

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

Dr. Ritu Sharma^{1*}, Himangi Tiwari²

ABSTRACT

This empirical study examines the impact of family environment on the happiness of young adults. A sample of 150 students completed the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Hills and Argyle (2007) and the Family Environment Scale by Bhatia and Chaddha (2012). Results reveal a significant relationship between happiness and family environment, with acceptance, care, cohesion, and active recreational orientation emerging as influential factors. The findings underscore the importance of familial dynamics in shaping young adults' happiness, offering insights for interventions to enhance their emotional well-being.

Keywords: *Happiness, Family Environment, Cohesion, Independence, Acceptance & Care, Expressiveness, Active Recreational Orientation, Organization, Control*

Research on pursuing happiness has become more prevalent, especially in positive psychology contexts (Pollock et al., 2016). According to Diener et al. (2017), happiness is a basic human goal that is associated with positive health outcomes and general well-being. Given that young people's happiness levels are closely linked to their well-being and quality of life, its importance is especially apparent in this context (Procter et al., 2009). Furthermore, the degree of happiness experienced by young adults influences many facets of life, such as emotional, mental, physical, and educational elements (Suldo et al., 2009). Central to understanding the dynamics of happiness among young adults is the family environment, which encapsulates the interactions and functioning among family members. The perception of family environment can vary among individuals within a family, yet it plays a crucial role in shaping their happiness levels. A positive family environment and supportive family create a sense of security and support to family members that enhance happiness. However, many contextual factors play a role in this relationship. Consequently, this study seeks to explore the relationship between family environment and happiness among young adults, aiming to discern predictors of happiness within this demographic. Additionally, the investigation aims to ascertain if gender differences exist in both the perceived family environment and happiness levels among young adults.

The current study aimed to investigate the family environment and happiness among young adults, to find an association between family environment and happiness, and to study the

¹Professor, Discipline of Psychology, SOSS, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, Delhi, India

²Research scholar, Central University of Haryana, Mahendragarh, Haryana, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: March 15, 2024; Revision Received: September 27, 2024; Accepted: September 30, 2024

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

impact of family environment on happiness of young adults. Furthermore, to study the gender difference on perceived family environment and happiness level among young adults.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Happiness among young adults is influenced by various factors, particularly during this critical period characterized by personal growth and development across various facets of life (Suldo et al., 2015). The external environment, especially the family environment, holds particular significance in shaping the happiness experiences of young adults. Daily interactions and events within the family dynamic play a pivotal role in determining their overall happiness. (Perez-Fuentes et al., 2019) studies showed that there is a difference between members in communication pattern based on gender particularly female child feel difficulty in communication than male child to their parents (Botelho Guedes et al., 2022), a good bond and frequent contact with family affect the feeling of happiness (Jiang et al., 2022). Additionally previous researchers also found that family cohesion and parental involvement affect happiness in family members (Xiang et al., 2020; Kocack et al., 2021; Gua, 2019; Fosco & Lydon-Staley, 2020). Family environment can affect happiness level through many variables such as affecting their socio-emotional adjustment (Tripathi & Sahu, 2019), mental well-being (Maheshwari, Chaturvedi, & Gupta, 2020). Family environment has a long-term effect on person's happiness and well-being, it not just affects in present, but it shapes a person well-being in continuous (Ramos et al., 2022). Family cohesion and expressiveness emerged as the most determining factors of happiness (Sowani & Lavalekar, 2020; Xiang et al., 2020; Botelho Guedes et al., 2022).

The current study aims to explore the impact of family environment on the happiness levels of young adults. Specifically, the investigation focuses on examining the relationship between different dimensions of family environment and happiness, while also determining if these dimensions of family environment serve as predictors of happiness. Additionally, the study seeks to investigate potential gender differences in these variables.

METHOD

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between family environment and happiness among young adults.
2. To study the effect of family environment on happiness among young adults.
3. To determine whether there are any gender differences in family environment and happiness among young adults.

Hypotheses

1. There would be a positive relationship between family environment and happiness.
2. There would be a significant effect of Family environment on happiness of young adults.
3. There would be no gender difference in family environment and happiness among young adults.

Participants

The study was conducted on young adults who were enrolled in university in Haryana. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. The participants completed a questionnaire comprising a demographic sheet, the Family

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

Environment Scale, and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. A total of 150 students participated in the study, with ages ranging from 18 to 24 years old.

Measures

- **Family environment scale (Bhatia and Chaddha, 1993):** The family environment scale consists of three categories i.e. 'relationship dimensions', 'personal growth', and 'system maintenance dimensions'. Which further divided into a total of eight dimensions including, 'cohesion', 'expressiveness', 'conflict', 'acceptance & care', 'independence', 'active recreational orientation', 'organization', and 'control'. The scale consists of 69 items on a 6-point Likert scale.
- **Oxford happiness questionnaire (Hills and Argyle, 2001):** The Oxford happiness questionnaire consists of 29 items on a 6-point response scale. It is a unidimensional scale to measure an individual's happiness.

Research design

Cross sectional research design was utilized to study the relationship between family environment and happiness among young adults.

Data analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. Descriptive analysis was employed to calculate means and standard deviations (SD) for the variables. Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between different dimensions of family environment and happiness. Regression analysis was utilized to determine if the dimensions of family environment served as predictors of happiness among young adults. Additionally, t-tests were conducted to investigate potential gender differences in the perceived family environment and happiness level of young adults.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Happiness and Family Environment Dimension

Variables	Mean	SD
Happiness	109	16.04
Cohesion	47	7.41
Expressiveness	29.34	4.74
Conflict	39.43	6.48
Acceptance and Care	40.10	7.02
Independence	28.86	4.17
Active Recreational Orientation	26.96	3.78
organization	7.60	1.65
control	13.34	1.83

The mean and standard deviation of happiness and dimensions of family environment are presented in Table 1. Overall, the mean happiness score was 109 out of a total possible score of 174, with a minimum score of 39 and a maximum score of 161. This indicates a considerable range in happiness levels among the participants. Additionally, scores on dimensions of family environment showed an average level of cohesion, expressiveness, conflict resolution, independence, active recreational orientations, and organization in family environment of young adults.

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

Table.2: Correlational value between Dimensions of family environment and happiness

	cohesion	Expressiveness	Conflict	Acceptance and Care	Independence	Active recreational orientation	organization	control
Happiness	.436*	.386**	.072	.483**	.400**	.110	.199*	.317**

Note: * $<.05$, ** $<.01$

Significant positive correlations were found between happiness and cohesion ($r = 0.436$, $p < 0.01$), expressiveness ($r = 0.386$, $p < 0.01$), acceptance and care ($r = 0.483$, $p < 0.01$), and independence ($r = 0.400$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that higher levels of cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance and care, and independence within the family environment are associated with greater levels of happiness among young adults. Additionally, organization ($r = 0.199$, $p < 0.05$) and control ($r = 0.317$, $p < 0.01$) displayed significant positive correlations with happiness, suggesting that higher levels of organization and control within the family environment are also linked to increased happiness among young adults however, Conflict ($r = 0.072$) and Active recreational orientation ($r = 0.110$) showed weaker positive correlations with happiness, although they were not statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table.3: Regression Analysis: Predictors of Happiness among Young Adults
Dependent variable: Happiness

Model	Predictors	R	R ²	R ² change	F	β	Significance
1	Acceptance & Care	.483	.233	.233	45.07**	.397	.000
2	Cohesion	.522	.272	.039	27.50**	.274	.000
3	Active Recreational orientation	.541	.293	.021	20.17**	-.162	.040

Note: * $<.05$, ** $<.01$

A stepwise regression analysis was conducted to explore the predictors of happiness among young adults (Table 3). Three distinct models were examined, each incorporating different dimensions of the family environment as independent variables. Model 1 revealed that 'Acceptance & Care' significantly and positively influenced happiness levels ($\beta = 0.397$, $p < .01$), explaining 23.3% of the variance in happiness ($R^2 = 0.233$). Model 2 showed that 'Cohesion' also had a significant positive relationship with happiness ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < .01$). Conversely, in Model 3, 'active recreational orientation' emerged as a significant predictor, albeit negatively associated with happiness ($\beta = -0.162$, $p < .05$). These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of family environment dimensions in shaping the happiness levels of young adults, highlighting the importance of acceptance, cohesion, and the potential drawbacks of excessive independence.

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

Table 3: Gender difference on dimensions of family environment and happiness

	gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Happiness	Male	101.84	11.46	-6.285**
	Female	116.52	16.73	
Cohesion	Male	46.18	6.48	-2.383**
	Female	49.02	8.06	
expressiveness	Male	29.80	4.02	1.195NS
	Female	28.87	5.36	
Conflict	Male	38.72	5.59	-1.362NS
	Female	40.16	7.25	
Acceptance and care	Male	40.43	4.84	.589NS
	Female	39.75	8.74	
independence	Male	27.89	3.75	-2.940**
	Female	29.85	4.38	
Active recreational orientation	Male	27	4.07	.131NS
	Female	26.91	3.48	
Organisation	Male	7.34	1.61	-2.005*
	Female	7.87	1.66	
Control	Male	13	1.95	-2.334*
	Female	13.68	1.64	

Note: * $<.05$, ** $<.01$, NS=Not significant

The analysis of gender differences in dimensions of family environment and happiness revealed significant variations across various aspects. Females demonstrated notably higher levels of happiness compared to males ($t(148) = -6.285, p < .01$), indicating a potential disparity in emotional well-being within familial settings. Additionally, females reported greater perceptions of family cohesion ($t(148) = -2.383, p < .05$), independence ($t(148) = -2.940, p < .01$), organization ($t(148) = -2.005, p < .05$), and control ($t(148) = -2.334, p < .05$), suggesting a tendency towards more structured and nurturing family dynamics from their perspective. However, no significant gender differences were found in expressiveness, conflict resolution, acceptance and care, or independence within the family environment.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate the role of family environment in happiness and to find if there is any gender difference among variables. The results revealed that the happiness score was moderate on the sample where female score relatively higher than male which aligned with Namazi (2022) and Chui & Wang (2016).

In the present study, 'Cohesion', 'expressiveness', 'active recreational orientation' and 'Organization' showed average score for both male and female. However, 'control', 'independence' and 'acceptance and care' showed low scores. These results demonstrated good bonding, commitment, unconditional love, communication, and low conflict among family members. There were significant gender differences found on 'cohesion', 'Independence', 'organization', and 'control'. These findings are aligned with previous literature. (Copeland & Kamis, 2022).

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between family environment and happiness, and to study the impact of family environment on happiness. The results

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

showed that except for 'conflict resolution' and 'active recreational orientation' all other six dimensions of family environment including, 'cohesion', 'expressiveness', 'acceptance & care', 'organization', and 'control' are significantly associated with happiness among young adults. These findings are aligned with previous studies. Sowani & Lavalekar (2020) found positive correlation with psychological well-being to cohesion and expressiveness. A similar result showed by Fosco & Lydon-Staley (2020) demonstrated that cohesion and conflict resolution are positively associated with mental well-being. However, the present study found significant association of organization and control with happiness among young adults.

Furthermore, the regression analysis results demonstrated the importance of unconditional acceptance, caring, and familial support in happiness of young adults. 'Acceptance and care' refer to unconditional love and acceptance from family members and expression of caring behaviors among family, when young adult feel unconditional acceptance and receive caring from family, they feel happier, which supported by the previous research (Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001) cohesion was the second most significant predictor of happiness among young adults. Cohesion refers to family support and bonding. The results suggest that a positive support and bonding among family member may increase the happiness of young adults, which is supported by past research as well, Xiang et al.,2020; Botelho Guedes et al.,2022; and Sowani & Lavalekar,2020 also found the similar results in their studies. Therefore, family cohesion is an important factor affecting happiness of young adults. However, the results also showed the active recreational orientation as a negative predictor of happiness which is surprisingly contradict to previous research (Kinczel, Maklári, & Müller, 2020), which may be due to small sample of the study.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study revealed that family is an essential factor that influences happiness among young adults. Most of the dimensions of family environment are positively associated with happiness and cohesion and acceptance care are the most influencing factors. Therefore, it can be said that by strengthening relationship dimensions of family dynamics lead to happiness among young adults.

The present study revealed the significant impact of various dimensions of family environment on the happiness levels of young adults, while also identifying gender differences in these variables. However, limitations included the cross-sectional design, which precluded assessing long-term effects. Additionally, the study's sample size was small and was confined to one district of Haryana, potentially limiting generalizability. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and expand the sample to encompass broader geographical areas, while also considering other influential factors such as school environment and cultural aspects to provide a more comprehensive understanding of young adults' happiness determinants.

REFERENCES

- Bhatia, H., & Chadha, N. K. (1993). Family environment scale. Lucknow: Ankur Psychological Agency.
- Botelho Guedes, F., Cerqueira, A., Gaspar, S., Gaspar, T., Moreno, C., & Gaspar de Chamberlain, J. M., & Haaga, D. A. (2001). Unconditional self-acceptance and psychological health. *Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive-Behavior Therapy*, 19, 163-176.

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

- Chui, W. H., & Wong, M. Y. (2016). Gender differences in happiness and life satisfaction among adolescents in Hong Kong: Relationships and self-concept. *Social Indicators Research*, 125, 1035-1051.
- Copeland, M., & Kamis, C. (2022). Who does cohesion benefit? Race, gender, and peer networks associated with adolescent depressive symptoms. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 51(9), 1787-1797.
- Diener, E., Pressman, S. D., Hunter, J., & Delgado-Chase, D. (2017). If, why, and when subjective well-being influences health, and future needed research. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 9(2), 133-167.
- Fosco, G. M., & Lydon-Staley, D. M. (2020). Implications of family cohesion and conflict for adolescent mood and well-being: Examining within-and between-family processes on a daily timescale. *Family Process*, 59(4), 1672-1689.
- Guo, X. (2019). The association between family structure and subjective well-being among emerging adults in China: Examining the sequential mediation effects of maternal attachment, peer attachment, and self-efficacy. *Journal of Adult Development*, 26, 22-30.
- Heizomi, H., Allahverdipour, H., Jafarabadi, M. A., & Safaian, A. (2015). Happiness and its relation to psychological well-being of adolescents. *Asian journal of psychiatry*, 16, 55-60.
- Hills, P., & Argyle, M. (2002). The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: a compact scale for the measurement of psychological well-being. *Personality and individual differences*, 33(7), 1073-1082.
- Kinczel, A., Maklári, G., & Müller, A. (2020). Recreational activities and motivation among young people. *Geosport for society*, 12(1), 53-65.
- Koçak, O., Ak, N., Erdem, S. S., Sinan, M., Younis, M. Z., & Erdoğan, A. (2021). The Role of Family Influence and Academic Satisfaction on Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy and Happiness. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(11), 5919. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18115919>
- Kulkarni, S., & Chincholikar, S. (2019). Happiness level among medical students at a medical college.
- Láng, A. (2018). Family structure, family functioning, and well-being in adolescence: A multidimensional approach. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 8(2), 24-31.
- Matos, M. (2022). Family environment and Portuguese adolescents: impact on quality mediating role of self-concept clarity and hope. *Current Psychology*, 1-10.
- Namazi, A. (2022). Gender differences in general health and happiness: a study on Iranian engineering students. *PeerJ*, 10, e14339.
- Perez-Fuentes, M. D. C., Molero Jurado, M. D. M., Gazquez Linares, J. J., Oropesa Ruiz, N. F., Simon Marquez, M. D. M., & Saracostti, M. (2019). Parenting practices, life satisfaction, and the role of self-esteem in adolescents. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(20), 4045.
- Pollock, N. C., Noser, A. E., Holden, C. J., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (2016). Do orientations to happiness mediate the associations between personality traits and subjective well-being? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17, 713-729.
- Rajapurkar, K. (2017). Family Environment and Life Satisfaction of Adolescents. *International Journal of Research Culture Society*, 1(8), 189-192.
- Ramos, M. C., Cheng, C. H. E., Preston, K. S., Gottfried, A. W., Guerin, D. W., Gottfried, A. E., & Oliver, P. H. (2022). Positive family relationships across 30 years: Predicting adult health and happiness. *Journal of Family Psychology*.

Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults

- Sowani, D., & Lavalekar, A. (2020). Exploring psychological well-being of college students in Maharashtra in relation to their family environment. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(3), 197-202.
- Tripathy, M., & Sahu, B. (2019). Impact of family environment on socio-emotional adjustment of adolescent girls in rural areas of western Odisha. *Asian Journal of Basic Science & Research (AJBSR)*, 1(1), 27-35.
- Xiang, G., Li, Q., Du, X., Liu, X., Xiao, M., & Chen, H. (2022). Links between family cohesion and subjective well-being in adolescents and early adults: The mediating role of self-concept clarity and hope. *Current Psychology*, 41(1), 76-85.

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Sharma, R. & Tiwari, H. (2024). Effect of Family Environment and Family Dynamics on Happiness of Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(3), 3372-3379. DIP:18.01.328.20241203, DOI:10.25215/1203.328