

FAMILY FACTORS INFLUENCING ADOLESCENTS' LIFE SATISFACTION IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

Objective. This study examined how family-related factors shape adolescents' life satisfaction within the sociocultural context of Vietnam.

Material and methods. The study involved 664 adolescents aged 12–18 from Hanoi and Bac Ninh provinces. Data were collected using standardized measurement tools that assessed various family dimensions, including family cohesion, parenting behavior, psychological control, parental relationship quality, children's participation rights, and both material and emotional aspects of family quality of life. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was used to evaluate adolescents' perceived life satisfaction.

Results. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between life satisfaction and factors such as family cohesion, participation rights, parenting behavior, emotional and material family quality of life, and positive parental relationships ($r = .38$ to $.45$, $p < .01$). In contrast, psychological control (particularly from mothers) and negative parental relationships were significantly negatively correlated with life satisfaction ($r = -.18$ to $-.28$, $p < .01$). Multiple regression analysis identified material quality of life ($\beta = .15$), children's participation rights ($\beta = .124$), and family cohesion ($\beta = .113$) as the strongest predictors, jointly accounting for 32.2% of the variance in adolescents' life satisfaction.

Conclusions. The findings suggest that adolescents' life satisfaction is substantially shaped by a supportive, emotionally nurturing, and materially stable family environment. Positive family interactions can buffer the adverse effects of psychological control and family conflict. These results underscore the importance of fostering adolescent participation and emotional bonding within the family, particularly in the context of modern Vietnamese society.

Keywords: family quality of life, adolescents, life satisfaction, parenting behavior, participation rights.

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Introduction

Adolescence is a formative stage of life characterized by heightened emotional intensity, identity exploration, and increasing social complexity. During this period, life satisfaction – defined as a global cognitive evaluation of one’s quality of life (Diener et al., 1985) – serves as a crucial indicator of subjective well-being and developmental adjustment (Gilman & Huebner, 2006). Among the many contextual factors that shape adolescent life satisfaction, the family remains a dominant influence, particularly in collectivist societies like Vietnam, where familial interdependence is central to cultural values and everyday life (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Research over the past two decades has consistently underscored the significance of family dynamics in promoting adolescent well-being. Family cohesion, characterized by emotional bonding and a sense of belonging, has been linked with higher levels of life satisfaction in diverse cultural contexts (Mas et al., 2021). Similarly, parenting behaviors marked by warmth, responsiveness, and support are positively associated with adolescents’ psychological health, whereas psychologically controlling parenting has been found to undermine autonomy and increase internalizing problems (Barber et al., 2005; Yap et al., 2014). Parents’ emotional regulation capacities how they understand and manage their own emotions – also influence their interactions with children, indirectly impacting adolescent adjustment (Morris et al., 2007).

Another emerging area of interest is the role of children’s participation rights within the family context. Grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, Article 12) (United Nations, 1989), children’s involvement in decision-making processes has been increasingly recognized as a key component of their development, agency, and well-being (Lundy, 2007). Empirical evidence has shown that adolescents who perceive greater participation in family decisions report higher levels of life satisfaction and self-esteem (González et al., 2015; Navarro et al., 2015). Moreover, the quality of the parent-parent relationship has been found to set the emotional tone for family life, influencing both parenting behaviors and children’s emotional outcomes (Cummings & Davies, 2010).

In the Vietnamese context, empirical research on how these multifaceted family factors jointly influence adolescent life satisfaction remains limited. Rapid social changes, urbanization, and shifting parenting roles are altering traditional family structures, raising the urgency of understanding how adolescents navigate and are impacted by their familial environments. While some studies have explored parenting styles or general family support (Nguyen et al., 2020), an integrative approach encompassing variables such as family quality of life, parental emotional regulation, children’s participation in decision-making, parent-parent relationships, parenting practices, and family cohesion has not yet been systematically examined.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the relative contribution of these family-related factors to adolescents’ life satisfaction in Vietnam. By analyzing data from a diverse sample of adolescents in both urban and peri-urban settings, the study aims to generate culturally grounded insights that can inform family-based mental health promotion strategies and child rights-based interventions. In doing so, it contributes to a broader understanding of how families—despite their complexity—can become key sources of strength in fostering adolescent well-being in transitional societies.

Material and methods

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

O1. To explore adolescents’ perceptions of family-related factors, including family quality of life (both material and emotional aspects), children’s participation rights, parental psychological control, the parent-parent relationship, parenting behaviors, and family cohesion.

O2. To analyze the relationships between family quality of life (both material and emotional), children’s participation rights, parental psychological control, the parent-parent relationship, parenting behaviors, family cohesion, and adolescents’ life satisfaction.

Research hypotheses

H1. Positive family factors (family quality of life, children’s participation rights, positive parenting behaviors, family cohesion, and harmonious parental relationships) are positively correlated with adolescents’ life satisfaction.

H2. Negative family factors (parental psychological control and conflicted parental relationships) are negatively correlated with adolescents’ life satisfaction.

Sample

The total number of participants in the study was 664 adolescents aged 12 to 18 years, recruited from five lower and upper secondary schools in Bac Ninh province and Hanoi city. The socio-demographic variables included in the study were those previously identified in the literature as influencing adolescents’ perception of happiness. Table 1 below describes the key characteristics of the study sample.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Study Participants

| Participant Characteristics | N | % | Participant Characteristics | N | % |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Gender | | | Family Type | | |
| Male | 330 | 49.7 | Extended family | 382 | 57.5 |
| Female | 334 | 50.3 | Nuclear family | 245 | 36.9 |
| | | | One or both parents deceased | 11 | 1.7 |
| | | | Divorced/separated parents | 20 | 3.0 |
| | | | Stepparent (stepmother/stepfather) | 6 | 0.9 |
| Age Group | | | Biological Status | | |
| Early adolescence | 252 | 38.0 | Biological child | 592 | 89.2 |
| Middle adolescence | 228 | 34.3 | Adopted child | 62 | 9.3 |
| Late adolescence /young adult | 184 | 27.7 | Stepchild | 10 | 1.5 |
| Birth Order | | | Family Economic Status | | |
| First-born | 298 | 44.9 | High | 158 | 23.8 |
| Middle-born | 195 | 29.4 | Middle | 476 | 71.7 |
| Youngest child | 129 | 19.4 | Low | 30 | 4.5 |
| Only child | 42 | 6.3 | | | |
| Residential Area | | | Location | | |
| Urban | 355 | 53.5 | Hanoi | 261 | 39.3 |
| Suburban | 133 | 20.0 | Bac Ninh | 403 | 60.7 |
| Rural | 176 | 26.5 | | | |

Instrument Development and Validation

In addition to demographic questions, several standardized and study-specific instruments were employed to capture adolescents' perceptions of life satisfaction and family dynamics. For internationally developed measures, a systematic translation and back-translation procedure was used (Brislin, 1980), followed by expert review to ensure semantic, conceptual, and cultural equivalence. A pilot test with 30 adolescents further confirmed the comprehensibility and cultural appropriateness of the items. For scales newly developed by the research team, items were generated based on theoretical frameworks, qualitative interviews, and expert consultation, then refined through pilot testing. Construct validity was examined using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on randomly split halves of the sample, with model fit indices (χ^2/df , CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR) indicating acceptable to good fit across all instruments.

Description of the instruments used

In addition to demographic questions, the following scales were employed in this study:

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985) measures individuals' overall life satisfaction using five items. While the original version employs a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), in this study the scale was adapted to a 5-point format (1 = not true to 5 = very true) to ensure consistency with other instruments. This adaptation maintained the internal reliability of the scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$), though it may reduce response granularity and limit direct comparability with findings based on the original 7-point version.

Family Quality of Life Scale (FqoL), originally developed by Poston et al. (2003), and later revised by Hoffman et al. (2006). The original version contains 10 subscales, later reduced to 5 subscales with 25 items. In this study, we utilized the shortened version and selected 3 subscales: Parenting (6 items), Emotional well-being (4 items), and Physical/Material well-being (5 items). The subscale on Disability-related support was excluded due to its limited relevance to our sample, and the Family interaction subscale was excluded due to multicollinearity with the family cohesion measure. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied. Participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction for each item. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were $\alpha = 0.70$ for the Physical/Material subscale and $\alpha = 0.73$ for the Emotional well-being subscale.

Family Cohesion Scale, developed by the research team, aimed to assess the emotional closeness and bonding between adolescents and their families. The scale consists of 8 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = not true, 2 = slightly true, 3 = fairly true, and 4 = very true. Higher scores indicate stronger family cohesion, while lower scores reflect weaker familial bonding. The Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.84$.

Children's Participation Rights Scale, developed by the research team to measure adolescents' perceived involvement in family activities and decision-making. This scale includes 7 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = not true, 2 = slightly true, 3 = fairly true, and 4 = very true. Higher scores indicate greater participation in family decisions, while lower scores suggest limited involvement. The Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.86$.

Psychological Control–Disrespect Scale (PCDS) by Barber et al. (2012). This scale measures adolescents' perceptions of disrespectful psychological control by their parents. It comprises 8 items with 3 response options: 1 = not like my parent, 2 = somewhat like my parent, and 3 = very much like my parent. Respondents answered separately for their mother and father. Higher scores reflect higher levels of perceived psychological control and disrespect, whereas lower scores indicate higher levels of perceived parental respect. The Cronbach's alpha

coefficients were $\alpha = 0.78$ for paternal psychological control and $\alpha = 0.79$ for maternal psychological control.

Parental Relationship Scale, developed by the research team, a 10-item Likert scale developed to assess adolescents' perceptions of their parents' relationship. It consists of two subdimensions: positive relationship (e.g., warmth and harmony) and negative relationship (e.g., conflict). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = not true, 2 = slightly true, 3 = fairly true, and 4 = very true. The Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.91$ for the positive relationship subscale and $\alpha = 0.85$ for the negative relationship subscale.

Data Confidentiality and Anonymity of Participants

All information collected from participants was processed anonymously and used solely for scientific research purposes. This study strictly adhered to the legal regulations on personal data protection in Vietnam, including the *Civil Code (No. 91/2015/QH13)*, the *Law on Cybersecurity (No. 24/2018/QH14)*, and especially the *Decree No. 13/2023/ND-CP on the Protection of Personal Data* issued by the Government of Vietnam.

Prior to participation, all individuals were thoroughly informed about the objectives, scope, and content of the study. They were explicitly advised of their rights, including the freedom to refuse or withdraw from the research at any point without any negative consequences. The research fully respected participants' autonomy and dignity, and committed to safeguarding the confidentiality and security of all personal or sensitive data, in strict accordance with ethical standards for scientific research conducted in Vietnam.

Results

Results 1

Adolescents' Perceptions of Family Dynamics

To assess adolescents' perceptions of their family environment, this study examined their evaluations of parental behaviors and various aspects of family quality of life, including emotional and material well-being, family cohesion, child participation, parental psychological control, and the quality of the parental relationship.

Findings revealed that adolescents rated *parental behavior* as fairly positive ($M = 3.81$; $SD = 0.78$). Parents were perceived as supportive in guiding behavioral development, decision-making, and participation in academic and extracurricular activities. The highest-rated item was "parents teach their children how to behave toward others" ($M = 4.25$), while the lowest-rated was "parents know their children's relationships well" ($M = 3.44$). This suggests a greater parental focus on behavioral instruction than on emotional connection or understanding of adolescents' social lives.

Regarding *emotional well-being*, adolescents reported a moderate level of satisfaction ($M = 3.59$; $SD = 0.83$). They appreciated the care and support received from family members. However, the item "my family helps me relieve stress" received the lowest rating ($M = 3.33$), indicating a shortfall in emotional communication and support mechanisms within the household.

Material well-being was evaluated at a relatively high level ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 0.78$), with adolescents expressing the greatest satisfaction with health care access ($M = 3.85$) and the sense of safety at home. Nonetheless, discrepancies in access to certain services, such as dental care ($M = 3.19$), suggest lingering gaps in material support.

Perceived *family cohesion* was moderate ($M = 3.11$; $SD = 0.61$). Adolescents valued emotional encouragement and the desire to live close to family. However, emotional bonding and

interpersonal sharing remained limited, particularly due to the lack of quality time between parents and children.

In terms of *children's participation rights*, the mean score was relatively low ($M = 2.74$; $SD = 0.71$). Although some adolescents mentioned having discussions with their parents during disagreements, most reported limited involvement in family decision-making. This reflects the persistence of hierarchical and patriarchal norms typical of many Asian family systems.

Parental *psychological control* was rated at a low to moderate level, with mothers exhibiting slightly higher levels of control than fathers ($M_{\text{mother}} = 1.75$; $M_{\text{father}} = 1.68$). Common behaviors included setting excessive expectations and making social comparisons, while emotional neglect was less frequently reported. These results suggest that parental control tends to stem from performance pressure rather than emotional disengagement.

Finally, the *quality of the parental relationship* was perceived more positively than negatively ($M_{\text{positive}} = 3.07$; $M_{\text{negative}} = 2.69$). Despite conflicts, adolescents felt that their parents generally loved and respected one another. Nonetheless, parental conflicts still contributed to emotional insecurity among adolescents.

Overall, adolescents perceived their family environments as moderately supportive. While behavioral guidance and material provisions were seen in a positive light, emotional intimacy, participatory rights, and psychological autonomy emerged as areas needing further improvement to enhance adolescent well-being in the context of contemporary Vietnamese families. (Table 2)

Table 2

Adolescents' perceptions of family environment

| Family Aspects | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Behavior Guidance | 3.81 | 0.78 |
| Emotional Well-being | 3.59 | 0.83 |
| Material Well-being | 3.69 | 0.78 |
| Family Cohesion | 3.11 | 0.61 |
| Participation Rights | 2.74 | 0.71 |
| Parental Psychological Control – Mother | 1.75 | 0.49 |
| Parental Psychological Control – Father | 1.68 | 0.48 |
| Parental Relationship Quality – Positive | 3.07 | 0.95 |
| Parental Relationship Quality – Negative | 2.69 | 0.97 |

Note. The “Parental Psychological Control” variable was divided into two separate components—Mother and Father—to clearly distinguish these dimensions

The “Parental Relationship Quality” variable was divided into two separate components—Positive and Negative—to clearly distinguish these dimensions

Results 2

The influence of family factors on adolescents' life satisfaction

The correlation analysis between family-related factors and adolescents' perceived happiness revealed that life satisfaction is significantly influenced by various aspects of the family environment. Specifically, six family variables were found to be positively and significantly

correlated with life satisfaction among adolescents, including: parenting behavior ($r = 0.43, p < 0.01$), emotional quality of life ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$), material quality of life ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$), family cohesion ($r = 0.45, p < 0.01$), child participation ($r = 0.45, p < 0.01$), and positive parental relationship ($r = 0.38, p < 0.01$). Among these, family cohesion and child participation showed the strongest correlations, underscoring the critical importance of a cohesive and democratic family environment in enhancing adolescents' overall life satisfaction. When adolescents feel heard, included in decision-making processes, and secure in their relationships with family members, their level of life satisfaction tends to increase markedly. In addition, active parental support—both emotional and material—also contributes to the formation of a positive perception of life.

Conversely, three factors demonstrated a significant negative correlation with adolescents' life satisfaction: paternal psychological control ($r = -0.26, p < 0.01$), maternal psychological control ($r = -0.28, p < 0.01$), and negative parental relationship ($r = -0.18, p < 0.01$). Notably, maternal psychological control exhibited the strongest negative association, suggesting that excessive maternal control may diminish adolescents' positive life evaluations. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that psychological control, when not accompanied by emotional support, can foster feelings of suffocation, lack of autonomy, and disrespect in adolescents. Although the impact of negative parental relationships was relatively weaker, it still contributed to lower life satisfaction—particularly in contexts where adolescents are frequently exposed to persistent family conflict. (Table 3)

Table 3

Correlation between family factors and adolescents' life satisfaction

| Family Factors | Correlation Coefficient (r) | Direction of Correlation | Strength of Association* |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Family cohesion | 0.45** | Positive | Strong |
| Child participation | 0.45** | Positive | Strong |
| Parenting behavior | 0.43** | Positive | Strong |
| Emotional quality of life | 0.42** | Positive | Strong |
| Material quality of life | 0.42** | Positive | Strong |
| Positive parental relationship | 0.38** | Positive | Moderate |
| Mother's psychological control | -0.28** | Negative | Weak–Moderate |
| Father's psychological control | -0.26** | Negative | Weak–Moderate |
| Negative parental relationship | -0.18** | Negative | Weak |

Note. Strength classification follows Cohen's (1988) guidelines: $r \geq .40$ = strong; $.30 \leq r < .40$ = moderate; $.20 \leq r < .30$ = weak; $r < .20$ = very weak.

To examine the predictive power of family-related variables on adolescents' life satisfaction, the study employed both simple and multiple regression analyses.

In the simple regression models, nearly all family factors demonstrated significant associations with life satisfaction. The strongest predictor was adolescents' *right to participate in family decisions*, explaining 20% of the variance in life satisfaction. *Family cohesion* accounted for 16.8%, while *parenting behavior* explained 14.4%, highlighting the role of parental guidance and emotional support. The *material* and *emotional quality of family life* contributed 12.6% and 10.2%, respectively. Though smaller in magnitude, *positive parental relationships* also had a

meaningful influence (6.2%). In contrast, *psychological control* and *negative parental relationships* had negative beta coefficients but explained only 4.5% and 1.5% of the variance, respectively.

In the multiple regression model, where all predictors were entered simultaneously, family-related factors explained 32.2% of the variance in adolescents' life satisfaction, $F(9, 654) = 36.04, p < .001$. Assumptions of regression were checked beyond VIF, with results indicating no serious violations. Five variables remained statistically significant. *Material quality of family life* emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.15$), followed by *adolescents' participation* ($\beta = 0.124$), *family cohesion* ($\beta = 0.113$), *parenting behavior* ($\beta = 0.09$), and *positive parental relationships* ($\beta = 0.082$). Negative variables, including psychological control and poor parental relationships, lost their predictive significance in the presence of positive dimensions. (Table 4 and table 5).

Table 4

Univariate regression model predicting adolescents' life satisfaction based on family factors

| Family Factor | R ² | SE | β (Beta) | t | p-value |
|--|----------------|------|----------------|-------|----------|
| Parenting Behavior | 0.185 | 0.04 | 0.43 | 12.33 | p < .001 |
| Emotional Quality of Life | 0.173 | 0.06 | 0.42 | 11.81 | p < .001 |
| Material Quality of Life | 0.172 | 0.05 | 0.42 | 11.78 | p < .001 |
| Family Cohesion | 0.201 | 0.04 | 0.45 | 12.96 | p < .001 |
| Participation Rights | 0.200 | 0.04 | 0.45 | 12.93 | p < .001 |
| Father's Psychological Control | 0.065 | 0.06 | -0.26 | -6.89 | p < .001 |
| Mother's Psychological Control | 0.079 | 0.05 | -0.28 | -7.59 | p < .001 |
| Positive Parental Relationship Quality | 0.141 | 0.04 | 0.38 | 10.47 | p < .001 |
| Negative Parental Relationship Quality | 0.032 | 0.07 | -0.18 | -4.77 | p < .001 |

Note. R²: indicates the proportion of variance in life satisfaction explained by each individual predictor.

SE: standard error associated with the regression estimate.

β (Beta): standardized coefficient reflecting the relative strength of each predictor.

t: t-statistic evaluating the null hypothesis that $\beta = 0$.

p-value: statistical significance; values below 0.001 indicate highly significant effects.

Table 5

Predictive power of family factors on adolescents' life satisfaction

| Predictor Variables | ΔR^2 | SE | β (Beta) | t | p | VIF |
|----------------------------|--------------|------|----------------|------|-------|------|
| Model Summary | 0.322 | 1.92 | — | 4.26 | 0.000 | — |
| Parenting Behavior | — | — | 0.10 | 2.29 | 0.022 | 1.91 |
| Emotional Quality of Life | — | — | 0.08 | 1.69 | 0.092 | 1.91 |
| Material Quality of Life | — | — | 0.15 | 3.71 | 0.000 | 1.61 |
| Family Cohesion | — | — | 0.11 | 2.47 | 0.014 | 2.07 |
| Child Participation Rights | — | — | 0.12 | 2.69 | 0.007 | 2.08 |

| Predictor Variables | ΔR^2 | SE | β (Beta) | t | p | VIF |
|--|--------------|----|-------------------|-------|-------|------|
| Father's Psychological Control | — | — | -0.03 | -0.59 | 0.555 | 1.99 |
| Mother's Psychological Control | — | — | -0.05 | -1.17 | 0.241 | 2.05 |
| Positive Parental Relationship Quality | — | — | 0.16 | 4.04 | 0.000 | 1.56 |
| Negative Parental Relationship Quality | — | — | -0.02 | -0.65 | 0.514 | 1.31 |

Note. ΔR^2 = Change in R-squared for full model;

SE = standard error of the model summary;

β = standardized regression coefficient; p-values in bold ($p < .05$) denote statistical significance; VIF = variance inflation factor, values < 5 suggest no serious multicollinearity.

Probability note. $p < .001$ indicates a highly statistically significant predictor.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine Vietnamese adolescents' perceptions of family dynamics and to explore how various family-related factors influence life satisfaction. The findings indicate that, while Vietnamese families provide moderate support in terms of behavioral guidance and material provisions, there are notable gaps in emotional intimacy, adolescent participation, and psychological autonomy.

Positive family influences on life satisfaction

Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), adolescents' life satisfaction was significantly associated with positive family characteristics, including parenting behavior, emotional quality of life, material well-being, family cohesion, adolescent participation, and positive parent-child relationships. Among these, family cohesion and adolescent participation emerged as the strongest predictors, suggesting that adolescents in cohesive and participatory family environments report higher life satisfaction. These findings align with prior research emphasizing that when adolescents are trusted, listened to, and meaningfully involved in family decision-making, their emotional well-being and sense of agency increase (Lampropoulou, 2018; Brion-Meisels & Jones, 2012). Bivariate regression results showed that adolescent participation accounted for approximately 20% of the variance in life satisfaction, highlighting the critical role of autonomy-supportive practices in fostering resilience and optimism during adolescence. Similarly, Fosco and Lydon-Staley (2020) found that high family cohesion contributes to greater positive affect and reduced vulnerability to daily stressors, reinforcing the protective role of supportive family environments. Material quality of life also emerged as a significant predictor, reflecting that adolescents' life satisfaction is multidimensional, shaped not only by emotional bonds but also by material security. This observation is consistent with Diener et al. (2018), who suggested that while emotional support nurtures inner well-being, material security forms a foundational context for evaluating overall life quality.

Negative family influences and cultural context

As expected, negative factors such as parental psychological control and interparental conflict were inversely correlated with adolescent life satisfaction. Notably, maternal psychological control demonstrated the strongest negative association, a pattern that is particularly salient in Vietnam. Cultural norms position mothers as primary supervisors of education and household routines, with substantial responsibility for children's academic success. Consequently, maternal behaviors that are perceived as intrusive or controlling can disproportionately affect

adolescents' autonomy and emotional well-being. This interpretation aligns with Barber's (1996) theory of intrusive parenting and prior research demonstrating the negative impact of psychological control on internalizing symptoms among adolescents (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Cui et al., 2014). Interestingly, multivariate analyses revealed that the negative effects of psychological control and family conflict were attenuated when positive parenting variables were included. This suggests a protective buffering mechanism, whereby emotional warmth, responsiveness, and family cohesion mitigate the adverse effects of controlling or conflictual behaviors (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Rada & Turcu, 2012).

Implications for culturally sensitive interventions

The findings highlight the need for family-based interventions tailored to Vietnamese cultural realities. Specifically:

Parent-training programs should emphasize positive parenting strategies that respect parental authority while promoting adolescent participation, such as structured family decision-making practices that allow youth input without challenging hierarchical norms.

Communication strategies can be designed to preserve "saving face" while encouraging adolescents to express opinions, thus balancing filial respect with autonomy.

Interventions should consider the role of alternative caregivers, including grandparents, particularly in multigenerational households, as well as the influence of parental labor migration on family cohesion, emotional support, and adolescent participation.

Cultural limitations and directions for future research

Several cultural factors may have influenced the findings. Social desirability bias may have affected adolescents' self-reports of family cohesion, parental control, and participation. Moreover, survey items may be interpreted differently depending on family structure, caregiving arrangements, and regional norms. Future studies should adopt mixed-methods approaches, incorporating qualitative interviews to unpack the cultural meaning of "participation" and to explore how adolescents perceive autonomy and parental authority within extended families. Additionally, research should examine longitudinal impacts of parental migration and multigenerational caregiving arrangements on adolescent life satisfaction.

Conclusions

This study provides in-depth insights into how family-related factors influence Vietnamese adolescents' life satisfaction and highlights cultural characteristics that shape family relationships. The findings indicate that family cohesion, adolescent participation, positive parenting, emotional quality of life, and material well-being all play significant roles in enhancing adolescents' well-being, while maternal psychological control and interparental conflict may have negative effects. These results not only reinforce Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) but also support international studies emphasizing the importance of adolescent participation and family cohesion for youth development (Lampropoulou, 2018; Fosco & Lydon-Staley, 2020; Brion-Meisels & Jones, 2012).

Notably, this study fills a gap in the existing literature, as prior research on family relationships and adolescent well-being has primarily focused on Western countries or individualistic cultural contexts. By emphasizing Vietnamese cultural factors such as maternal supervisory roles, hierarchical family structures, "saving face," and the involvement of alternative caregivers in multigenerational households, this study extends understanding of how cultural context shapes the effects of family factors on adolescent life satisfaction.

Furthermore, the findings provide a basis for cross-cultural comparison. For instance, while studies in Western countries often highlight adolescent autonomy and participation (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010), findings in Vietnam suggest that participation must be balanced with filial piety and hierarchical norms. This opens avenues for international comparative research, helping to clarify how cultural variations interact with family dynamics to influence adolescent psychological development.

In conclusion, this study enriches the field of family and adolescent well-being research, offering empirical evidence from Vietnam, identifying both protective and risk factors within families, and proposing culturally sensitive intervention strategies. These findings are valuable for researchers, policymakers, educators, and mental health practitioners seeking to develop programs that respect family traditions while promoting adolescent participation and autonomy.

Limits and future directions

This study presents several limitations. First, the data were entirely based on adolescents' self-reporting, which may be subject to social desirability bias and limitations in self-awareness. Second, the cross-sectional design precludes any inference of causality between family factors and life satisfaction. Third, cultural norms might have influenced the transparency of responses, especially regarding negative family dynamics.

Despite these constraints, the study benefits from a relatively large sample size and the use of psychometrically sound instruments, providing valuable insights into the influence of family environments on adolescents' subjective well-being. The findings underscore the significance of democratic participation, emotional bonding, and supportive parenting practices in promoting youth life satisfaction.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to explore causal pathways and include multiple informants, such as parents or teachers, to triangulate adolescents' perceptions. Furthermore, intervention programs should prioritize strengthening family cohesion, enhancing adolescents' participatory roles within the household, and reducing psychological control, to foster resilient and sustainably happy youth.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethics Committee Approval

The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam. (No 9305/CN-XHNV).

Consent to participate

Informed written consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Adolescents were fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, their right to withdraw at any time without any consequence, and the assurance that all responses would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes.

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