



The Role of Positive Youth Development, Religious Coping, and the Parenting Styles in Adolescent Students' Life Satisfaction

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Abstract

Background: Life satisfaction in adolescence could be influenced by various factors, such as adolescent skills, religious beliefs, and parenting styles. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate life satisfaction in accordance with positive youth development (PYD), religious coping, and the parenting styles in adolescent students.

Methods: In this cross-sectional study, the statistical population of the study included all the high school students in Semnan, Iran, during 2018. Using a multi-stage cluster sampling, 383 subjects (191 boys and 192 girls) completed the demographic questionnaire, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), the PYD Scale (PYD-VSF), and the Religious Coping Scale (Brief-RCOPE). The statistical methods of Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression analysis were utilized in this study. The data were analyzed via SPSS version 19.

Results: The results of Pearson correlation indicated that authoritative parenting style ($r=0.35$; $P<0.001$), the PYD ($r=0.39$; $P<0.001$), and positive religious coping ($r=0.34$; $P<0.001$) had positive and significant relations with life satisfaction. Moreover, negative religious coping ($r=-0.16$; $P=0.002$) had a negatively significant association with life satisfaction in adolescents. Moreover, the results of stepwise regression analysis revealed that adolescents' life satisfaction could be predicted based on confidence dimension ($\text{Beta}=0.42$; $P<0.001$), authoritative parenting ($\text{Beta}=0.28$; $P<0.001$), positive religious coping ($\text{Beta}=0.22$; $P<0.001$), and negative religious coping ($\text{Beta}=-0.14$; $P<0.001$).

Conclusion: According to the results, it is necessary to pay attention to religious coping style, parenting style, and the PYD components in order to promote well-being and life satisfaction among adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescent, Parenting, Positive youth development, Religious coping, Personal satisfaction

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the first topic of interest among psychologists was «joy, excellence, and desirable human performance.» Therefore, following years of focus on pathology, the field of psychology was ready for a change (1). Recently, interest in the study of happiness and well-being in children and adolescents has increased; therefore, today life satisfaction can be considered as an important indicator of adolescent adjustment (2). Life satisfaction is an individual perspective, a general assessment of life or certain aspects of life in which the quality of individuals' life is assessed on the basis of a set of criteria (3).

Diener (4) believes that life satisfaction refers to an

individual's cognitive judgments of his/her overall satisfaction with life. Life satisfaction in children and adolescents is associated with a large number of psychological and cultural factors; for example, family life and parent-adolescent relationships may be the most important psychological factors with an important impact on adolescents' life in many cultures (2). Furthermore, family, as an element in shaping the behavior and character of children and adolescents, is one of the factors influencing the growth in this age group.

Therefore, it could be said that parenting styles can reflect the efforts of parents to control or socialize children and adolescents (3). Despite the role of peers and physical appearance in adolescence, studies have

indicated that achieving life satisfaction is strongly linked to positive relationships with parents (1). The way parents communicate with adolescents plays a pivotal role in the evolution and psychological functions of adolescents, which could be a very important factor in predicting adolescents' life satisfaction (5). The fact that the component of life satisfaction is considered as an integral indicator of good health and performance in adolescents (6) necessitates investigating life satisfaction and its resources in adolescence (2). One of the factors that can affect mental health of adolescents is parenting practices. In other words, parents are the most influential individuals whom an individual faces throughout his/her life and their influences are profound and sustainable in the life of children and adolescents (7).

According to Darling and Steinberg (8), parenting styles refer to the emotional environment in which parents raise their children. Parenting styles differ from parenting methods. Parenting methods focus on directing children and adolescents to specific goals, including academic success, while parenting styles consist of all the emotional environments surrounding the relationship between parents and children (9).

Initially, experts introduced parenting styles, including permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative styles. Over time, parenting styles were divided into four categories: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful styles, based on two choices adopted by parents (upper/lower intimacy and upper/lower control). Each of these four styles has specific behavioral and psychological consequences for children and adolescents. Authoritative parents show a high level of intimacy and positive control; authoritarian parents have a low level of intimacy and a high level of punitive control; permissive parents reveal high levels of intimacy and very low control; neglectful parents have low levels of intimacy and control (2, 3, 7).

The four parenting styles and their strengths and weaknesses suggest that parents and professionals should direct their behaviors and practices towards the styles that are more successful in teens' upbringing.

The authoritative parenting style seems to be the best way to achieve this goal (10). The authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful styles differently affect the feelings and behaviors of children and adolescents and influence their daily behaviors, for instance, life satisfaction, in these age groups.

High life satisfaction in several cases results into positive experiences in the individual; for example, adolescents with a high level of life satisfaction may have more adaptive behaviors and better mental health (11).

Over the past two decades, with the advent of positive psychology, research on adolescents has increased, which suggests moving towards practical and scientific approaches emphasizing the strengths of adolescence rather than pathology. In this regard, positive youth development (PYD) is an approach that helps to promote adolescent health and potential flourishing via corrective and preventive programs (12-15).

In prevention programs, adolescence is considered as a periodic risk, conflict, and problem. Today, negative perceptions of adolescence are apparently exaggerated. In contrast, the PYD focuses on the strengths of adolescents and their abilities to cultivate a successful generation through the coordination between their strengths and contextual resources. In other words, positive development in adolescence involves all the aspirations and efforts of a community to develop strong, happy, and experienced adolescents in order to become successful and desirable adults (9, 16).

Lerner and colleagues (17) introduced the 5C model for the PYD. The 5C model consists of the following factors: competence, such as skills and capabilities in social, cognitive, and professional performance; confidence, such as self-efficacy and positive self-concept; caring, such as a sense of empathy and sympathy with others; connection, such as positive and stable communication with people and organizations; character, such as respect, attention to cultural norms, and unity of personality.

In a study on early prevention, Meyers and Meyers (18) suggested that the PYD could promote mental well-being, competence, and social support. In addition, researchers believe that mental well-being and its cognitive components, for instance, life satisfaction, could be achieved through the PYD (19).

Recently, researchers have found a significant relationship between spiritual variables and mental health, which indicates the potential significant value of these variables in individuals' guidance and counseling (20). Other protective factors, like education, religious, and spiritual beliefs, often but not always, are associated with a higher level of well-being (21). "Religious coping" means the use of religious beliefs and coping strategies

that people apply when they are in stressful life situations (22).

Ellison and Fan (23) showed a positive relationship between various religious and spiritual variables and valuable consequences, such as well-being and life satisfaction.

The study of the effects of religion on life satisfaction, physical, and mental health is one of the most important domains in psychology. Since there has been less focus on how religious beliefs can affect life satisfaction (24), the current study was conducted to investigate the roles of the PYD, parenting styles, and religious coping in predicting life satisfaction among adolescents.

2. Methods

2.1. Research design

The present research was a cross-sectional study. The research method was of descriptive-correlational type.

2.2. Selection and Description of Participants

The population of this work included the high school students in Semnan, Iran, in 2018. We obtained General Directorate of Education's permission and received ethical approval with the code of 74815. 383 students, including 192 girls and 191 boys, were selected through multi-stage random cluster sampling.

Primarily, four schools (two boys' and two girls' schools) were randomly selected from the list of public high schools of Semnan. Subsequently, after referring to the selected schools, the classes were randomly selected to complete the study questionnaire.

The inclusion criteria comprised high school students, under the age of 18 years old, living in the city, and having filled informed consent to cooperate in the research.

The exclusion criteria included lack of student cooperation, not completing the study questionnaire, and severe physical and mental illness. Therefore, tool responsiveness-associated information and training were provided for the participants and all the subjects participated in this study with informed consents.

2.3. Self-report measure

2.3.1. The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS):

The SWLS was developed by Diener and colleagues (25). It consists of five single-factor items and is rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). Bayani and colleagues (26) used this questionnaire in Iranian society and reported that the Cronbach's alphas for the SWLS was 0.83 and the test-retest reliability for the scale was 0.69. Furthermore, content and face validity of the Persian version of SWLS was confirmed by two English language experts and students (26). In the present study, internal consistency for this questionnaire was 0.82.

2.3.2. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ):

The PAQ was designed by Buri (27) to assess parenting styles. The questionnaire involves 30 items and three subscales, including permissive (10 items), authoritarian (10 items), and authoritative (10 items) styles. Each item is rated by respondents on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Buri (27) reported that the Cronbach's alphas for permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative styles in mothers were 0.75, 0.82, and 0.85, respectively. Additionally, the Cronbach's alphas for these styles in fathers were 0.74, 0.85, and 0.87, respectively.

Besharat and colleagues (28) also reported that the Cronbach's alphas for permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative styles in mothers were 0.77, 0.79, and 0.83, respectively and those for these styles in fathers were 0.73, 0.81, and 0.85, respectively in the Persian version of this questionnaire. The content and face validity of this questionnaire was also confirmed by 10 experts and Kendall's coefficient of concordance was from 0.80 to 0.89 (28). The Cronbach's alphas for these styles in the present study were 0.44, 0.72, and 0.73, respectively.

2.3.3. The PYD-Very Short Form Scale (PYD-VSF):

This questionnaire has 17 items, among which the six first are two-sided and each of them has two options, including "Really true" and "Sort of true" and other items are measured with a 5-point Likert scale. The PYD-VSF consists of five components, including competence (three items), confidence (three items), connection (four items), character (four items), and

caring (three items). Geldhof and colleagues (29) reported that the Cronbach's alphas were 0.80 to 0.86 for competence, 0.80 to 0.92 for confidence, 0.89 to 0.93 for character, 0.89 to 0.92 for connection, and 0.80 to 0.82 for caring.

Babaei and colleagues (30) suggested that the Cronbach's alphas for the total scale, competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring were 0.81, 0.50, 0.86, 0.79, 0.52, and 0.63, respectively in Iranian students.

Moreover, two English language experts confirmed the content and face validity of this questionnaire (30). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for the total PYD-VSF was 0.68.

2.3.4. Religious Coping Scale (Brief-RCOPE):

Pargament and colleagues (20) developed this questionnaire to evaluate people's religious coping strategies when dealing with stressful life situations. The Brief-RCOPE as a 14-item scale measures two dimensions of positive religious coping (items 1-7) and negative religious coping (items 8-14). This scale is rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 4 (completely agree).

Mohammadzadeh and Najafi (31) showed that the internal consistency for the positive and negative dimensions of religious coping were respectively 0.79 and 0.71. The reliability through test-retest for the whole questionnaire, positive religious coping, and negative religious coping were 0.90, 0.93, and 0.88, respectively in the Persian version of this questionnaire.

The content and face validity of this questionnaire was also confirmed by an English language expert and convergent validity coefficients for the positive and negative dimensions of religious coping were 0.85 and 0.83, respectively (31).

In the present research, the Cronbach's alphas for the total scale, positive religious coping, and negative religious coping were 0.72, 0.84, and 0.74, respectively.

2.4. Statistical analysis

The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient (to investigate the linear correlation between the variables) and stepwise multiple regression analysis (in order to predict life satisfaction in adolescents based

on parenting styles, the PYD, and religious coping) with SPSS version 19.

3. Results

This study was performed on high school students in Semnan, Iran. Out of the 383 participants in the present study, 192 were females (50.1%) and 191 were males (49.9%) with a mean and standard deviation of 16.55 and 0.93 years, respectively. All the study measures were completed by the participants and the response rate was 100%. In addition, the study major of 197 participants (51.4%) were Humanitarian sciences, 145 participants (37.9%) studied Experimental sciences, and 41 (10.7%) Mathematics.

Table 1 represents the results of Pearson correlation. As could be seen, authoritarian parenting style had a negative and significant linear correlation to life satisfaction ($r=0.15$; $P<0.001$) while a positive and significant linear correlation was observed between authoritative parenting style and life satisfaction ($r=0.35$; $P<0.001$). Moreover, there was a positive and significant linear correlation between life satisfaction and the PYD components, including competence ($r=0.19$; $P<0.001$), confidence ($r=0.42$; $P<0.001$), connection ($r=0.28$; $P<0.001$), character ($r=0.17$; $P<0.001$), and caring ($r=0.12$; $P=0.014$). In addition, there was a positive and significant linear correlation between positive religious coping and life satisfaction ($r=0.34$; $P<0.001$) whereas a negative and significant linear correlation was there between negative religious coping and life satisfaction ($r=-0.16$; $P=0.002$).

Also, the results of stepwise regression implied that in the first step, the confidence variable entered regression equation and explained 18% of the variance of life satisfaction.

In the second step, by the entry of authoritative parenting style, the quantity of the explained variance increased by 25%. In the third step, positive religious coping entered and raised the quantity of the explained variance by 30%. In the fourth step, by entering the negative religious coping, the quantity of the explained variance enhanced by 32%. Therefore, 32% of adolescents' life satisfaction variances could be predicted based on these predictive variables.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, and correlations among the research variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1- Life Satisfaction	20.76	6.91	1											
2- Authoritarian parenting style	26.95	6.15	-0.15**	1										
3- Permissive parenting style	27.03	4.53	-0.07	0.22**	1									
4- Authoritative parenting style	32.88	5.80	0.35**	-0.05	0.14**	1								
5- Competence	8.94	1.92	0.19**	0.03	0.03	0.08	1							
6- Confidence	10.22	2.21	0.42**	-0.13*	0.00	0.017**	0.47**	1						
7- Connection	14.28	3.02	0.28**	-0.18**	-0.02	0.14**	0.17**	0.47**	1					
8- Caring	12.87	3.05	0.12*	-0.05	-0.05	0.13**	0.01	0.05	0.08	1				
9- Character	12.56	2.89	0.17**	-0.07	-0.05	0.26**	0.15**	0.13**	0.11**	0.26**	1			
10- PYD	58.90	7.75	0.39**	-0.14**	-0.04	0.27**	0.50**	0.66**	0.64**	0.53**	0.59**	1		
11- Positive religious coping	20.45	4.80	0.34**	-0.08	-0.06	0.26**	0.09	0.18**	0.19**	0.24**	0.29**	0.35**	1	
12- Negative religious coping	16.62	4.43	-0.16**	0.15**	0.11*	-0.08	0.02	-0.08	-0.10*	-0.18**	-0.08	-0.16**	0.12*	1

* P≥0.05; ** P≥0.01; M: mean; SD: standard deviation; PYD: positive youth development; Correlation matrix of study variables

Final regression model, including standard and non-standard coefficients in predicting life satisfaction, is depicted in Table 2.

As shown, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance results indicated that the Multicollinearity did not occur in the study variables. Furthermore, t was significant at the level of 0.001 (P<0.001).

The beta coefficients of the variables of confidence (Beta=0.42; P<0.001), authoritative parenting style

(Beta=0.28; P<0.001), and positive religious coping (Beta=0.22; P<0.001) were positive and significant.

Thus, with the increase in these variables, the level of life satisfaction increased.

The beta coefficient of negative religious coping (Beta=-0.14; P<0.001) was negative and significant. Therefore, with the increase in this variable, the level of life satisfaction decreased and vice versa.

Table 2: Final regression model in prediction of adolescents' life satisfaction

Variables	B	B error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	7.22	1.51	-	4.76	0.001	-	-
Confidence	1.32	0.14	0.42	9.14	0.001	1	1
Authoritative parenting style	0.34	0.05	0.28	6.38	0.001	0.97	1.03
Positive religious coping	0.32	0.06	0.22	4.99	0.001	0.91	1.09
Negative religious coping	-0.22	0.06	-0.14	-3.35	0.001	0.96	1.03

* Standard and non-standard regression coefficients.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate life satisfaction with regards to the positive youth development (PYD), religious coping, and the parenting styles in adolescent students in the city of Semnan, Iran. The findings of the current study showed a positive and significant linear

correlation between authoritative parenting style, the PYD components, and positive religious coping related to life satisfaction in high school students.

This finding was in line with the results of previous studies (5, 32), reporting the relation of authoritative parenting style with life satisfaction and well-being of adolescents.

In explaining the findings of this research, one can say that, firstly, parents with an authoritative parenting style show a deep and unconditional feeling of intimacy and affection for their children, which helps to improve life satisfaction in adolescents. These parents are sensitive to the needs and interests of the child and allow adolescents to have independent behaviors.

Secondly, these parents provide information about family laws and specific restrictions for children and tell them about these limitations. Thirdly, this parenting style helps children to be rational, issue-oriented, and orderly and be able to explain the reasons behind the rules. Hence, an authoritative parenting style could lead to further adolescent life satisfaction (32).

In general, when it comes to the effects of parenting style on adolescents, those who consider their parents to be authoritative or permissive, feel higher self-esteem and life satisfaction than those whose parents follow an authoritarian style. Additionally, an authoritarian child-rearing style leads into low life satisfaction and self-esteem in adolescents.

This may be due to the fact that these parents have low responsiveness and at the same time, a high degree of control over adolescents and their unilateral decisions may have negative effects on adolescence well-being since during this period, adolescents seek more independence (33). Additionally, for adolescents, parents with authoritarian styles are identified as individuals who formulate strict laws and punish them for non-compliance with these rules, which may lead to lower life satisfaction and happiness in adolescents (32).

Furthermore, the findings of the current study revealed a positive and significant linear correlation between the PYD components and life satisfaction in adolescents. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies (18, 19, 34), indicating that the PYD components were related to high life satisfaction in adolescents. However, certain studies (34, 35) have suggested that all PYD components are not necessarily associated with life satisfaction. In other words, many adolescents may have different stages of development or different needs and potentials in several areas, each of which may affect their life satisfaction in a particular way.

Social competence, which refers to the ability and interpersonal skills to communicate with others can improve life satisfaction in adolescents. Therefore,

adolescents' access to social competence enables them to have positive and healthy interpersonal relationships (34). Additionally, the PYD can directly affect adolescents' behaviors and assessment of life.

As a result, the factors that improve the PYD are of great importance in the sense of satisfaction with life in adolescents. Since life satisfaction is an individual's cognitive assessment of quality of life, negative assessments of adolescents from their lives could lead to life dissatisfaction and the emergence of a variety of behavioral problems (19).

In short, since the rise of independence is considered as one of the key characteristics of adolescence, the PYD focuses on active participation of adolescents in important decision makings; these bilateral relationships of adolescents to other individuals and institutions lead to their well-being, growth, and development (36).

Moreover, the obtained findings herein demonstrated a positive and significant linear correlation between positive religious coping and life satisfaction in adolescents while there was a negative and significant linear correlation between negative religious coping and life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with those of some previous researches (37, 38, 24), reporting that religious beliefs and activities were positively associated with life satisfaction in individuals.

One of the characteristics of religious people is having religious beliefs that interpret the empirical world and the role they play in it. Such belief may justify the fact that religious beliefs have a positive relationship with the life satisfaction (39).

Today, there is a significant debate about how religious behaviors can affect individuals' mental well-being. Some researchers have emphasized social and supportive networks whereas others have focused on the internal and private dimensions of religious practices.

Therefore, there are two theoretical explanations of how religious beliefs can affect the well-being of individuals; the first explanation is that religious institutions, such as churches and mosques, can increase subjective well-being in individuals by facilitating access to social networks and supportive structures.

The second explanation describes that the private and internal dimensions of religion, such as believing in God and the life after death, could be accompanied by a higher subjective well-being in individuals (40). One of the most comprehensive studies on the relationship

between religious beliefs and life satisfaction has been done by Koenig and colleagues (41) quoted by Kortt and colleagues (40). The authors reviewed 100 studies to examine the statistical relationship between religion and life satisfaction.

According to their results, 79 studies reported a positive relationship between religion and life satisfaction, 13 did not find any relationships, seven were inconclusive, and one study reported a negative relationship between religion and life satisfaction.

However, this research mainly indicated that religious beliefs could predict life satisfaction by setting a goal in life as well as attending religious services and institutions by creating a sense of social belonging. In addition, Bergan and McConatha (42) presented several possible explanations for a positive relationship between religion and life satisfaction; for example, social support and engagement, as one of the benefits of being dependent on a religion, can lead to life satisfaction in individuals.

Additionally, increased attachment to religion would result in choosing a healthy lifestyle in individuals and creating positive outcomes, thereby increasing life satisfaction in individuals.

It seems that having a divine religion can bring peace, support, and meaning to life and increase life satisfaction by increasing self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The findings of the current study showed a negative correlation between negative religious coping and life satisfaction in high school students. Religiousness could have positive and negative consequences for mental well-being; for instance, Pargament and colleagues (20) introduced the term «religious coping» which means the use of coping strategies that people apply once experiencing life-threatening events.

An example of a negative religious coping is the punitive assessment of religion based on the belief that a person will be punished by God for committing a sin. This can explain why believing in God and being religious cannot necessarily have positive effects on the well-being of individuals (39).

This study had certain limitations which should be considered for generalizing the results. Although the present study showed that authoritative style of parenting, the PYD components, and positive religious coping were positively associated with life satisfaction in adolescents, this study was conducted only on high school students and should be reconsidered for generalizing these

outcomes to other groups or adolescents outside the school. In addition, the present study was conducted on the adolescents studying in Semnan; accordingly, generalizing these results to adolescents living in villages should be done cautiously.

Another limitation of the present study was that it was a cross-sectional design. Therefore, in future studies, it is suggested that longitudinal plans be used to collect information to make the findings more reliable over time. It is also suggested that the role of some interfering factors, such as economic status, parental divorce, or parents' dispute, be considered in future studies.

5. Conclusions

It seems that the strategies and practices used by parents, social institutions, and the society in guiding and encouraging adolescents could increase the sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescents and this will make adolescents have further satisfaction with their lives.

On the other hand, religious beliefs, as one of the protective factors against horrific events of life, can help life satisfaction in adolescents. Additionally, given the predictive role of religious coping, parenting styles, and the PYD in life satisfaction in adolescents, it is suggested that appropriate parenting styles and the use of the PYD programs be taught to parents and social and administrative institutions of countries.

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Ethical Approval

The Ethics Review Board of the General Directorate of Education of Semnan approved the present study under the following number: 74815.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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