

Happy Adolescents: The Link Between Subjective Well-Being, Internal Resources, and Parental Factors

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The research investigates the associations of personal and parental factors with subjective well-being (SWB) in adolescents on the basis of 2 studies. The first included 97 university students and 185 adolescents who completed questionnaires measuring perceived mastery, dispositional optimism, and affect used as a measure of SWB. Correlations and hierarchical regression analyses showed mastery and optimism to be negatively associated with negative affect (NA) and positively associated with positive affect (PA). Demographic variables did not relate to PA and NA except for gender, with female adolescents showing higher levels of NA than males. The second study included 121 adolescents and their parents who completed questionnaires measuring mastery, optimism, SWB indicators, and assessments by the adolescents of their relationships with their parents. The associations of the adolescents' mastery and optimism with SWB measures were positive and were similar to those found in the first study. Positive correlations were found between the adolescents' and their parents' SWB (especially with their father's), but no significant associations were observed between adolescents' and parents' mastery and optimism. However, adolescents' mastery and optimism were related to positive relationships with parents. The results highlight the importance of mastery, optimism, and positive adolescent–parent relationships in contributing to the well-being of adolescents.

KEY WORDS: adolescents; parents; subjective well-being; mastery; optimism.

INTRODUCTION

The present research focuses on subjective well-being among adolescents. The period of adolescence, which spans ages 11–21, is divided roughly into early (ages 11–14), middle (ages 15–18), and late adolescence (ages 19–21) (Holmbeck *et al.*, 1995). Adolescents undergo through multiple transitions during this period: the transition to puberty, and transitions involving parent–child relationships, school, peers, and cognitive and emotional abilities. These transitions shape maturity of cognition, emotion, and behavior.

The early period of adolescence is characterized by the onset of puberty. The acute and rapid biological changes involved affect adolescent feelings as well as relationships with parents and may result in conflicts and emotional distancing (Holmbeck *et al.*, 1995; Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn, 1991). As adolescents mature, they experience emotional changes linked to perceptions of self and others, with increases in negative emotionality from the early to middle adolescence periods (Holmbeck *et al.*, 1995). Other changes typical of the developmental sequence of adolescence include alterations in cognitive and thinking patterns, which are also reflected in social relationships.

In sum, literature on adolescence points to multiple and interwoven, albeit normative, changes experienced by the adolescents, with the period of adolescence being a stressful period for some (Frydenberg, 1997; Herman-Stahl and Peterson, 1996), and having implications for their general well-being. The present research assesses subjective well-being among adolescents, focusing on

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personal and parental factors as 2 major elements that contribute to young people's sense of well-being and happiness.

Subjective Well-Being

Psychological well-being is composed of cognitive and affective components and is defined as a subjective global state of satisfaction and positive mental health (Lawton, 1984). The main components of SWB are affect (Lawton, 1984) and life satisfaction (Diener and Fujita, 1995). The affective component is based on 2 dimensions of emotional experience, termed positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) (Tellegen, 1985; Watson and Clark, 1992). PA reflects the co-occurrence of positive emotional states, such as joy, interest, excitement, confidence, and alertness. NA, in contrast, describes subjective distress and dissatisfaction and is composed of negative emotional states such as anger, fear, sadness, guilt, contempt, and disgust. The 2 dimensions are considered to be highly distinct and weakly correlated (Diener and Emmons, 1985), and have been investigated as both states and traits. Watson *et al.* (1988) report findings showing NA to be related to stress and health complaints, and PA to social activity and satisfaction. The PA/NA construct has been investigated in numerous studies on mood and distress, and is considered to be part of the affective aspect of well-being and quality of life.

The life satisfaction component of SWB has both cognitive and affective aspects, and may be assessed by evaluations of specific satisfactions with work, marriage, school, and other life areas, or by a single dimension of general satisfaction with life (Myers and Diener, 1995). This study focused on both the affect and life satisfaction components of well-being among adolescents, and some of the factors that may influence level of well-being in this age group.

Internal Resources

One factor that might affect well-being is the resources that people have. According to one approach, "Resources are material, social, or personal characteristics that a person possesses that he or she can use to make progress toward her or his personal goals" (Diener and Fujita, 1995, p. 926). Resources, thus, are utilized by people to advance in their life and to achieve status, companionship, and good health. Diener and Fujita (1995) found that social and personal resources contributed to all 3 measures of SWB among young students, while material resources had smaller correlations with these indicators.

Another approach is to be found in stress and coping models (e.g., Lazarus, 1999; Moos and Schaefer, 1993) which conceive resources as aids people use in coping with stressful encounters, and which thus have a bearing on long-term consequences, such as well-being, general health, and functioning in the world. This approach divides resources into internal qualities such as personality characteristics, and external variables such as economic status or social support. Myers and Diener (1995) suggest that SWB as an indication of happiness is weakly related to age, gender, race, or income, which are external characteristics, and in contrast, is positively related to the internal qualities of self-esteem, sense of control, optimism, and extraversion. This study focused on 2 internal resources of adolescents, namely, the personal characteristics of perceived mastery and dispositional optimism.

Perceived mastery refers to the belief of life occurrences as being either under personal control or controlled by fate (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978), defined as the "perceived ability to significantly alter events" (Burger, 1989, p. 246). Mastery or sense of control is conceived as a personality characteristic that constitutes an internal resource enabling an individual to better cope with stressful encounters (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Moos and Schaefer, 1993; Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). Thus, perceiving a link between one's own actions and outcomes is an important cognition that can lead to problem-focused coping and action. Indeed, Carver *et al.* (1989) found that the internal locus of control is related to active coping, while other studies found it to be correlated with better adaptation in stressful situations (e.g., Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1993). Mastery has been found to be positively related to positive affect in an adult community sample (Ben-Zur, 2002). Furthermore, high levels of mastery among young adolescents (mean age = 12) were associated with adjustment, measured in terms of low depressive symptoms and negative life events (Herman-Stahl and Peterson, 1996).

Dispositional optimism is often assessed by the perceived probability that goals will be attained (Klaczynski and Fauth, 1996), or by the generalized expectancy that good outcomes will occur when confronting major problems (Scheier and Carver, 1985). This quality is considered to be a determinant of sustained efforts to deal with problems, as contrasted with turning away and giving up. Carver *et al.* (1989) found substantive correlations between optimism and problem-focused coping, as well as negative associations with avoidance and denial. Optimism has been also found to enhance adaptation following stressful encounters (e.g., Ben-Zur *et al.*, 2000). Among adolescents, optimism was found to be related to positive adjustment (Herman-Stahl and Peterson, 1996), to intentions to avoid unsafe sex (Carvajal *et al.*, 1998), and

to avoiding substance use (Carvajal *et al.*, 1998). Thus, optimism may contribute to adolescents' well-being by buffering the effects of stress as well as by promoting active coping and engagement in healthy behaviors.

One main aim of the present research was to test the associations of the internal resources of mastery and optimism with SWB among adolescents. The second main aim was to delineate 2 possible factors that may lead to high levels of SWB and internal resources of adolescents, namely, parents' internal resources and adolescent-parent relationships.

Parental Factors

A multitude of familial and parental factors can shape and determine the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and personality attributes of adolescents. Parental and family influences on adolescents' characteristics can be genetic or environmental in origin, and both were found to contribute to stability and change in the developmental patterns of adolescent adjustment (Neiderhiser *et al.*, 1996). Parents as socialization agents teach their children through discipline and instructions (Perry and Bussy, 1984), and children also learn through vicarious social learning, explained according to identification, modeling, and other learning processes (e.g., Bandura, 1992; Coleman, 1992), that can lead to similar parent-adolescent characteristics and behaviors. Furthermore, family process theory (e.g., Larson and Richards, 1994) suggests that the joint family environment leads to shared forms of cognition, values, attitudes, and emotions on the part of adolescents and their parents.

Several studies have investigated the similarity between parents' and children's affective responses. Moderate agreement was reported between 161 mothers' and daughters' ratings of family cohesion and family conflict (Paikoff *et al.*, 1993). Larson and Richards (1994) showed modest correlations between the emotional patterns of 55 adolescents and their parents, depending on the child's gender and age of the child and parent's gender. Rustemli and Karanci (1996) in their study of 44 adolescents and their parents following an earthquake showed modestly significant correlations between the adolescents and their parents on certain subscales of the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90) measuring distress.

In the area of personality, a study of the similarity between 218 adolescents (12-, 15-, and 18-year-olds) and their parents in terms of Type A behavior (Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 1988) indicated positive correlations only for the younger adolescents and their opposite-sex parents. In the domain of political attitude research, a study by Dalhouse and Frideres (1996) found that parents' gender, political

activity, and sociodemographic status all affected degree of similarity in political values in parents and adolescents.

In sum, parent-child similarities have been indicated in several research areas, although the correlations found are usually modest: sometimes observed for 1 parent only and may be dependent on age, gender and sociodemographic status. This study investigates parent-adolescent similarities in SWB and internal resources, with the expectation of only modest positive correlations in light of prior research findings.

Although families share the same environment, the family is composed of individual members whose perceptions of the family situation may differ. Such differences may contribute to family stress and have implications for the well-being of adolescents (Paikoff *et al.*, 1993). Thus, while parents continue to influence their adolescent children's behavior, as in the past, adolescence is a period of emerging individuation from the family (Igra and Irwin, 1996). In seeking independence and autonomy from their parents, adolescents undergo changes in roles and status that redefine their place in society and may lead to confrontations and conflicts with parents (Coleman, 1992; Holmbeck *et al.*, 1995; Paikoff *et al.*, 1993; Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn, 1991). This process can take place in the context of intimate, warm, open, and friendly relationships with parents, or, alternatively, in an environment of alienated, hostile, and cold relationships.

Conceivably, the role model function of parents in such areas as sexual relationships or attitudes toward work depends in part on adolescent-parent relationships that are emotionally positive in nature (Coleman, 1992). Furthermore, adolescents who reported greater intimacy with their parents were also found to report higher self-esteem, happiness with self and less depression (Field *et al.*, 1995; Lasko *et al.*, 1996), and to be more positively adjusted and resilient (Herman-Stahl and Peterson, 1996). In Israel, adolescents' positive relationships with their parents were shown to contribute to the coping and adjustment process of 18-year-old males to mandatory military service (Mayselless and Hai, 1998). Regard for parents has been positively related to psychosocial competence, as indicated by measurements of self-esteem and susceptibility to antisocial peer pressure (Sim, 2000). In sum, warm and close relationships with parents may affect the development of internal resources and contribute to the SWB of adolescents.

Research Aims

The research, which encompassed 2 studies, focused on perceived mastery and dispositional optimism as the

main internal resources affecting the subjective well-being of young people, as well as on adolescent-parent similarities and the impact of adolescent-parent relationships on adolescents' internal resources and well-being. The aim of the first study was to establish the positive associations between mastery and optimism on the one hand, and SWB on the other, among 2 age groups: young university students and adolescents at mid-adolescence. The second study investigated three independent family sources, namely, adolescents at mid-adolescence and their parents. It tested adolescent-parent similarities in mastery, optimism, and SWB; and adolescent-parent relationships as a factor that can affect the internal resources and well-being of adolescents.

STUDY 1

The first study sought to investigate the patterns of associations between mastery, optimism, and SWB in everyday life as assessed by positive and negative affect, in 2 samples, differing on age and research conditions: (1) young university students (ages 18–30), and (2) adolescents in the mid-period (ages 15–17). The hypothesis, based on findings by Myers and Diener (1995) and Ben-Zur (2002), was that mastery and optimism would be positively related to positive affect and negatively related to negative affect.

Method

Participants

Two samples were used: (1) A sample of 97 university students, ages 18–30, comprising 47% males and 53% females, mean age 24.1 ($SD = 2.36$), all Jewish and Hebrew speaking, having parents with a high school education (45%) or higher (50%). (2) A sample composed of 185 Hebrew-speaking Jewish adolescents ages 15–17, comprising 48% males and 52% females, mean age 16.06 ($SD = 0.84$), most from intact families (88.2%), whose parents had a high school education (41 and 40% for fathers and mothers, respectively) or higher (53 and 54% for fathers and mothers, respectively). Most reported being secular in lifestyle (72%). A quota sampling was used on the basis of similar proportions from 3 ages (15 (31.9%), 16 (36.2%), and 17 (31.8%)), with similar proportions of boys and girls in each age group. Family economic status was rated by this sample on a 1–5 scale (1 = very good and 5 = very bad; $M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.88$). Most respondents reported a good (37.5%) or middling (37.5%) level of family economic status.

Instruments

The following questionnaires were used:

1. *Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)*: This 20-item brief trait scale (Watson *et al.*, 1988) refers to everyday feelings and affects. It comprised 20 adjectives depicting various mood and affective states (e.g., enthusiastic, hostile), with 10 positive items and 10 negative items. The items were rated on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = a lot). The 2 subscales in the original English version, namely, PA and NA, showed high internal reliabilities (0.84–0.90) and were validated through their correlations with anxiety and depression (Watson *et al.*, 1988). The scale was translated into Hebrew and validated (see Ben-Zur, 2002; $\alpha = 0.78$ for PA, $\alpha = 0.83$ for NA).

The psychometric data for this and the following scales are shown in Table I. As can be seen in the table, the reliabilities are satisfactory. PA is higher than NA, as was found by Watson *et al.* (1988). The correlation between the 2 measures was minimal ($r_s = -0.10$ and -0.09 for students and adolescents, respectively).

2. *Mastery Scale*: This 7-item scale, taken from Pearlin and Schooler (1978), is used in its Hebrew form (Pedut, 1990) to measure perceived mastery. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with each item (e.g., "I feel in control of my life") on a 7-point scale (1 = does not describe me at all; 7 = describes me very well). A test-retest reliability of 0.85 and a reasonable internal consistency level ($\alpha = 0.75$) were reported for the measure, (Hobfoll and Walfisch, 1984) and a similar alpha value was reported by Ben-Zur (2002; $\alpha = 0.80$). When low-mastery items are reversed, a high mean score indicates a high level

Table I. Psychometric Data of Study 1 Variables for Student and Adolescent Samples

Variable	Sample 1 (Students, aged 21–30)		Sample 2 (Adolescents, aged 15–17)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Positive affect	3.77	0.75	0.76	3.62	0.49	0.71
Negative affect	2.43	0.53	0.88	2.28	0.60	0.83
Mastery	5.21	0.99	0.78	5.34	0.91	0.69
Optimism	3.75	0.80	0.83	3.59	0.61	0.61
SDS	4.02	2.07	0.65	3.54	2.11	0.66

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale.

of mastery. The data for both samples were similar (see Table I), indicating a higher level of perceived mastery as compared with the scale midpoint (3.5) for both groups.

3. *The Life Orientation Test (LOT)*: This 8-item scale (Scheier and Carver, 1985), which measures dispositional optimism, was used in its Hebrew version (Zeidner and Ben-Zur, 1994). The items (e.g., "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best") are rated on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). Zeidner and Ben-Zur (1994) reported medium-level reliability ($\alpha = 0.63$). Following the reversal of the pessimistic items and averaging, a high score indicates an optimistic tendency. Optimism was found to be positively correlated with mastery both for Samples 1 and 2 ($r_s = 0.57$ and 0.46 , respectively; $p < 0.001$). The alpha reliability index was lower for Sample 2 than that for Sample 1.
4. *Social Desirability Scale (SDS)*: An 8-item measure, the items chosen from the Crowne and Marlowe's Social Desirability Questionnaire (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964), was used in its Hebrew form (Ben-Zur, 2002; $\alpha = 0.66$). The SDS for Sample 1 showed positive correlations with mastery and optimism ($r_s = 0.34$ and 0.36 , respectively, $p < 0.001$) but not with PA ($r = 0.10$), and a negative correlation with NA ($r = -0.50$, $p < 0.0001$). In Sample 2, for adolescents, the correlations of SDS with PA, mastery and optimism were all significantly positive ($r = 0.24$, 0.41 and 0.24 , respectively, $p < 0.001$), while a negative correlation was observed for NA ($r = -0.36$, $p < 0.001$).

Procedure

Sample 1 (student sample) was recruited by university bulletin-board announcements. A payment of \$10 was made to each participant in the study. The questionnaires were completed in small groups, supervised by a research assistant. Data were collected and coded anonymously. In Sample 2 (adolescent sample), data were collected by teams of graduate students, who approached families with an adolescent child among friends and neighbors in the community. On obtaining parental agreement, the students brought the questionnaire to the adolescents' homes and monitored the response process to avoid parental influence on the respondents' answers. Data were collected and coded anonymously.

Results

Pearson correlations were computed between mastery or optimism and PA or NA. In the student sample, mastery and optimism were positively related to PA ($r_s = 0.44$ and 0.45 , respectively; $p < 0.0001$), and negatively correlated with NA ($r_s = -0.50$ and -0.46 , respectively; $p < 0.0001$). Similar results were obtained for the younger adolescents, with positive correlations between mastery or optimism and PA ($r_s = 0.35$ and 0.41 , respectively; $p < 0.0001$), and significant and negative correlations with NA ($r_s = -0.44$ and -0.47 , respectively; $p < 0.0001$).

These 2 sets of data confirm the research hypothesis, namely, that mastery and optimism would be positively related to PA and negatively related to NA. To test the unique contribution of mastery and optimism to PA and NA, 2-step hierarchical regressions were conducted for each of the 2 samples (see Table II). The regressions were identical except for the inclusion of perceived economic status in the adolescents' data analyses. In Sample 1 (students) data the first step, which included gender, age, father's education, and social desirability, showed only 2 significant effects of these variables: gender was related to NA, with females characterized by higher negative affect than males; and high social desirability was related to low NA scores. The amount of explained variance for NA was 34%, while for PA it was a nonsignificant 5%. In the second step, the above control variables were entered together with mastery and optimism. As can be seen, the R^2 for PA was significant, with 31% of the variance explained by the demographic and internal resources variables, and with a significant positive contribution of both mastery and optimism constituting an addition of 26% of explained variance. For NA, R^2 was also significant, with 47% explained variance; smaller but significant negative contributions of mastery and optimism (an addition of 13% explained variance); and significant effects of gender and social desirability, as the Step 1 analysis showed.

The Sample 2 (adolescents) data showed similar effects (see Table II). As can be seen in the table, in Step 1 the only variable associated with PA is social desirability. Both SDS and gender are related to NA, with females showing more NA than males, as was also seen in the student sample. Step 1 yielded low levels of significant R^2 , with 8 and 18% of explained variance for PA and NA, respectively. In Step 2 the regression analyses showed significant positive beta coefficients for mastery and optimism in regard to PA, and significant negative beta coefficients for mastery and optimism in regard to NA, with significant effects of the other variables only for gender and SDS. The R^2

Table II. Two-Step Hierarchical Regressions of Students' and Adolescents' Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scores on Internal Resources and Demographic Variables, Study 1

Variable	Students (<i>n</i> = 95)				Adolescents (<i>n</i> = 175)			
	Positive affect		Negative affect		Positive affect		Negative affect	
	Beta	<i>R</i> ² ch	Beta	<i>R</i> ² ch	Beta	<i>R</i> ² ch	Beta	<i>R</i> ² ch
Step 1								
<i>R</i> ²	0.05	—	0.34***	—	0.08 [†]	—	0.18***	—
Gender	0.01		0.30*		0.01		0.21**	
Age	−0.07		0.07		0.14		−0.08	
Father's education	0.15		0.14		0.04		0.04	
SDS	0.13		−0.50***		0.25**		−0.37***	
Perceived Economic status	—		—		0.01		−0.01	
Step 2								
<i>R</i> ²	0.31***	0.26***	0.47***	0.13***	0.23***	0.15***	0.37***	0.19***
Gender	0.06		0.24*		0.00		0.21**	
Age	−0.03		0.04		0.09		−0.03	
Father's education	0.12		0.15		0.06		0.03	
SDS	0.07		−0.34**		0.11		−0.21**	
Perceived Economic status	—		—		0.02		−0.02	
Mastery	0.36*		−0.18		0.16 [†]		−0.19*	
Optimism	0.27*		−0.26*		0.31***		−0.33***	

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale; ch = change.

[†] $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$; *** $p < 0.0001$.

was significant indicating 23 and 37% of explained variance for PA and NA, respectively. Mastery and optimism added 15% and 21% of explained variance to the PA and NA scores, respectively.

The students' and the adolescents' data were then analyzed together with a group variable to assess possible differences between the students and adolescents inserted, and perceived economic status, which was not available for students, deleted. The overall standard multiple regression analyses showed no effects for the group variable, with *R*² values of 0.26 and 0.41 ($p < 0.0001$) for PA and NA, respectively, and significant effects of mastery and optimism on PA ($\beta = 0.24$ and 0.30, respectively; $p < 0.001$) and on NA ($\beta = -0.20$ and -0.30 , respectively; $p < 0.001$).

Conclusions

The results of Study 1 confirmed the research hypothesis, showing that both perceived mastery and dispositional optimism are positively and uniquely related to PA, while negatively and uniquely related to NA. These unique effects of mastery and optimism were obtained despite the social desirability effect on NA, and despite the strong positive correlation between the 2 characteristics,

suggesting that both are important for well-being among young people.

The data replicate some of the findings by Diener and Fujita (1995) for students, and Ben-Zur's for a community sample (Ben-Zur, 2002), showing that internal resources are positively related to SWB. Furthermore, the analyses show that such demographic variables as age and father's education are not related to SWB, as measured by PA and NA, apart from the finding of females reporting higher levels of NA than males.

An additional finding in the study is the strikingly similar average levels of the adolescents' and students' positive and negative affect scores. Thus, no trend toward higher levels of NA or lower levels of PA among the younger adolescents was observed in comparison with the older adolescents (i.e., the students).

STUDY 2

Study 2 assessed mastery, optimism, and SWB among adolescents aged 15–19, and, in addition, included an evaluation of parents' mastery, optimism, and SWB. Furthermore, the study assessed life satisfaction of both parents and their offspring, and also used a measure of the adolescent-parent relationships, as assessed by the child.

Three hypotheses were posited:

1. In line with Study 1 results, other research results (e.g., Ben-Zur, 2002; Diener and Fujita, 1995), and theoretical models (e.g., Lazarus and Folkman, 1994; Moos and Schaefer, 1993), the first hypothesis was as follows: Adolescents' SWB would be positively related to mastery and optimism, and minimally related to demographic variables.
2. Theory and research on family processes and adolescent-parent relationships (e.g., Holmbeck *et al.*, 1995; Larson and Richards, 1994; Mayselless and Hai, 1998; Paikoff *et al.*, 1993; Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn, 1991) lead to the second (and third) hypothesis: Adolescents would show certain similarities to their parents in mastery, optimism, and SWB indicators.
3. Adolescents' SWB, mastery, and optimism would be positively correlated with positive interactions with parents.

Method

Participants

A sample of 363 Jewish participants was tested consisting of 121 adolescents, their fathers, and mothers. Thus, each family contributed data from 3 sources. The adolescents' group comprised 48% males and 52% females, with an age range of 15–19 ($M = 17.06$, $SD = 0.86$). Most reported being secular in lifestyle (81%). A quota sampling was used, with similar proportions of females and males divided in 3 age levels: 15–16 (29.8%), 17 (44.6%), and 18–19 (25.6%). Most of the parents were born in Israel (78% of the fathers and 81% of the mothers), and most had either high school (39% of the fathers and 31% of the mothers) or higher education levels (59% of the fathers and 68% of the mothers). The mean ages of the fathers and mothers, respectively, were 48.35 ($SD = 4.06$) and 45.89 ($SD = 4.47$). The families had an average of 3.2 children. Perceived economic status, rated on a 1–5 scale (1 = very good; 5 = very bad), was assessed by the adolescents, fathers, and mothers on similar levels ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.80$; $M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.80$; and $M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.83$; respectively), with most (over 80%) rating their economic situation as either good or middling.

Instruments

The following 4 questionnaires, described in detail in Study 1 earlier, were completed by the adolescents and

their parents in the Hebrew version:

1. *PANAS*: The 20-item brief trait scale introduced by Watson *et al.* (1988) to measure PA and NA.
2. *Mastery Scale*: The 7-item scale, taken from Pearlin and Schooler (1978), and used to measure perceived mastery.
3. *LOT*: The 8-item scale (Scheier and Carver, 1985) used to measure dispositional optimism.
4. *SDS*: The 8-item measure, the items chosen from the Crowne and Marlowe's social desirability questionnaire (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964).

PA, NA, mastery, optimism, and social desirability were scored in the 4 questionnaires as in the first study. Table III presents the psychometric properties. As can be seen in the table, the reliabilities of the measures are satisfactory, and their levels are similar to those observed in Study 1. The correlation between adolescents' PA and NA was nonsignificant ($r = -0.16$), whereas their optimism and mastery scores were positively correlated ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.0001$), also as in Study 1. Similarly, PA and NA showed minimal correlations for fathers or mothers ($r_s = 0.02$ and 0.05 , respectively), while mastery and optimism were positively correlated ($r_s = 0.37$ and 0.42 , respectively; $p < 0.001$).

The following 2 measures were used for the first time in Study 2:

5. *Life Satisfaction Scale*: This indicator of SWB consists of 3 new items depicting general satisfaction: "Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my life"; "It may be said that overall I am content with the way my life has turned out"; "Usually I am pleased with the events that take place in my life." Respondents rated the extent to which the sentence describes their general outlook on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all; 5 = to a large extent).

Table III. Psychometric Data of Study 2 Variables for Adolescents and Their Parents

Variable	Adolescent		Father		Mother				
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Positive affect	3.59	0.64	0.83	3.59	0.52	0.80	3.74	0.50	0.77
Negative affect	2.38	0.66	0.83	2.12	0.62	0.86	2.25	0.58	0.84
Satisfaction	3.99	0.81	0.91	4.01	0.65	0.90	3.95	0.71	0.92
Mastery	5.23	0.98	0.80	5.33	0.88	0.73	5.20	0.89	0.69
Optimism	3.70	0.59	0.72	3.94	0.59	0.69	3.97	0.60	0.70
SDS	3.62	1.93	0.57	4.59	1.99	0.58	4.93	1.92	0.60

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale.

The scale was found to have a high alpha level (see Table III). The 2 affects correlated with the adolescents' life satisfaction scores ($r_s = 0.33$ and -0.31 for PA and NA, respectively; $p < 0.001$). Similar significant correlation values for PA and NA were obtained for the parents (fathers: $r_s = 0.42$ and -0.29 , respectively, $p < 0.01$; mothers: $r_s = 0.22$ and -0.33 , respectively, $p < 0.01$). These associations show that life satisfaction is correlated with the affective measures, as expected, although the associations are modest and point to the need for an independent evaluation of this variable.

6. *Adolescent-Parent Relationships Scale*: This assessment of the parent-child relationship by the adolescent consisted of 10 identical items relating to each parent, selected from the Relationship with Father/Mother Questionnaire (Mayseless *et al.*, 1998; Mayseless and Hai, 1998). Of the 7 subscales in the original questionnaire, all with high reliability levels and high intercorrelations, 5 items were chosen from an emotional closeness scale (e.g., "She tends to hug me occasionally") and 5 items were taken from a communication scale (e.g., "He always listens to my ideas and opinions"). The items were rated on a 6-point scale (1 = not true at all; 6 = very true). The two 5-item sets were highly correlated for fathers ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.0001$) and for mothers ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.0001$) and were therefore averaged in 1 index. The means of the resulting 10-item scales were found to be above scale midpoint (i.e., 3), with high internal reliabilities for the fathers ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.91$, $\alpha = 0.89$), and for the mothers ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.88$, $\alpha = 0.90$). The adolescent-father and adolescent-mother relationship scores were also highly correlated ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.0001$).

Procedure

Data were collected by graduate students working in teams who approached families with an adolescent child among friends and neighbors in the community. Upon obtaining consent of the parents and their children to participate in the study, the students gave each family member all the questionnaires described earlier (apart from the Adolescent-Parent Relationships Scale completed only by the adolescents), and they were completed at home, under students' supervision. Data were collected and coded anonymously.

Table IV. Pearson Correlations Between Adolescents' and Parents' Internal Resources and SWB Measures, Study 2

Variable	Positive affect	Negative affect	Satisfaction	SDS
Adolescents				
Mastery	0.23*	-0.44***	0.55***	0.24*
Optimism	0.27*	-0.45***	0.50***	0.26*
SDS	0.03	-0.33**	0.19 [†]	—
Fathers				
Mastery	0.43***	-0.45***	0.37***	0.14
Optimism	0.45***	-0.31**	0.47***	0.20 [†]
SDS	0.10	-0.34***	0.22*	—
Mothers				
Mastery	0.30**	-0.38***	0.44***	0.14
Optimism	0.29**	-0.34***	0.39***	0.23*
SDS	0.09	-0.33**	0.13	—

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale; $n = 120-121$.

[†] $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$; *** $p < 0.0001$.

Results

Pearson correlations between perceived mastery and dispositional optimism on the one hand, and the 3 SWB measures on the other, are presented in Table IV. As can be seen in the table, the adolescents' mastery and optimism are positively correlated with PA and life satisfaction, and negatively correlated with NA, all 3 being SWB indicators, as hypothesized, and as shown in Study 1. The parents' data show similar correlation patterns between mastery or optimism and the SWB measures. Table V depicts the results of 2-step hierarchical regression analyses of the adolescents' data. As can be seen in the table, the data in Step 1 show minimal associations between background variables and PA, NA, or life satisfaction, except for the SDS-NA association. The resulting R^2 are small and are significant only for the NA measure (16% explained variance). Step 2, in which mastery and optimism were added to the regression, shows that the explained variance is markedly increased for the NA and life satisfaction measures (39 and 41%, respectively). Mastery and optimism added together 21 and 34% to the explained variance of NA and life satisfaction, respectively. The associations found for demographic variables, perceived economic status, or social desirability were small and insignificant. Although PA was correlated with both mastery ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$) and optimism ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), the explained variance for optimism was relatively small (16%), while mastery did not relate significantly to PA in the regression analysis.

The next analysis involved computing the correlations between the parents' and their adolescent children's attributes. As shown in Table VI, the adolescents' PA, NA, and satisfaction are positively correlated with their

Table V. Two-Step Hierarchical Regression of Adolescents' Positive Affect, Negative Affect, and Life Satisfaction on Internal Resources and Demographic Variables, Study 2

Variable	Positive affect		Negative affect		Satisfaction	
	Beta	R ² change	Beta	R ² change	Beta	R ² change
Step 1						
R ²	0.06	—	-0.16**	—	-0.09	—
Gender	0.15		0.17		-0.12	
Age	0.11		0.04		0.14	
Father's education	0.06		0.12		0.06	
SDS	-0.04		-0.36***		0.11	
Perceived	-0.13		0.03		-0.18	
Economic status						
Step 2						
R ²	0.13	0.09	0.39***	0.21*	0.41***	0.34***
Gender	0.17		0.13		-0.05	
Age	0.07		0.11		0.05	
Father's education	0.05		0.14		0.04	
SDS	-0.11		-0.24*		-0.03	
Perceived	-0.10		-0.04		-0.10	
Economic status						
Mastery	0.15		-0.25*		0.40***	
Optimism	0.21 [†]		-0.31**		0.32**	

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale; *n* = 112.
[†] *p* < 0.05; * *p* < 0.01; ** *p* < 0.001; *** *p* < 0.0001.

fathers' corresponding measures, but the adolescent–father correlations for optimism and mastery are minimal and insignificant. The same trend is observable for the correlations with the mothers, although they are smaller and significant only for the satisfaction measure. Thus, the second hypothesis was confirmed mainly for adolescent–father similarities in SWB indicators. The table also contains the father–mother correlations for comparison purposes: they are lower than those observed for their children, and show significance only for the mastery characteristic. Notably, perceived economic status was highly correlated for all 3 dyads: adolescent–father (*r* = 0.56, *p* < 0.0001), adolescent–mother (*r* = 0.59, *p* < 0.0001), and father–mother (*r* = 0.73, *p* < 0.0001).

Table VI. Pearson Correlations Between Adolescents' and Parents' Positive Affect, Negative Affect, Satisfaction, and Resources, Study 2

Variable	Adolescent–	Adolescent–	Father–
	Father	Mother	Mother
Positive affect	0.22*	0.09	0.13
Negative affect	0.22*	0.18	0.13
Satisfaction	0.34**	0.25*	0.20
Mastery	0.17	0.02	0.22*
Optimism	0.17	-0.10	0.04
SDS	0.26*	0.30*	0.14

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale; *n* = 120–121.
 * *p* < 0.01; ** *p* < 0.001.

Table VII presents the correlations between the adolescents' measures of SWB and internal resources, and their relationships with their parents. As the table shows, the associations between satisfaction, mastery, and optimism, on the one hand, and adolescent–father and adolescent–mother relationships on the other, are all significant, thereby bearing out the third hypothesis. The table also shows the association between the adolescent–parent relationships and the parents' measures of SWB, mastery, and optimism. Interestingly, the relationships of adolescents with fathers and with mothers are correlated

Table VII. Pearson Correlations Between Adolescents' and Parents' SWB and Internal Resources and Adolescent–Parent Relationships, Study 2

Variables	Adolescents' relationship with father		Adolescents' relationship with mother	
	Adolescent	Father	Adolescent	Mother
	Positive affect	0.29**	0.31**	0.21 [†]
Negative affect	-0.23*	-0.15	-0.11	-0.17
Satisfaction	0.37***	0.27*	0.36***	0.26*
Mastery	0.25*	0.25*	0.23*	0.19 [†]
Optimism	0.34**	0.29**	0.27*	0.28*
SDS	0.11	0.01	0.32**	0.28*

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale; *n* = 120–121.
[†] *p* < 0.05; * *p* < 0.01; ** *p* < 0.001; *** *p* < 0.0001.

positively with their parents' mastery, optimism, and life satisfaction. Of the parents' demographic variables, however, only fathers' education was minimally correlated with adolescent–father relationship ($r = 0.19, p < 0.05$). Mother's SDS was correlated with adolescent–mother relationship ($r = 0.28, p < 0.01$).

In light of the relatively large number of variables, and on the basis of the results of Study 1 and the 2-step hierarchical regression analysis depicted in Table V, only gender and SDS were used in the final regression analyses as shown in Table VIII. (Notably, a regression analysis using all the demographic variables shown in Table V led to similar results.) The table presents the results of the 3-step hierarchical regression applied to the SWB data: Step 1 tested gender and SDS, Step 2 tested relationships with the father, and Step 3 tested mastery and optimism. Step 1 shows that SDS alone contributed to NA, indicating a significant R^2 (15% explained variance). Step 2, however, showed that R^2 was significant in all 3 analyses, once the adolescent–father relationship scale was introduced revealing an explained variance of 11, 20, and 18% for the PA, NA, and satisfaction measures, respectively. As can be seen, the adolescent–father relationship is significantly related to all 3 SWB measures in Step 2, but after the addition of adolescents' mastery and optimism, remains significant only for the satisfaction measure. (Notably, the same analysis, using relationship with the mother, revealed similar patterns, but with weaker associations.)

Table VIII also shows the results of the regression analyses applied to adolescents' mastery and optimism. As can be seen, mastery and optimism are positively related to the adolescent–father relationship, suggesting a mediation model in which the effect of the relationship with the father is mainly mediated by these characteristics, while also being directly related to life satisfaction. Lastly, a test of the adolescents' relationship with the father showed that it was unrelated to adolescents' gender or SDS.

The mediating model revealed in Table VIII is depicted in Fig. 1, which highlights the data for the satisfaction and the NA components of SWB (PA did not correlate highly with any of the measures; the gender and social desirability coefficients were deleted for clarity). As can be seen in the figure, the adolescent–father relationship is associated directly with life satisfaction, but can also affect life satisfaction and NA through its associations with mastery and optimism.

Conclusions

Study 2 replicated the results of Study 1, and confirmed the first hypothesis, that is, positive associations between SWB indicators and the adolescents' internal resources of mastery and optimism were shown. In addition, similar patterns were obtained for the parents' data, which contribute to the robustness of the mastery and optimism association patterns with SWB. The second hypothesis

Table VIII. Three-Step Hierarchical Regressions of Adolescents' Positive Affect, Negative Affect and Satisfaction on Internal Resources, Relationships With Father, and Demographic Variables, Study 2

Variable	Positive affect		Negative affect		Satisfaction		Mastery		Optimism	
	Beta	R^2 ch	Beta	R^2 ch	Beta	R^2 ch	Beta	R^2 ch	Beta	R^2 ch
Step 1										
R^2	0.05	—	0.15***	—	0.04	—	0.06 [†]	—	−0.07 [†]	—
Gender	0.21		0.20		−0.08		−0.12		−0.02	
SDS	0.00		−0.36***		0.19		0.23*		0.26*	
Step 2										
R^2	0.11*	0.06*	0.20***	0.05	0.18***	0.14***	0.10**	0.04 [†]	0.16**	0.09**
Gender	0.17		0.24*		−0.14		−0.16		−0.07	
SDS	−0.02		−0.34***		0.15		0.20 [†]		0.23*	
Relationship with father	0.26*		−0.23*		0.39***		0.27*		0.31**	
Step 3										
R^2	0.16**	0.05 [†]	0.37***	0.17***	0.40***	0.22***				
Gender	0.20 [†]		0.18 [†]		−0.07					
SDS	0.08		−0.23*		0.02					
Relationship with father	0.18		−0.08		0.22*					
Mastery	0.09		−0.26*		0.35***					
Optimism	0.18		−0.27*		0.24*					

Note. SDS = Social Desirability Scale; ch = change $n = 115$.

[†] $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$; *** $p < 0.0001$.

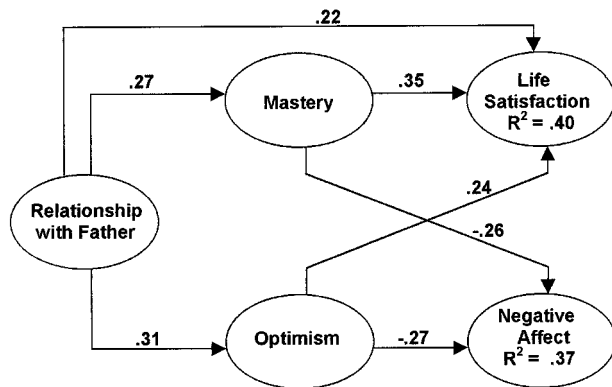


Fig. 1. Path analytic model of the effects of adolescents' relationships with their fathers on internal resources and SWB measures, Study 2. *Note:* The numbers near arrows represent standard regression coefficients.

was confirmed in part, the results also implying that SWB and internal resources may be affected by differential processes: significant correlations were observed between the adolescents' and fathers' SWB measures (and between adolescents' and mothers' life satisfaction), whereas the adolescents' and parents' internal resources of mastery and optimism did not correlate significantly. Lastly, the third hypothesis was confirmed showing significant associations between the adolescents' relationships with their parents and adolescents' SWB measures.

Two unexpected findings were revealed in the study: (1) The parents' internal resources were correlated with their adolescent child's assessments of his/her relationship with his/her parents, thus suggesting that the parents' internal resources (mastery and optimism) may contribute to their positive interactions with their children; and (2) when the adolescents' internal resources were entered into the regression analysis (see Table VIII, Step 3), the contribution of the adolescent–father relationship was lowered. It was, however, related to mastery and optimism. Thus, the pattern of relationships with the father is the main contributor to adolescent internal resources of mastery and optimism, the latter presumed to be mediators of the effects of adolescent–parent relationships on the adolescents' SWB (see Fig. 1).

DISCUSSION

The Functions of Mastery and Optimism in Adolescence

The hypothesis posited in the present research that perceived mastery and dispositional optimism are related to the happiness and well-being of adolescents and young

people was confirmed in the 2 studies reported here. Both optimism and mastery were shown to be related to 3 measures of SWB: life satisfaction, negative affect, and positive affect. In contrast, none of the demographic or background variables, apart from gender, were found to contribute to SWB.

These results are similar to extant findings that show associations between internal resources and self-esteem and depressed mood among adolescents (e.g., Lasko *et al.*, 1996), or mastery and affect (Ben-Zur, 2002) in an adult community sample. The results also indicate that these internal resources make a stronger contribution to SWB than are demographic factors, including perceived economic status, as suggested by Diener and Fujita (1995).

Dispositional optimism and perceived mastery represent some of the cognitive aspects of personality, and, although interrelated, each quality is based on distinct cognitions. Mastery refers to beliefs and opinions about self and interactions with the world, suggesting that the individual is capable of influencing life occurrences and that his/her actions meaningfully affect outcomes (e.g., Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). Optimism refers to the individual's beliefs and opinions that the future holds positive occurrences for him/her, and that goals will be attained (Klaczynski and Fauth, 1996). Both qualities refer to future expectations, and both may lead to effective coping with stressful encounters or with life problems, resulting in general well-being and quality of life (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Moos and Schaefer, 1993; Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). Thus, mastery may enable adolescents to effectively solve their problems, invest appropriately to achieve goals, and dare to act so that they can realize their potential. Optimism may contribute to a positive view of goal-fulfilling expectations and affect the motivations and efforts they invest in order to fulfill these expectations.

Parental Factors and Well-Being in Adolescence

Two factors that may affect SWB and internal resources among young people—namely, their parents' SWB and internal resources, and the nature of their relationships with their parents—were also tested in the present research. Certain similarities between adolescents and their parents (mainly fathers) for the SWB components were observed, but not for mastery or optimism. These findings support studies that show correlations between parents' and children's emotional responses (e.g., Larson and Richards, 1994), and bear out family process theory, which suggests that family members share a subjective reality, including shared values and world views (Larson and Richards, 1994). Notably, however,

the adolescent–father correlations for optimism and mastery were not significant, in contrast to positive parents–children correlations shown for more enduring traits, such as Type A behavior (Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 1988).

Perhaps the most meaningful findings are the associations between the adolescents' positive relationships with their fathers and their high levels of the internal resources of optimism and mastery. These results match those found in previous studies (e.g., Field *et al.*, 1995; Lasko *et al.*, 1996; Sim, 2000), and imply that positive interactions with parents may better equip adolescents with resources that can aid them in coping with life's problems and enhance the quality of their adult life.

Interestingly, both the fathers' SWB and internal resources, and the adolescent–father relationship, showed more significant correlations than the comparable mothers' variables. This paternal dominance was not expected given that mothers generally spend more time with their children and are more involved in their lives. Conceivably, since fathers typically exercise the most power in the family (Larson and Richards, 1994), presumably they become the social model most imitated.

Contribution and Limitations of the Study

Notably, the present findings were replicated in 3 different adolescents samples, and were obtained after controlling for social desirability, thus removing the possibility of a biased responses explanation. Furthermore, the research used independent sources of data, namely, separate reports by the adolescents and each of their parents, so that the correlations between the adolescents' and their parents' data could not be explained by common source variance.

However, it should be emphasized that the associations between mastery, optimism, SWB, and relationships with parents were obtained by means of a correlational design, and although the data were interpreted in unidirectional terms, with internal resources and parental factors affecting adolescents' well-being, the reverse may also be true. Conceivably, therefore, SWB may contribute to feelings of mastery and optimism, or adolescents' SWB and internal resources affect parents' comparable characteristics. Future research may attempt to test this possibility by using longitudinal designs and several testing points for both the adolescents' and their parents' data.

Summary

The pattern of positive associations found between subjective well-being and the internal resources of mastery

and optimism in adolescents suggests that these associations are established early in life. The present data further imply that adolescents reporting warm relationships and open communication with their parents show higher levels of both internal resources and well-being. Moreover, and unexpectedly, parents' internal resources are related to the adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with their parents. These findings have important implications for child-rearing and education practices, as well as for the prevention of emotional problems in the general population.

Lastly, it should be noted that a great deal of research is devoted to measuring young people misery, that is, their anxieties, depressions, problems, stressors, deficiencies and harmful behaviors. This study indicates that the more positive aspects of their lives, namely, internal resources and well-being, also merit investigation and can contribute to a better understanding of the significant developmental processes in adolescence.

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