

## Predictors of Psychological Well-Being of School going Adolescents in Chennai

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The Present study is an attempt was made to identify the influence of parental expectations, family relationship, perceived competence and academic pressure on psychological well-being of school going adolescents. A total of 996 adolescent students were selected for the study using simple random sampling technique. The sample comprised of 562 boys and 423 girls studying 8th to 12th standard from State board and CBSE Schools. Standardised self-report measures were used to collect data. Correlation and regression analysis was done to obtain the results. Perceived parental expectations, perceived competence and family environment was positively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students whereas Academic pressure was negatively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students. Regression analysis revealed that perceived parental expectations, family relationship and academic pressure emerged as significant predictors of psychological well-being of school going adolescents..

**Keywords:** Parental Expectation, Family Relationship, Psychological Well-being, Competence, Academic Pressure.

### **Introduction**

Psychological well-being is identified as a positive mental state, which ensures a happy or satisfied life. Psychological well-being involves 'personal growth and living up to one's potential' (Fava & Riuni, 2003). India is a highly populated country in the world. Adolescents between the age group of 10–19 years constitute about one-fifth of India's population (Census of India, 2011). During adolescence vigorous physical, biological and cultural changes takes place altogether. During this phase of life, an individual is found to face challenges in dealing with all these changes. Hence, it is important to study the psychological well-being of adolescent students. The psychological well-being of school going adolescents are influenced by various factors. It is very important to understand both the protective and risk factors influencing the well-being of adolescent students. This understanding will help in sustaining and enhancing the psychological well-being of adolescents. For school going adolescents these factors operate at personal level and also at family, school and societal level. Factors such as high self-esteem,

resilience, family connectedness, conducive school climate and living environment may be key protective factors, which can be affected by risk factors such as poverty, child abuse, early parental loss, family conflict, academic pressure, etc. All these factors have to be analysed and significant risk factors has to be reduced and protective factors has to be promoted to ensure well-being of adolescents. The present study intends to find out the influence of factors such as perceived parental expectations, family environment, perceived competence and academic pressure on psychological well-being among school going adolescents.

Parents have a major influence over an adolescent's development. Parental expectations influence children's behaviours and achievement directly as well as indirectly. When parental expectations and aspirations of their adolescents are realistic and attainable they foster development. A positive support from parents with increased attention and responsiveness to what is happening in the adolescents' life with provision of both information and experiences would enhance

their well-being (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Marjoribanks, 1990; Scott-Jones, 1984). Parents are the primary source of support for their children (Cox & Cox, 1979). The degree and quality of parental control have a major impact on adolescent development. Parents play a significant role in supporting secure attachments during these transitions (Laursen & Williams, 1997) and parental support during stressful periods of transition predicts positive adolescent adjustment (Papini & Roggman, 1992).

Adolescent students who perceived themselves to be academically and socially incompetent were vulnerable to depression than adolescents who are perceiving themselves more competent resulting in negative experiences in life affecting their evaluations from peers, teachers and also their parents (Cole, Martin & Peeke, 1999). Research findings of Caplan (1980) revealed that adolescents with high levels of social and personal competence had specific skills and abilities that helped them to deal with the demands and challenges during adolescence.

In addition to this, adolescents with poor social and personal competence are hopeless when faced with new challenges and daily hassles resulting in maladaptive behaviours (Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Epstein & Doyle, 2002). Further, academic pressure is pervasive in education. Academic pressure refers to any pressure that is felt by students during their academic years that is in any way related to school or the pursuit of academic achievement. The psychological impact of academic pressure has caused many students to experience nervous breakdown (White, 1987). Due to this high level of stress and pressure from school, peer and parents, adolescents tend to have poor psychological well-being (Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984). In addition, a negative view of one's own competence is more closely connected to poor psychological well-being. Hence, the present study intended to identify the influence of certain factors such as parental expectations, family environment, perceived competence and academic pressure on psychological well-being among school going adolescents.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the empirical evidences, the following hypothesis were formulated,

1. Perception of parental expectations would be related to psychological well-being of adolescent students.
2. Good family environment would be positively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students.
3. High perceived competence (thinking skills, reading skills, mathematical skills, language skills, engagement skills and study skills) would be positively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students.
4. Academic pressure would be negatively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students.
5. Perception of parental expectations, family environment, perceived competence and academic pressure would be predictors of psychological well-being of adolescent students.

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

The present study is a survey research and ex post facto in nature.

#### **Sample**

Adolescent students studying from 8th to 12th standard from State Board and CBSE schools from Chennai constituted the population of the study. A total of 996 adolescents were selected for the studying using simple random sampling technique. Out of 996, 11 students were not included due to incomplete information. Thus, 985 students' responses were included for final analysis. The sample comprised of 562 boys and 423 girls.

#### **Tools used**

*Perceived Parental Expectation Inventory* (Sasikala & Karunanidhi, 2011) consists of 30 items. The items were scored according to the dimensions using 5 (all the time), 4 (most of the time), 3 (sometimes), 2 (very rarely) and 1 (not at all). The scores were added to get a composite

score of the overall perception of parental expectations. High scores on PPE indicate perception of high level of parental expectations.

*Index of Family Relations (Hudson, 1982)* is a 25 item scale designed to measure the extent of severity, or magnitude of the problems that family members have in their relationship with one another. This is a 5-point rating scale giving scores ranging from 0 to 100 with lower score indicating evidence of the presence of family relationship problems.

*Perceived Competence Scale* was developed by the researchers for the present study. It consists of 36 items with six dimensions namely thinking skills, reading skills, mathematical skills, language skills, engagement skills and study skills. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the six dimensions of perceived competence scale namely thinking skills, reading skills, mathematical skills, language skills, engagement skills and study skills were .72, .59, .64, .64, .57 and .64 respectively. Content validity was established. The scale consisted of four response categories like never, sometimes, often and almost always. All the items under each dimension are scored directly and total score on six dimensions are obtained separately. Higher the score in each dimension indicates high perceived skill for that dimension.

*Academic Pressure Scale* was developed for the present study. It consists of 10 items with four response categories namely strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. The total score is derived by adding all the 10 items indicating the degree of total academic pressure felt by students. Inter item reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale is found to be 0.56.

*General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972)* consists of 12 items asking whether the respondent was already experiencing a particular symptom rated on a four-point scale of Likert type.

**Ethical Consideration**

Briefing of the nature of research work was done to the participants and written consent was obtained from the participants. Confidentiality was assured and maintained. The researcher

conducted the research without harming the participant in any way. After filling the questionnaire, debriefing was done to educate the participants about the research.

**Statistical analysis Used**

Correlational analysis was done to find the relationship and Multiple Linear regression analysis was done to identify the predictors of emotional problems.

**Results**

**Table 1. Relationship of Perceived Parental Expectations, Academic Pressure and Family Relationship with Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents**

Variables	N	Psychological well-being r
Perceived Parental expectations	985	.226**
Family environment		.346**
Academic pressure		-.120**

\*\* p <.01

Table 1 shows that perceived parental expectations and family environment were positively related to psychological well-being, whereas academic pressure was negatively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students. From this, it can be inferred that when perceived parental expectations is more, psychological well-being of adolescent students was found to be good. Similarly, when perceived family environment is good, psychological well-being was found to be good. On the other hand, if academic pressure is less, psychological well-being tends to be good. Thus, the hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 are accepted.

From table 2 it can be inferred that the dimensions of perceived competence namely thinking skills, reading skills, mathematical skills, language skills, engagement skills and study skills were positively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students. From this, it is understood that when perceived competence is high psychological well-being tend to be good. Thus, hypothesis which stated that "high perceived competence (thinking skills, reading

skills, mathematical skills, language skills, engagement skills and study skills) would be positively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students" is accepted.

**Table 2. Dimensions of Perceived Competence in relation to Psychological Well-Being of School Going Adolescents**

Dimensions of Perceived Competence	N	Psychological well-beingr
Thinking skills	985	.192**
Reading skills		.223**
Mathematical skills		.137**
Language skills		.182**
Engagement skills		.226**
Study skills		.141**

\*\* p < .01

**Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficient, Beta Value and 't' Value**

Variable	Psychological well-being	
	Standardized Beta coefficients	t
Perceived parental expectations	0.11	3.27**
Family environment	0.25	7.89**
Dimensions of perceived competence:		
Thinking skills	0.04	1.00
Reading skills	0.05	1.47
Mathematical skills	0.03	0.86
Language skills	0.06	1.76
Engagement skills	0.07	1.86
Study skills	0.00	0.00
Academic pressure	-0.10	3.15**
R	.413	
R <sup>2</sup>	.17	
F	22.32**	
N	985	

\*\*p<.01

In the multiple linear regression analysis (table 3), the variables namely perceived parental

expectations, family environment, dimensions of perceived competence and academic pressure were included as independent variables. It is observed that perceived parental expectations, family environment and academic pressure were significant predictors of psychological well-being of adolescent students, whereas dimensions of perceived competence did not emerge as predictors of psychological well-being of adolescent students. Therefore, hypothesis stating that perception of parental expectations, family environment, perceived competence and academic pressure would be predictors of psychological well-being of adolescent students was partially accepted.

### Discussion

The present study aimed to find out the predictors of psychological well-being among school going adolescents. Findings of the study are discussed in the light of cultural context and earlier researches. Correlation analysis indicated that parental expectations, perceived competence and family environment were positively related to psychological well-being whereas academic pressure was found to be negatively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students. This revealed the fact that when parental expectation is high, psychological well-being also tends to be better. Similarly, adolescents with high perceived competence have better psychological well-being. Further, it was also found that good family environment also improves the psychological well-being of adolescent students. Regression analysis revealed that perceived parental expectations, family environment and academic pressure as significant predictors of psychological well-being among school going adolescents.

The findings of the relationship between parental expectation and psychological well-being have yielded results that are surprising and contrary to findings from previous studies. Many studies have reported that perceived unfulfillment of parental expectation was positively related to depression, anxiety, behaviour problems etc., (Kobayashi, 2005; Sasikala, 2011; Wang & Heppner, 2002). On the other hand, in the present study, parental expectation was found to be positively related

to psychological well-being. The positive relationship between parental expectation and psychological well-being could be due to the fact that parents desire for the success of their wards. Further, parents tend to give maximum support and motivation in all possible ways in order to fulfil their expectations. Even though parents have high expectations of their wards, the kind of parental support, involvement and motivation given by them, might have created a feeling of sense of security and emotional bonding which could have enabled the adolescents to act with responsibility towards fulfilling their ambitions and expectations. Indian parents generally take much pride and bask in the glory of their wards' achievement rather than their own. This attitude of parents is more commonly found in India and they tend to take more responsibility for their wards' education particularly to avoid criticism from relatives, friends and neighbours. In support of the above findings a study reported by Oishi and Sullivan (2005) depicted that high parental expectation increased adolescent's self-esteem. Many studies have also proved that self-esteem and psychological well-being are positively related to each other (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine & Broadnax, 1994; Paradise & Kernis, 2002; Roberts & Bengtson, 1993). Thus, high parental expectation could have positively enhanced in aspects related to psychological well-being.

Adolescents who have supportive parents and good feelings about themselves can cope better. In this study, it is also found that the family has been found to play a vital and influential role in the Indian culture and it is not surprising that those adolescents who experienced poor family environment had poorer psychological well-being. Family environment was found to be positively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students. Family climate that includes family structure, parenting style, other family stressors like financial or illness in the family, contributes to a perception of poor family relationship among adolescents. Moreover, adolescence is the beginning of separation and establishment of autonomy. It is the time when more conflicts and arguments arise in the family between parents and adolescents. The conflicts during adolescence can take on an

added intensity because adolescent's desire for autonomy can be stressful for parents also (Small, Eastman & Cornelius, 1988). When families do not encourage individuality and are not sensitive to the growing adolescent's need, it could become an unfavourable environment for identity development. Erikson (1968), also pointed out that the key to resolve identity crisis lies in interaction with significant others where parents play a major role. When adolescents feels they are not understood or their needs are not met in the family, the chances of him/her getting detached from the family are more. The finding of the present study is similar to earlier studies which reiterated that, potentially low psychological well-being adolescents described their families as less cohesive and less expressive (Barrera & Garrison-Jones, 1992; Donnelly, 1999; Gill-Rivas, Greenberger, Chen & Lopez-Lena, 2003).

The correlation analysis further revealed that academic pressure was negatively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students. This shows that while academic pressure increases, the psychological well-being of adolescent students get affected. Academic pressure arises from multiple sources including parents, teachers, peer, society etc. High and unrealistic expectations from the people around tend to result in pervasive pressure. This kind of pressure results in nervous breakdown among students (White, 1987). Wiekhorst (1973) identified four factors of school related pressure namely parental pressure, peer pressure, importance of school and fear of failure in relation to academic achievement. The importance of school and fear of failure were positively related to achievement among sixth grade participants. In India, students are expected to get high scores. Indian education magnifies the old age of life coming down to a few moments of monstrous proportions. Even an exemplary student for entire life is not considered intellectual if he does not ace the examination. Every student is pressurized to score as high as 95 percent to get into a college and course of good reputation and recognition. Adolescence is a time described as a period of storm and stress and more liable for emotional upheaval. Hence, it is likely that such pressure

could precipitate negative affect which in turn might result in poor psychological well-being. Adolescents may not be physically and mentally prepared to face crisis and challenges and hence the highest target set by the parents may be a challenge for the adolescents and result in poor mental health. Individual talents and abilities are not considered at all. The adolescents suppress their real interests and thereby it affects their mental health. Moreover, they do not get sufficient leisure time to interact and to play with peers or participate in other activities due to academic preparation and also because of parental pressure. Due to their monotonous preparation focusing on marks, adolescents' well-being might get affected. Therefore, continuous academic pressure was found to be negatively related to psychological well-being.

While analyzing perceived competence in relation to psychological well-being, it was found that dimensions of perceived competence namely thinking skills, reading skills, mathematical skills, language skills, engagement skills and study skills were positively related to psychological well-being of adolescent students. Perceived competence refers to subjective judgments concerning one's ability to perform effectively in a given area or situation (Ames & Ames, 1984). Moreover, a person with high perceived competence tends to forget information about their own failures more readily, evaluate similar performances as more positive, and is less sensitive to evaluations of others (Burns, 1979). This helps them to have a good mental health. Studies have also proved that perceived competence is positively related to all measures of psychological well-being (Mechanic & Hansell, 1987). A study carried out among American and German college students (Levescque, Zecedhlike Stanek & Ryan, 2004) indicated that even though students were experiencing a pressurized learning context, the autonomous motivation and perceived competence of these college students of both countries positively predicted well-being. However, regression analysis indicated that the dimension of perceived competence were not significant predictors of psychological well-being. This could be due to the other factors such as parental expectations, family environment and

academic pressure which had taken care of the impact of perceived competence also. Further, perceived competence might play an indirect role in relating to psychological well-being.

### Conclusion

Perception of parental expectations and favourable family environment were found to act as protective factors and academic pressure as a risk factor of psychological well-being of adolescent students. Moreover, perceived competence was found to be positively related to psychological well-being. Therefore, the school authorities need to conduct frequent parent-teacher meetings for having realistic parental expectations and helping parents to provide support necessary support for adolescents and also to make them understand the importance of family environment in promoting the well-being of adolescents. School authorities need to be emphasized about the consequence of heavy academic burden forced on adolescents. They need to be sensitized about enhancing the unique and individual competencies of their wards. In addition, parents of adolescents require counselling to understand and handle their wards in dealing with their problems during adolescent period and also to promote their well-being.

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