

## **LIFE SATISFACTION, PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND AFFECT OF ADOLESCENTS**

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### **Abstract**

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Life satisfaction is the way a person evaluates his or her life and how he or she feels about where it is going in the future. It is a measure of well-being and may be assessed in terms of mood, satisfaction with interpersonal relationships and with achieved goals, self-concept, and self-perceived ability to cope with daily life. The main aim of this study was to examine the perceived social support affect and life satisfaction of adolescents. The sample comprised of 801 adolescents (boys = 403; girls = 398) belonging to the age range of 11 to 19 years. The main variables were examined using Satisfaction with Life Scale, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule. The statistical techniques employed for analysis of the data were Descriptive statistics, Student's t-test, Analysis of variance (One - way and two - way ANOVA), Duncan's multiple range test, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results showed that three groups of adolescents (early, middle, and late adolescents) did not differ in their levels of perceived social support, satisfaction with life and positive affect. The early adolescents had higher levels of negative affect than late

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***Keywords:***

*Life Satisfaction;*

*Perceived Social Support;*

*Positive Affect;*

*Negative Affect;*

*Adolescence.*

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adolescent's .The females having higher levels of satisfaction with life, total perceived social support and perceived support from friends and family. There is significant positive moderate relationship between satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive affect. There is also a significant negative moderate relationship between satisfaction with life and negative affect among adolescents. These findings have implications for future research in life satisfaction and for the promotion of satisfaction enhancing practices among the adolescents in our culture.

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## **1.Introduction**

Life satisfaction is the way a person evaluates his or her life and how he or she feels about where it is going in the future. Diener views life satisfaction as the degree to which an individual positively evaluates the overall quality of his or her life according to individually and subjectively held standards (Diener, 1984; Veenhoven, 1996). The most crucial period in one's life span is the adolescent period. Adolescence can be broken into three stages: early adolescence, middle adolescence, and late adolescence. Each stage has its own characteristics. There are many factors that influence the life satisfaction of adolescents like perceived social support, and affect. Social support is one of the important factors that contribute to life satisfaction. Social support refers to the various types of support (i.e., assistance/help) that people receive from others. Support can come from many sources, such as family, friends, pets, neighbours, co-workers, organizations, etc. Government-provided social support is often referred to as public aid. Previous research has shown that perceived support is linked to low psychological distress and low rates of psychological disorder, and that people with high perceived support are happier than people with low perceived support (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Lakey, 2013; Lakey & Cronin, 2008; Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss, 2003). Positive affectivity is a trait reflecting differences in emotional experience. The higher levels of positive affectivity, the more cheerfulness, enthusiastic and energetic a person will be. On the other hand, lower levels of positive affectivity can be related to sadness, lethargy and distress. However, low positive affectivity does not necessarily mean negative affectivity. In fact, positive and negative

affectivity are independent from each other. Negative affectivity is often defined as a variety of negative emotions, including anger, disgust, fear, etc. A person can be high in both positive affectivity (PA) and negative affectivity (NA), or high in one and low in the other, or low in both. This all depends on our surroundings and environment. In general, positive affectivity (and negative affectivity) can influence one's opinions and decision.

Adolescent well-being will be reflected in adulthood and old age. Today, however, most empirical work on life satisfaction has examined adults (Holder, 2012). As a result, there is less information on wellbeing in adolescence. Although the work on adults is important, it has limited generalizability to life satisfaction in youth as individuals' salient interests, developmental needs and concerns in life change with age (Park & Huebner, 2005). Moreover, factors associated with adults' life satisfaction (i.e. job satisfaction, being married, and having children) are often not applicable to adolescents (Holder, 2012). Examining life satisfaction in adolescents requires comprehensive knowledge of the multiple factors that influence how adolescents perceive their own lives (Forste & Moore, 2012). Thus, the complex interplay between adolescents and environmental factors should be investigated in order to better understand what leads to life satisfaction. Unfortunately, literature in this area is limited. The lack of research on adolescent life satisfaction is somewhat surprising as today's society places such great emphasis on the development of well-being in youth.

Well-being is central to healthy development (Forste & Moore, 2012), and Suldo and Huebner (2004b) consider life satisfaction an important protective asset that should be fostered by parents, teachers, and others who work to promote the positive development of children and adolescents. By means of identifying early markers, predictors, processes, and risk factors influencing life satisfaction in adolescence, one is able to form the foundation for health promotion, prevention and treatment measures. The relationship between adolescents, environmental factors, and life satisfaction in specific, is perhaps best explored by qualitative research. The findings of the study are expected to throw light on the factors that enhance satisfaction with life as well as areas in which interventions are possible to facilitate a healthy living and promote optimum well-being.

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## *OBJECTIVES*

The major objectives of the present study are:

1. To examine whether there are differences among the three age groups of adolescents (early, middle, and late) in satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive and negative affect.
2. To examine whether there are gender differences among adolescents in satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive and negative affect.
3. To examine the relationship of satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive and negative affect in adolescents.

## **2. Research Method**

### *Participants*

The sample comprised of 801 adolescents (boys = 403; girls = 398) belonging to the age range of 11 to 19 years (Early adolescent 11-14 years, Middle adolescents 15-17 years, Late adolescents 18-19 years). The subjects were selected employing simple random sampling drawn from various educational institutions under the Thrissur corporation of Thrissur district of the state of Kerala, using the following inclusion /exclusion criteria.

### *Inclusion criteria*

- Age above 11 years, and below 20 years
- Adolescents having no identified physical /mental disorder
- A minimum ability to read and write

### *Exclusion criteria*

- Those below 10 years of age and above 20 years of age
- Non school going adolescents

### *Instruments*

Only questionnaire measures were used in the study. Well established measures having high reliabilities and demonstrated validities were used to obtain data regarding satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive and negative affect. In addition to these, a personal data sheet was used to obtain the socio demographic profile of the respondents.

The following tools were used for obtaining relevant data

A Personal Data Sheet developed by the investigator was used to collect data regarding the socio demographic characteristics of the participants. The personal details like age, gender, religion, type of family, and so on were obtained using the personal data sheet.

#### *Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)*

The ‘Satisfaction With Life Scale’ developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) was used to measure the life satisfaction of the participants. The scale measures global cognitive judgements of one’s life satisfaction. Each item is responded on a seven- point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The sum of the item scores is an overall measure of satisfaction with life, a higher score indicating extremely satisfied life. The SWLS has shown strong internal reliability and moderate temporal stability. Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) reported a coefficient alpha of .87 for the scale and a two month test-retest reliability coefficient of .82. The scale has good convergent validity and construct validity with other scales and with other types of assessments of subjective well-being (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

#### *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)*

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) to assess both perceived availability and adequacy of emotional and instrumental social support from three specific sources - family, friends, and significant others. This 12-item measure is a self- report inventory that is easy to use, self-explanatory and time effective. The 12 items of the MSPSS is responded on a 7-point Likert scale .There are three subscales with four items each that are designed to measure perceived social support from the three sources. Higher scores indicate greater levels of perceived social support. Zimet, Powell, Farley, Wekman, and Berkoff(1990) extended the findings of the initial study by researching the MSPSS across different subject groups. Their study demonstrated good internal reliability (alpha ranged from .84 to.92) and adequate validity.

#### *‘Positive and Negative Affect Schedule’*

The 'Positive and Negative Affect Schedule' developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988) was used to measure the two dispositional mood dimensions of positive affect and negative affect of the participants. The PANAS consists of two 10-item mood scales designed to provide independent measures of positive affect and negative affect. The respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they have experienced each particular emotion within a general time period, with reference to a 5-point Likert scale. The inter correlations and internal consistency reliabilities of the scale are high, ranging from .86 to .90 for positive affect and from .84 to .87 for negative affect. The 8 week test-retest reliability found that the values increased as the time-instruction increased from momentary feeling to feeling in general, alpha reliabilities ranging from .47 to .68 for positive affect and .39 to .71 for negative affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

### *Procedure*

The schools and colleges under the Thrissur corporation were listed and out of the 52 higher secondary schools and 5 arts and science colleges, 13 schools and 2 colleges were randomly selected using simple random sampling method. From the selected colleges and schools the participants were selected to the different strata's (early, middle, and late) of adolescents through random sampling. The participants were met individually and a brief detail on the purpose of the study was given. After getting their informed consent, the tools were given to them and were allowed to complete the questionnaires at leisure. The participants were selected based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria adopted. The collected data were analyzed using the statistical techniques of Student's t-test, one-way ANOVA, Duncan's post hoc test and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

### **3.Results and discussion**

The results presented in Table 1 reveals that the differences among the three age groups (11- 14 early adolescents, 15-17 middle adolescents and 18-20 late adolescents) of adolescents in satisfaction with life are not significant. The early, middle and late adolescents have a satisfied life. Adolescents is a period of rapid change in various dimensions like physical, emotional and cognitive, however these changes do not have an influence on their life satisfaction. This study

does not support previous research by Sood, Bakhshi and Gupta (2012) who found that younger adolescents aged 15 years reported better well being and satisfaction with life than those of 17 years of age.

Table 1

*The results of the one-way –ANOVA with respect to age and satisfaction with life*

Satisfaction with life	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	69.586	2	34.793	1.066
Within Groups	26056.391	798	32.652	
Total	26125.978	800		

From the Table 2 it can be observed that there is no significant difference among the different age groups of adolescents in their perceived social support. The influence of perceived support from family, friends and significant other do not vary across the different age groups of adolescents indicating that perceived social support has equal importance in all the adolescents. Supportive social relationships influence achievement of adolescents (Ahmed, Minnaert, Werf, & Kuyper, 2010) .

Affect refers to the experience of feeling or emotion (Hogg, Abrams, & Martin, 2009). Positive affect refers to the extent to which an individual subjectively experiences positive moods such as joy, interest, enthusiasm and alertness. Negative affect refers to feelings of distress, guilt, hostility, irritabilities, nervousness and upset. The results of the one -way ANOVA presented in Table 3 shows significant differences among the different age groups of adolescents in negative affect. This signifies that age has an impact on negative affect. However, in the case of positive affect there is no significant difference. In order to get a clear picture regarding the group means, multiple comparisons were made and the obtained results are presented in Tables 4 respectively.

Table 2

*The results of the one-way –ANOVA with respect to age and perceived social support*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Perceived support from Significant others	Between Groups	142.128	2	71.064	2.249

	Within Groups	25216.231	798	31.599	
	Total	25358.360	800		
Perceived support from Family	Between Groups	20.714	2	10.357	.487
	Within Groups	16957.311	798	21.250	
	Total	16978.025	800		
Perceived support from Friends	Between Groups	53.406	2	26.703	1.255
	Within Groups	16973.592	798	21.270	
	Total	17026.999	800		
Total perceived social support	Between Groups	173.130	2	86.565	.607
	Within Groups	113719.365	798	142.505	
	Total	113892.494	800		

Table 3

*The results of the one –way ANOVA with respect to age, positive affect, and negative affect*

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
Positive affect	Between Groups	88.981	2	44.491	.874
	Within Groups	40643.021	798	50.931	
	Total	40732.002	800		
Negative affect	Between Groups	665.525	2	332.763	6.554**
	Within Groups	40517.608	798	50.774	
	Total	41183.134	800		

\*\*Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4

*The results of the post hoc test for negative affect and age*

Age	N	Subset for alpha=0.05	
		1	2
Late	200	24.00	
Middle	300		25.31
Early	301		26.35
Sig.		1.000	.101

In the case of negative affect the results of the post – hoc analysis revealed that there are significant differences between the late young adolescents and the other two groups of adolescents. The highest mean score in negative affect was obtained by the early adolescents (M= 26.35) and the lowest score was obtained by the late adolescents (M= 24.00). These results indicate that the late adolescents have less negative emotions than the early and middle adolescents. The early adolescents have more negative feelings of irritability, distress, nervousness and hostility. Charles, Reynolds, and Gatz (2001) reported that for people at all ages, negative affect decreased over time. The present results are consistent with previous findings in this regard.

Gender is an important variable considering the influence it has made on most psychological variables. In the present investigation, the gender differences in satisfaction with life, perceived social support, and positive affect and negative affect were examined. The mean scores obtained by the male and female adolescents in the above variables have been computed and the differences were tested for significance using the ‘t’ test (Table 5).

Table 5

*The mean and the standard deviation of the scores obtained by the male and the female adults in the different variables and the corresponding 't' values*

Variables	Male (N= 403)		Female (N=398)		't'
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Satisfaction with life	23.08	5.867	24.07	5.519	2.455*
Perceived support from significant others	20.97	5.382	21.57	5.862	1.509
Perceived support from family	22.99	4.930	24.25	4.166	3.900**
Perceived support from friends	22.51	4.773	23.50	4.396	3.058**
Total perceived social support	66.46	12.353	69.31	11.325	3.402**
Positive affect	32.38	7.568	31.72	6.662	1.318
Negative affect	25.41	7.036	25.33	7.321	.148

\*Significant at the 0.05 level \*\*Significant at the 0.01 level

The results with respect to life satisfaction revealed that there is significant gender difference in life satisfaction. This indicates that life satisfaction has an influence in males and the females. In this study female have higher life satisfaction (M= 24.07) than the males (M=23.08). This does not support previous studies who have reported no gender differences in life satisfaction (Al-Attayah & Nasser, 2013; Ye, Yu, & Li, 2012).

The results revealed significant gender difference in the case of support from family ( $t= 3.9$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), support from friend ( $t=3.0$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and total perceived social support ( $t= 3.40$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Here, the female participants have significantly higher mean score than the male participants. The increase in support from family and friends could be a reason for better satisfaction in life among the females than the males. In the case of the sources of perceived support from significant others the gender differences are not significant. The results revealed that there were no gender differences in positive affect and negative affect among adolescents.

Table 6

*The coefficients of correlation obtained between happiness and satisfaction with life, gratitude, optimism, pathway thinking, agency thinking, hope, and positive and negative affect (N=801)*

	Perceived social support from significant other	Perceived social support from family	Perceived social support from friend	Total Perceived social support	Positive affect	Negative affect
Satisfaction with life	.294**	.440**	.303**	.426**	.167**	-.196**
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

\*\*Significant at the 0.01 level

From Table 6 it can be seen that satisfaction with life has significant positive correlations with all the three sources of social support as well as total support. All these correlations are significant at the 0.01 level and moderate in magnitude. These correlations suggest that an increase in perceived support from family, friends, and significant others lead to corresponding increase in satisfaction with life, or vice versa. In this study the total perceived support ( $r=.426$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) has the substantial positive correlation with satisfaction with life. This could mean that the perception of being loved, cared, and accepted by the family and society increases satisfaction in life among adolescents. Dollete, Steese, Phillips, and Matthews (2004) found the role of social support as very important mechanism to buffer against life stressors and promote health, wellness and happiness.

The relationship between satisfaction with life and perceived support from special person/significant others is found to be significant and positive ( $r=.294$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). This moderate correlation suggests that increase in perceived support from others or rather the society apart from family and friends increases the life satisfaction in the adolescents.

The relation between satisfaction with life and perceived support from friends is moderate and positive ( $r=.303$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). This indicates that support from friends enhances life satisfaction in

adolescents. Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, and Cardoza (2003) reported that in youth, the friends' support made a slightly greater contribution to well-being than family support.

The relationship between satisfaction with life and perceived support from family in this study is found to be positive and substantial ( $r = .440$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that increased levels of perceived support from family increases life satisfaction in adolescents. Family is always considered as the backbone of all support systems. Holahan, Valentier, and Moos (1995) reported that students with higher levels of perceived parental support scored higher on well-being and happiness and showed less depression and anxiety than students with low perceived parental support.

The present results revealed significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and positive affect ( $r = .167$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and significant negative correlation with negative affect ( $r = -.196$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The magnitude of these relationships is negligible to moderate which suggests that increases in positive affect leads to a corresponding increase in life satisfaction and an increase in negative affect leads to a decrease in life satisfaction. This study support previous studies of Singh and Jha (2008), and Jaisri and Joseph (2014) who reported a significant positive correlation between positive affect, and life satisfaction, as well as a significant moderate negative correlation between life satisfaction and negative affect.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The present study has contributed significantly to the existing body of research on satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive affect and negative affect among adolescents. The findings of the study have provided baseline information on satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive affect and negative affect among adolescents in our culture. The findings provide areas to be addressed in enhancing the life satisfaction among adolescents.

#### **5. Implications Of The Study**

Based on the results obtained in the present study, the following implications are enumerated:

- ❖ The findings of the study have provided baseline information on satisfaction with life, perceived social support and positive affect and negative affect among adolescents in our culture.

❖ The findings of the study can be used as basic empirical evidence that may serve as the basis for the development of training and intervention programmes and the formulation of public policies aimed at the enhancement of human well-being. Therapists, counsellors, and all those concerned with the enhancement of happiness and life satisfaction, both at individual and global levels, can make fruitful use of the present findings.

### **6.Limitations**

Despite all attempts to carry out the study scientifically and systematically, the study had the following limitations.

1. The present study included only the adolescents sample ranging in age from 11-20 years. Including adults could give a more complete picture regarding life satisfaction in human life.
2. Only quantitative and questionnaire measures have been employed in the present investigation. Employing qualitative methods as well, may yield more and deeper information regarding life satisfaction.
3. The probable correlates of life satisfaction such as socio-economic status, academic performances etc of the participants were not taken into consideration in the study. Inclusion of such variables could give a more comprehensive picture of life satisfaction.
4. The research was based on the data obtained from self-report measures. The inherent drawbacks and limitations of survey research might have affected the study results.

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