support must also consider school based support, especially from teachers and staff. Educators play a vital role in identifying emotional needs and providing encouragement. Studies have shown that teacher support correlates with lower dropout rates and better emotional adjustment among secondary school students (Reddy & Kamalanabhan, 2014). In resource limited settings, such institutional support becomes a crucial supplement to familial and peer based networks.

In summary, social support is deeply influenced by demographic factors such as gender, family type, place of residence, socioeconomic status, number of friends, and language environment. In the context of Indian higher secondary students, these variables interact within a complex socio-cultural framework, shaping students' perceptions of being cared for, understood, and valued. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing targeted interventions that strengthen

adolescents' emotional foundations and contribute to their overall happiness and academic success.

Happiness

Happiness is widely regarded as a core component of psychological well-being, especially during adolescence, when individuals undergo critical changes in emotional, social, and cognitive functioning. Diener (1984) introduced happiness under the broader concept of subjective well-being, which includes both affective components and cognitive judgments such as life satisfaction. Seligman (2002) later elaborated on the multidimensional nature of happiness through his model of pleasure, engagement, and meaning, suggesting that sustainable happiness arises from a balanced combination of sensory enjoyment, deep involvement in tasks, and a sense of life purpose.

During adolescence, especially among higher secondary school students (typically aged 16–18), happiness becomes especially salient. This developmental stage involves heightened emotional sensitivity, peer comparison, identity exploration, and academic pressure. These challenges can significantly impact an adolescent's sense of well-being and their capacity to experience happiness. Research has shown that happier adolescents are more engaged in academic and extracurricular activities, possess stronger coping skills, and enjoy healthier interpersonal relationships (Suldo & Huebner, 2006).

Gender differences in happiness levels have also been observed in several studies. While girls tend to report greater emotional expressiveness and social connectedness, they are also more susceptible to internalizing problems such as anxiety and self-doubt, which can dampen happiness (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). Conversely, boys may report higher subjective well-being in competitive or individual achievement domains but may underreport emotional distress due to social norms around masculinity, especially in conservative cultural contexts like India (Rani & Kumar, 2022).

The family environment plays a substantial role in shaping happiness during adolescence. Adolescents from joint families, often common in India, may feel higher levels of happiness due to higher familial interaction, collective caregiving, and shared responsibilities (Nehra & Kaur, 2020). In contrast, students from nuclear families may have fewer relational buffers during stress, affecting emotional well-being. Nevertheless, the quality of familial interaction, rather than structure alone, appears to be the key determinant of adolescent happiness.

The medium of instruction can indirectly impact emotional well-being, particularly in multilingual societies. Students studying in regional-language mediums may feel more emotionally anchored due to cultural and linguistic familiarity, while those in English medium settings might face identity or communication challenges, especially in rural or first-generation learner contexts (Mitra, 2020). These dynamics can influence how secure and competent a student feels, thereby affecting happiness.

Socioeconomic status and satisfaction with family income also correlate strongly with adolescent happiness. Financially stable households provide more opportunities for recreational activities, academic resources, and social mobility, all of which are linked to positive emotional experiences (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In contrast, financial hardship can induce stress and social stigma, reducing life satisfaction.

Perhaps one of the strongest predictors of happiness throughout adolescence is the number and quality of close friendships. Close peer relationships offer validation, companionship, and emotional support, which are vital for adolescents piloting identity formation and social belonging (Jose et al., 2012). Adolescents with larger or more supportive friend networks consistently report higher happiness levels, reinforcing the reputation of social integration.

Social Support and Happiness: Theoretical Intersection

Research suggests a robust and positive relationship between social support and happiness. Theoretically, this connection is supported by the concept of social capital, where relational networks provide not only emotional security but also a sense of belonging and purpose. Studies by Shamir and Shamir Balderman (2024) show that persons with higher levels of perceived social support report significantly greater happiness, mediated through reduced anxiety and increased emotional security.

For adolescents, this link becomes particularly meaningful as peer validation and family bonding significantly shape emotional outcomes. The authors further note that support from peers—those who share similar experiences can have a more substantial impact than support from family or formal institutions, especially during periods of crisis or heightened developmental sensitivity.

Relevance to Indian Adolescents

Although much of the existing literature focuses on adult populations or Western settings, the findings from Shamir and Shamir Balderman (2024) underscore important psychological processes that are equally applicable to Indian higher secondary students. These students, who often navigate intense academic pressures and familial expectations, may benefit

significantly from structured support systems. In collectivist societies like India, the presence of strong social ties is not only culturally endorsed but also empirically linked to increased well-being. Given the minimal study focusing on the interaction of social support and happiness among Indian adolescents, the present study fills a critical gap by exploring this relationship within a culturally and developmentally relevant framework.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Sampling and Participants

The study employed a descriptive research design and used multistage sampling technique to collect data from higher secondary school students across different locations from Virudhunganar district, Tamilnadu. Virudhunganar district has divided into three geographical revenue area and then into 11 blocks and finally the there was a representation from schools from all the blocks This approach was selected due to accessibility constraints and the practical need to gather a substantial number of responses efficiently within a defined academic term.

A total of 398 students from grades 11 and 12 participated in the study. Overall population of this study is 38,367. This data was collected from the higher secondary school students from their school prior to get permission from district chief educational officer. The sample comprised both male and female students from government, government-aided, and private schools, with a diverse representation in terms of region such as rural, urban, medium of instruction such as Tamil and English, religion, and community background.

Demographic information collected included students' gender, age, class, school type, family structure, place of residence, mother's education, father's education, and parent's occupation, and income. This data enabled a relation between socio demographic variables and the other constructs measured.

3.2. Measurement Tools

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

Social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support pioneered by Zimet et al. (1988). The scale includes 12 items that evaluate perceived support from friends, family, and significant others. And the respondents rated their agreement using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 which is "Very Strongly Disagree" to 7 which is "Very Strongly Agree". Which include statements like "My family really tries to help me", "I can talk about my problems with my friends".

This tool has demonstrated high internal consistency in various adolescent samples globally, with Cronbach's alpha typically exceeding 0.85. In the current study, preliminary reliability testing also indicated a Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.88$, confirming suitability for use among Indian adolescents.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Short Version)

Happiness was measured using the 8-item short version of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002). This scale captures both affective and cognitive dimensions of happiness, including satisfaction with life, emotional balance and mental alertness. Responses were recorded on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 which is Strongly Disagree to 6 which is Strongly Agree. Which includes statements like "I feel that life is very rewarding", "I am well satisfied about everything in my life". Reverse scoring was applied to negatively worded items. The scale is known for strong psychometric properties with Cronbach's α values typically above 0.80, and in this study, the reliability was found to be 0.84.

3.3. Procedure

Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire structured by the researcher and distributed physically to the higher secondary school students. The recruitment process involved collaboration with school headmasters and teachers who facilitated access to students during non instructional hours before that proper written permission was obtained from district chief educational officer.

The objective and the purpose of the research were e briefed to the respondents just before the data collection and assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Each student was required to provide informed consent, and parental/guardian consent was obtained in advance.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1. Findings related to Socio - Demographic Variables:

This study found that the majority (46.2%) of the respondents are 16 years old, followed closely by 17 year old, who make up 41.4% of the sample. Additionally, 9.3% of respondents are aged 15, while a smaller proportion, 2.4%, belong to the 18-year-old category. The least represented age group is 14, accounting for only 0.7% of the total respondents. This distribution suggests that the study primarily includes mid-teen participants, who likely provide relevant insights into the research focus. This study found that majority of the participant are male students, representing 68.9% of the sample, on the other hand

females students representing 31.1%. This distribution indicates a higher representation of male respondents in the study, which may influence the interpretation of findings based on gender related perspectives.

This study identified that the majority (62.7%) of the respondents are studying in the 12th standard, while 37.3% are in the 11th standard. This indicates that the study sample consists of a higher proportion of students from the final year of higher secondary education, which may be relevant in understanding their perspectives and experiences in relation to the objectives of the study.

This study reveals that the majority of the respondents are from Government Aided Schools, accounting for 40.9% of the sample, followed by Government School students at 38.8%. Private School students make up the smallest proportion, representing 20.3% of the total respondents. This distribution suggests that the study includes a diverse representation of students from different types of educational institutions, which may provide varied perspectives relevant to the research objectives.

This study identified that the majority of the participants (51.9%) study in English medium, while 48.1% study in Tamil medium. This nearly equal distribution indicates a balanced representation of students from both Tamil and English medium.

This study found that the majority (73.2%) of the respondents reside in rural areas, while 25.4% live in urban areas. A small proportion, 1.4%, belongs to tribal communities. This distribution indicates that the study primarily includes respondents from rural backgrounds, which may influence the findings based on rural socio economic and educational factors.

This study identified that the majority (79.2%) of the respondents belong to nuclear families, while 20.8% come from joint families. This distribution indicates a predominant presence of nuclear family structures among the respondents, which may have implications for family dynamics, support systems, and social interactions in the context of the study.

This study reveals that the largest proportion of fathers (46.4%) have completed education between the 6th and 12th standard, followed by 31.1% who have education below the 5th standard. A smaller percentage, 13.2%, have attained an undergraduate degree, while only 9.3% have completed postgraduate education. This distribution suggests that a significant number of respondents come from families where the father's education level is relatively low, which may have implications for parental influence on academic aspirations and career choices.

This study found that that the distribution of respondents based on their mother's level of education. The majority of mothers (45.7%) have completed education between the 6th and 12th standard, followed by 31.6% who have studied below the 5th standard. A smaller proportion, 12.7%, have attained a postgraduate degree, while 10.0% have completed undergraduate education. This distribution indicates that a significant number of respondents come from families where the mother's education level is relatively low, which may influence the educational environment and academic support available to students at home.

This study identified that the majority of fathers (56.2%) are engaged in daily wage labor, followed by 20.6% who are self-employed. A smaller proportion, 11.2%, work in private jobs, while 10.0% are employed in government jobs. Additionally, 1.9% of respondents' fathers are unemployed. This distribution indicates that a significant portion of respondents come from households where the primary earner is engaged in daily wage labour, which may have implications for the family's financial stability and access to resources.

This study reveals that the largest proportion of mothers (41.1%) are engaged in daily wage labour, followed closely by housewives, who make up 38.8% of the sample. A smaller percentage, 8.9%, are self-employed, while 6.2% work in private jobs and 5.0% hold government jobs. This distribution suggests that a significant number of respondents come from households where mothers either contribute to the family's income through daily wage labour or are primarily engaged in household responsibilities, which may impact the family's economic stability and support structure.

This study found that the responses are nearly evenly split, with 50.5% of respondents indicating satisfaction with their monthly income, while 49.5% are not satisfied. This distribution suggests that financial stability varies among the respondents, with a significant portion experiencing some level of dissatisfaction, which may influence their overall well-being and access to resources.

This study identified that the largest group (41.6%) reported having 1 to 3 close friends, followed by 34.9% who have 6 or more close friends. A smaller proportion, 23.4%, indicated having 4 to 5 close friends. This distribution suggests that while a significant number of respondents maintain a small, close-knit group of friends, a considerable portion also have a wider circle of close relationships, which may influence their social interactions and emotional support systems.

4.2. Findings Related to Social Support:

The distribution of respondents based on their perceived level of social support reveals that the most (60.8%) of the respondents reported a higher level of social support. This suggests that most individuals in the sample feel well-supported, potentially benefiting from strong social networks, emotional assistance, and community backing.

Meanwhile, 38.5% of respondents indicated a moderate level of social support, representing individuals who receive some level of support but not consistently enough to be categorized as high. These individuals may experience fluctuations in the availability or quality of social connections.

A very small proportion of the respondents (0.7%) reported a low level of social support. Although this group is minimal, it highlights that some individuals may lack essential social connections, which could impact their quality of life and psychological well-being.

There is no significant difference in social support being male and females ($t = 1.044$, $p = .297$). Females ($M = 63.53$, $SD = 11.18$) reported slightly higher levels than males ($M = 62.26$, $SD = 11.72$).

The difference in social support was not statistically significant ($t = 1.945$, $p = .053$). Tamil medium students ($M = 63.79$, $SD = 10.60$) scored slightly higher than English medium students ($M = 61.60$, $SD = 12.30$), but the result was not sufficient to establish a meaningful difference.

There was no statistically significant difference in social support between urban ($M = 62.37$, $SD = 12.07$) and rural ($M = 62.75$, $SD = 11.39$) students ($t = 0.294$, $p = .769$).

The difference in social support was not statistically significant ($t = 0.773$, $p = .440$). Students from joint families ($M = 63.51$, $SD = 10.57$) reported slightly higher social support compared to those from nuclear families ($M = 62.43$, $SD = 11.80$), but the difference was not meaningful.

There was a statistically significant difference in social support based on income satisfaction. Students satisfied with their income ($M = 63.79$, $SD = 12.15$) reported significantly higher social support than those who were not satisfied ($M = 61.54$, $SD = 10.85$) ($t = 2.004$, $p = .046$).

There was a statistically significant difference in social support ($t = 5.971$, $p = .000$). Students with a larger friend circle ($M = 64.60$, $SD = 10.57$) reported more social support than those with a smaller circle ($M = 57.26$, $SD = 12.45$).

4.3 Findings Related to Happiness

The distribution of respondents based on their level of happiness indicates that the majority (75.1%) of the respondents reported a moderate level of happiness. This suggests that most individuals in the sample experience an average sense of well-being and satisfaction but may not always feel a strong sense of happiness. A significant portion (14.8%) of respondents reported a high level of happiness, reflecting a group of individuals who experience frequent positive emotions, satisfaction with life, and overall well-being. On the other hand, 10.0% of respondents reported a low level of happiness, which indicates that a small but notable group of individuals may be struggling with dissatisfaction, emotional distress, or other factors that affect their happiness.

The difference in happiness levels was not statistically significant ($t = 0.289$, $p = .773$) among male and female adolescent higher secondary school students. Males ($M = 34.05$, $SD = 6.78$) and females ($M = 34.25$, $SD = 6.14$) had very similar scores.

There was a statistically significant difference in happiness levels between Tamil and English medium students ($t = 2.384$, $p = .018$). Tamil medium students ($M = 34.90$, $SD = 6.08$) reported higher happiness compared to English medium students ($M = 33.37$, $SD = 6.95$), suggesting greater happiness among Tamil medium students than English medium students.

The difference in happiness levels was not statistically significant ($t = 1.409$, $p = .159$). Rural students ($M = 34.37$, $SD = 6.29$) reported slightly higher happiness than urban students ($M = 33.33$, $SD = 7.36$), but the difference was not meaningful. There was no statistically significant difference in happiness levels ($t = 0.304$, $p = .761$). Students from joint families ($M = 34.30$, $SD = 6.16$) and nuclear families ($M = 34.06$, $SD = 6.70$) reported nearly identical levels of happiness.

A significant difference was also observed in happiness levels ($t = 4.491$, $p = .000$). Students with more friends ($M = 34.96$, $SD = 6.17$) reported higher happiness than those with fewer friends ($M = 31.76$, $SD = 7.13$).

4.4 Correlation between Happiness and Social Support

Social support emerges as a particularly influential factor, with the strongest correlation observed between happiness and social support ($p < .001$). This significant association emphasizes that individuals who feel supported socially are more likely to experience higher level of happiness.

4.5 Regression Analysis between Social Support and Happiness

Table 1. Represent regression analysis

Model No	R Value	R Square Value	Adjusted R Square Value	Change in R Square	Sign. Change F
1	.621a	.386	.384	.386	.000

A simple linear regression was conducted to inspect the effect of social support on happiness. The results showed that social support is a significant predictor of happiness, $R = .621$, $R^2 = .386$, and Adjusted $R^2 = .384$. This shows that approximately 38.6% of the variance in happiness can be explained by the level of social support.

The model produced a standard error of the estimate of 5.165, suggesting a moderate average deviation of observed values from the predicted regression line. The p value ($p < .001$) indicates that the model delivers a better fit to the data than a model with no predictors.

These results suggest that individuals with higher levels of social support have reported higher levels of happiness.

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the impact of social support on promoting happiness among higher secondary school students in Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu. The findings clearly indicate a strong and statistically significant relationship between perceived social support and happiness among adolescents. This result supports the central premise of positive psychology that social relationships and supportive environments show a critical role in enhancing subjective well-being (Diener, 1984; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive association between social support and happiness, indicating that students who perceive higher levels of social support tend to report higher happiness level. This finding is constant with earlier studies which have demonstrated that social support acts as a protective factor against stress and emotional distress during adolescence (Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Ruegers et al., 2016). Adolescence is a sensitive developmental phase manifest by academic pressure, identity exploration, and emotional vulnerability, making social support particularly crucial. The regression analysis further strengthened this relationship by showing that social support significantly predicts happiness, explaining nearly 38.6% of the variance in happiness scores. This substantial explanatory power underscores the centrality of supportive relationships in adolescents' emotional lives. Similar findings have been reported by Jose et al. (2012), who researched that perceived support from peer group, family and significant others predicted happiness among adolescent school students.

Demographic analyses provided additional insights. The absence of significant gender differences in both social support and happiness suggests that male and female students benefit similarly from supportive environments. This aligns with studies conducted in Indian school settings that report minimal gender variation in overall happiness levels when social contexts are comparable (Holder, 2012). However, a significant difference was observed with respect to the medium of instruction, where Tamil-medium students reported higher happiness than English-medium students. This may be attributed to greater cultural familiarity, reduced communication barriers, and stronger peer bonding within the native language context (Mitra, 2020).

Friendship networks emerged as another important factor influencing both social support and happiness. Students with larger numbers of close friends reported significantly higher levels of perceived support and happiness. Peer relationships serve as a primary source of emotional validation during adolescence, reinforcing feelings of belonging and self-worth (Rueger et al., 2016). This finding reinforces the view that peer based interventions and group activities in schools may play a vital role in promoting student happiness.

6. Limitations

Despite its significant findings, the study has certain limitations and that must be acknowledged. First, this study employed a cross-sectional design. While social support was found to significantly predict happiness, it is not possible to determine whether increased social support leads to greater happiness or whether happier adolescents perceive their social environments more positively. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the directionality of this relationship (Diener, 2016).

Second, this study depend solely on self-report measures to assess social support and happiness. Although standardized and reliable instruments such as the MSPSS and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire were used, this type of data may provide desirability bias or response exaggeration. In future, the research could incorporate qualitative methods, teacher reports, or parental assessments to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent well-being (López-Pérez & Wilson,

Third, the sample was limited to higher secondary students from Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu. While the sample size was adequate, the findings may not be fully generalizable to adolescents from other regions, urban metropolitan settings, or culturally diverse populations. Regional variations in educational resources, family structures, and social norms may influence perceptions of support and happiness.

Finally, although several demographic variables were examined, the study did not explore potential mediating or moderating factors such as mental health, resilience, academic stress, coping strategies. Including such variables in future research could deliver a more nuanced thoughtful of how social support operates within the networks of adolescent happiness.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides empirical evidence that the social support act as a crucial role in promoting happiness among higher secondary school students. The positive association between social support and happiness highlights the importance of nurturing supportive relationships during adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by emotional and academic challenges.

The findings suggest that adolescents who perceive greater emotional, familial, and peer support are better equipped to experience positive emotions, cope with stress, and maintain psychological well-being. This aligns with existing theoretical perspectives that emphasize social connectedness as a core component of subjective well-being (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Suldo & Huebner, 2006).

From an educational and policy perspective, the study underscores the need for schools to strengthen social support mechanisms through peer mentoring programs, teacher-student bonding initiatives, and school-based counseling services. In line with the NEP 2020, fostering socio emotional learning and mental wellbeing should be prioritized alongside academic achievement.

In conclusion, enhancing social support systems within families, peer groups, and educational institutions can significantly contribute to the happiness and holistic development of adolescents. In near future research should build on these findings of research by adopting new designs as longitudinal designs and exploring intervention-based approaches to promote sustained happiness among higher secondary school students.

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