



Friendship Quality As A Predator of Happiness and Well Being in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between friendship quality, subjective well-being, and happiness among young adults. Young adulthood is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity exploration, increasing independence, and a growing reliance on peer relationships for emotional support. The study aimed to investigate how friendship quality and subjective well-being influence overall happiness.

A quantitative, correlational research design was employed. The sample consisted of 100 young adults aged 18–25 years, selected using purposive sampling from educational and urban settings. Data were collected through standardized self-report measures assessing friendship quality, subjective well-being, and happiness. Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation.

The findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between friendship quality and happiness and well-being ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals with higher-quality friendships tend to report greater levels of happiness. The results suggest that supportive, trusting, and meaningful friendships play a significant role in enhancing emotional well-being. Additionally, subjective well-being was found to be an important psychological factor influencing how individuals perceive their life satisfaction and emotional experiences.

The study highlights that while friendship quality is a key contributor to happiness, well-being is influenced by multiple factors. These findings emphasize the importance of fostering positive interpersonal relationships to promote mental health among young adults. Future research should explore additional variables and include more diverse samples to strengthen the generalizability of results.



Keywords: Friendship Quality, Subjective Well-being, Happiness, Young Adults, Mental Health

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Happiness in young adulthood (18–25 years) is shaped by a combination of emotional, social, and psychological factors, with friendship quality and subjective well-being playing crucial roles. This developmental stage involves identity exploration, increased independence, and new academic, professional, and social challenges. During this time, friendships become a primary source of emotional support, validation, and companionship, making their quality essential for overall happiness.

Subjective well-being is another key determinant of happiness and refers to an individual's evaluation of life through life satisfaction, positive affect, and low negative affect (Diener et al., 1999; Diener et al., 2002). Individuals with high subjective well-being tend to be more optimistic, resilient, and capable of coping with life challenges. It also acts as a mediator between friendship quality and happiness by influencing how individuals perceive and respond to their experiences.

Several psychological theories explain this relationship. Attachment Theory highlights that secure relationships promote emotional safety and reduce anxiety. Self-Determination Theory emphasizes relatedness as a basic psychological need fulfilled through meaningful friendships, while Social Support Theory suggests that emotional and social support act as buffers against stress and enhance mental well-being.

Research in the Indian context supports these findings. Studies have shown that poor friendship quality is linked to higher emotional distress, while strong companionship and emotional support are associated with greater happiness among young adults (Sharma & Kaur, 2018; Pradhan & Chettri, 2018). Additionally, peer relationships have been identified as significant predictors of life satisfaction and reduced negative affect among youth (Patel et al., 2022). These findings underline the importance of friendships in managing academic pressures, social expectations, and changing family dynamics in India.

However, modern lifestyle factors such as social media and digital communication may affect the depth and authenticity of friendships, sometimes leading to superficial connections and reduced well-being. Increasing mental health concerns, including stress, anxiety, and loneliness among young adults, further highlight the need to understand these dynamics (National Mental Health Survey, 2021).

Despite existing research, limited attention has been given to the combined influence of friendship quality and subjective well-being on happiness, particularly in the Indian context.

Addressing this gap is important to better understand how these factors interact and contribute to mental well-being.

In conclusion, friendship quality and subjective well-being are essential determinants of happiness in young adulthood. While supportive friendships provide emotional security and reduce stress, subjective well-being shapes individuals' perceptions and experiences. Together, they play a vital role in enhancing mental health and overall happiness among young adults.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Young adulthood is a key stage of psychosocial development where friendships play an important role in emotional security, identity formation, and social learning. High-quality friendships—marked by trust, intimacy, and support—are associated with greater life satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem (Alsarrani et al., 2022).



Subjective well-being, defined as life satisfaction and a balance of positive over negative emotions (Diener et al., 2002), influences how individuals cope with stress.

In the Indian context, where collectivistic values emphasize relationships, friendships contribute to emotional support, value formation, and shared identity (Patel et al., 2022). Thus, the relationship between friendship quality and subjective well-being is crucial for both immediate mental health and long-term adjustment in young adults



LITERATURE REVIEW

Happiness in psychology is typically conceptualised as subjective well-being (SWB), a multidimensional construct encompassing life satisfaction and affective balance between positive and negative emotions (Diener et al., 1985). High SWB is consistently associated with better health outcomes, positive social relationships, and higher functioning across the life course (Diener et al., 2018). Among social ties, friendships play a particularly central role in young adulthood—a stage characterised by identity exploration, increased autonomy, and shifting social networks (Arnett, 2015).

Alsarrani et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review of 43 quantitative studies (2000–2022) examining the link between friendship quality and subjective wellbeing among adolescents. The findings indicated that higher-quality friendships—characterized by trust, intimacy, and support—were associated with lower depression and loneliness, and greater life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, and overall wellbeing. Despite most studies being cross-sectional, the review emphasized the importance of fostering positive peer relationships to enhance adolescents' mental wellbeing.

Using data from the 2003 General Social Survey of Canada, the study examined how friendship network characteristics—including number of friends, frequency of contact, and network heterogeneity—affect subjective well-being (SWB). Findings revealed that having more friends and frequent contact were associated with greater social trust, lower stress, and better health, all contributing to higher SWB. While heterogeneous networks increased access to social support, frequent face-to-face interactions remained the strongest direct predictor of enhanced wellbeing.

A study conducted in Turkey by [Author, 2016] examined the mediating role of perceived social support between friendship quality and psychological well-being among 529 adolescents aged 14–19. Using the Friendship Qualities Scale and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, data were analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Findings indicated that social support from family, friends, and significant others fully mediated the relationships between various dimensions of friendship quality—such as companionship, conflict, and security—and psychological well-being. The results highlight the critical role of perceived social support in translating positive friendship experiences into better adolescent mental health.

A study in Hatay, Turkey (2015–2016) examined the impact of friendship skills training on adolescents' friendship quality and subjective well-being. Twenty-one students participated in an eight-session psychoeducation program based on Morganett's (2013) model. Results showed significant improvements in both friendship quality and subjective well-being among participants compared to the control group, indicating that friendship-focused interventions can effectively promote adolescents' social and emotional health.

A study involving 1,690 college students examined differences in friendship experiences and their relationship with subjective well-being (SWB) between perceived adults (Pas) and perceived emerging adults (PEAs). Although no significant differences were found in friendship experiences between the groups, friendship quality showed stronger associations with SWB among Pas. Friendship variables explained 26% of SWB variance for Pas and 12% for PEAs, suggesting that friendships contribute more significantly to wellbeing in individuals who identify as adults.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study seeks to investigate the role of friendship quality and subjective well-being in influencing happiness among young adults. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Examine the relationship between friendship quality and happiness among young adults.
2. Assess the impact of subjective well-being on levels of happiness in young adults.
3. Explore the combined effect of friendship quality and subjective well-being on overall happiness.
4. Identify which dimensions of friendship quality (e.g., trust, emotional support, intimacy, conflict management) are most strongly associated with happiness.
5. Generate evidence-based recommendations for interventions or programs aimed at enhancing happiness and mental health .

HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

Young adults with higher-quality friendships and greater levels of subjective well-being will report significantly higher levels of happiness compared to those with lower-quality friendships and lower subjective well-being.

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

Friendship quality will have a positive and significant relationship with happiness among young adults, such that higher friendship quality predicts greater happiness.

Hypothesis 3 (H3)

Subjective well-being will significantly mediate the relationship between friendship quality and happiness in young adults.

Hypothesis 4 (H4)

Young adults who experience greater emotional support and trust within friendships will exhibit higher subjective well-being than those with weaker or less supportive friendships.



CHAPTER II- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a quantitative, correlational design to examine the relationship between friendship quality, subjective well-being, and happiness among young adults. It explores how these variables are associated without manipulation. Young adults were chosen due to important developmental changes influencing relationships and well-being. Ethical guidelines were followed, and standardized scales ensured reliability and validity.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The study population included young adults aged 18–30, a stage marked by significant development in relationships and emotional well-being. A sample of 100 participants from diverse educational, social, and occupational backgrounds was selected. The sample, including students and working professionals from Dehradun and nearby areas, was adequate for correlational analysis.

SAMPLING STRUCTURE

The sampling structure includes equal representation of participants across different demographic categories to avoid data bias.

INCLUSION-EXCLUSION CRITERIA

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Individuals aged 18–25 years.
- Both male and female participants were included to ensure gender representation.
- Participants fluent in English and able to understand the questionnaire items.
- Young adults who voluntarily consented to take part in the study.



EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Participants younger than 18 or older than 25.
- Individuals who did not complete all the questionnaire items.
- Participants with inconsistent, patterned, or invalid responses (e.g., selecting the same option throughout).
- Individuals with diagnosed psychiatric conditions that could influence self-report responses were not included.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Purposive sampling was used to select participants aged 18–30, targeting individuals in emerging adulthood.

Data were collected through both (Google Forms via social media) and offline questionnaires to ensure diversity.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected using both online and offline methods to ensure wider accessibility. A Google Form with

Standardized scales was shared via platforms like WhatsApp, Email, Instagram, and educational groups,

making data collection efficient and convenient. Offline questionnaires were also used for participants

preferring paper-based responses. This dual approach improved sampling reliability and reduced bias.

Participants were informed about the study, and their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained.



CHAPTER III

RESULT

Mean and standard deviation table

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Friendship quality	3.489	0.605
Happiness & well being	3.925	0.666

Correlation table (APA style)

Variable 1	Variable 2	r	p-value
Friendship quality	Happiness & well being	0.549	0.00004

Statistical interpretation of the result

A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between friendship quality and happiness & well-being among young adults (N = 50). The results indicated a moderate positive correlation, $r = 0.549$, $p = 0.00004$, suggesting that higher friendship quality is associated with higher levels of happiness and well-being.



CHAPTER IV- DISCUSS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULT

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULT

The findings of the present study reveal a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$) between friendship quality and happiness & well-being among young adults. This suggests that individuals who experience supportive, trusting, and meaningful friendships are more likely to report higher levels of happiness and overall psychological well-being. The statistically significant p-value further indicates that this relationship is not due to chance and holds importance within the studied sample.

These results can be interpreted in light of developmental theories of young adulthood, where peer relationships play a central role in emotional regulation, identity formation, and social support. High-quality friendships often provide a sense of belonging, validation, and security, which are essential components of subjective well-being. Emotional sharing, mutual understanding, and companionship in friendships may act as protective factors against stress, loneliness, and psychological distress.

The moderate strength of the correlation also indicates that while friendship quality is an important predictor of happiness, other factors such as family environment, personality traits, academic or career satisfaction, and mental health status may also contribute to an individual's well-being. Therefore, friendship should be considered as one of several significant determinants rather than the sole influencing factor.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of nurturing healthy interpersonal relationships during young adulthood. Promoting positive friendship experiences may contribute to enhancing emotional well-being and life satisfaction, making it a valuable area for psychological interventions and future research.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between friendship quality and happiness and well-being among young adults. The findings revealed a statistically significant moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals who experience higher-quality friendships tend to report greater levels of happiness and overall well-being. This highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships during young adulthood, a developmental stage characterized by increased reliance on peer connections for emotional support, identity development, and a sense of belonging (Arnett, 2000).

The results further indicate that positive qualities of friendship, such as trust, empathy, effective communication, and mutual support, play a crucial role in enhancing emotional stability and life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with earlier research, which emphasizes that strong and supportive social relationships are key contributors to subjective well-being and can act as protective factors against stress, loneliness, and psychological distress (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Moreover, supportive friendships have been associated with improved mental health outcomes and



greater resilience among young adults (Demir & Özdemir, 2010).

However, the moderate strength of the correlation suggests that happiness and well-being are influenced by multiple factors beyond friendship quality. Variables such as family environment, personality characteristics, academic or occupational satisfaction, and overall mental health status also play significant roles. This supports the understanding that well-being is a multidimensional construct shaped by a combination of internal dispositions and external circumstances (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

In conclusion, although friendship quality is not the only determinant of happiness and well-being, it remains a significant and meaningful contributor to psychological health in young adulthood. The findings underscore the importance of fostering positive, supportive, and meaningful friendships to enhance emotional well-being and life satisfaction. Future research should focus on including additional variables, employing larger and more diverse samples, and exploring longitudinal designs to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing well-being over time.

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