

Navigating Adolescent Happiness: Exploring Determinants, Obstacles, and Implications from Recent Literature (2021-2025)

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Abstract: This study explores key factors influencing adolescent happiness through a narrative literature review. Adolescence is a vulnerable phase marked by significant biological, psychological, and social transitions, making happiness a vital component for long-term well-being and healthy development. The review analyzed 20 peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2025. Findings indicate that adolescent happiness is shaped by three main domains: (1) individual psychological factors such as emotion regulation, gratitude, optimism, religiosity, self-acceptance, self-esteem, character strengths, help-seeking behaviour, and emotional intelligence; (2) social and relational factors, particularly the quality of relationships with parents and peers; and (3) lifestyle factors, including sleep quality, physical activity, and patterns of social media use. In addition, several barriers were identified, such as academic stress, interpersonal difficulties, and unhealthy daily habits. These findings suggest the importance of integrated intervention strategies that address internal psychological skills, enhance interpersonal relationships, and promote healthy lifestyle choices. The study contributes to the field by synthesizing recent literature across various contexts, offering a conceptual basis for the development of more targeted, evidence-based programs aimed at improving adolescent happiness.

Keywords: Adolescent happiness, Psychological factors, Social and relational factors, Lifestyle factors

1 INTRODUCTION

Happiness is a personal emotional state that arises from how individuals perceive and respond to life experiences. Seligman (2005) defines a happy person as someone who experiences more positive emotions than negative ones in daily life. In line with this, Arif (2016) emphasizes that all human efforts are fundamentally directed toward the pursuit of happiness. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS-Badan Pusat Statistik) indicate that happiness tends to peak during youth, particularly among individuals aged ≤ 24 and 25–40. This trend suggests that adolescence a period marked by significant psychological, biological, and social transitions (WHO, as cited in Putro, 2017) is a crucial phase in the formation of well-being. However, adolescence is also a period of vulnerability, characterized by emotional instability, indecisiveness in decision-making, identity exploration, academic pressure, and social demands (Hurlock, 1995). The World Health Organization (2024) reports a significant rise in the number of adolescents who have seriously considered suicide, increasing from 5.4% in 2015 to 8.5% in 2023. This highlights the urgent need to support adolescent happiness. Recent studies underscore the importance of happiness in protecting adolescents from risky behaviors and enhancing resilience. For instance, Ciftci and Sarman (2024) highlight happiness as a buffer against behavioral risk tendencies, while Murtezaoglu and Cıkrıkci (2022) emphasize the role of peer relationships in adolescent emotional well-being. Other research has shown that factors such as emotional intelligence (Llamas-Diaz et al., 2023), self-compassion (Rahmi et al., 2024), and family support (Rini, 2023) significantly contribute to adolescent happiness. A systematic review by Izzo, Baiocco, and Pistella (2022) confirms that the quality of family functioning is one of the key determinants of happiness among children and adolescents. Furthermore, Lukoseviciute, Zailskiene, and Smigelskas (2022) reveal that standardized measures of happiness are essential for understanding and assessing adolescent happiness. Taken together, these findings reflect a significant advancement in adolescent happiness research over the past decade, both in terms of thematic focus and methodological approaches.

Nevertheless, several gaps remain unaddressed in the scientific literature. This review found that most studies have focused on only one or two determinants of happiness, such as social support or family functioning, while few have explored adolescent happiness from a more holistic perspective. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by synthesizing recent empirical evidence on the factors influencing adolescent happiness across various dimensions and contexts. At the same time, this article offers both a conceptual and practical foundation for developing more comprehensive evidence-based interventions, by thematically and cross-contextually mapping the latest findings. Based on the background and urgency of studying adolescent happiness, this research is guided by three main questions: (1) What are the key factors influencing adolescent happiness today? (2) What are the main barriers that hinder or lower happiness levels among adolescents? and (3) What are the implications of the literature findings for the development of effective happiness intervention programs for adolescents? In line with these questions, the objectives of this study are: first, to identify and classify both internal and external factors most frequently cited as determinants of adolescent happiness in empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025; second, to analyze the contribution of each of these factors to adolescent happiness; and third, to uncover research gaps or limitations in previous studies as a foundation for developing more targeted future research. This study is expected to offer broad benefits theoretical, practical, and policy-related. Theoretically, its findings aim to enrich the body of knowledge in developmental psychology and positive psychology, particularly in relation to adolescent happiness, and to serve as a basis for strengthening or advancing relevant theories. Practically, the results may provide valuable insights for parents and educators in creating environments that support adolescent well-being, and serve as a reference for counselors and psychologists in designing effective intervention programs. For future researchers, this study may serve as an initial roadmap to highlight areas that warrant further exploration. At the policy level, the findings may be used as a foundation for developing evidence-based strategies and programs to improve adolescents' psychological well-being through the education sector, mental health services, and social welfare systems.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a narrative literature review approach as its primary method to explore key factors influencing adolescent happiness. The articles analyzed were obtained through systematic searches on academic databases, specifically Google Scholar and Scopus, with the assistance of Harzing's Publish or Perish software. The keywords used for the search were "Adolescent Happiness" and "kebahagiaaan remaja" to ensure a comprehensive capture of relevant literature in both English and Indonesian. To maintain the currency and relevance of the review, the search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2025. The inclusion criteria for article selection focused on studies that discussed the determinants of happiness in adolescents and had research subjects specifically within the adolescent age group. Conversely, articles were excluded if their research subjects were not adolescents, if they did not present results relevant to the topic of adolescent happiness, or if they were not available in full-text format.

The selection process involved several stages. Initially, 100 articles were identified from Google Scholar and 200 from Scopus. A preliminary selection based on titles and abstracts led to the exclusion of 223 articles (67 from Google Scholar and 156 from Scopus) due to irrelevance, being books or book chapters, duplicates, or being theoretical studies such as literature reviews and meta-analyses. Following this, 44 articles (10 from Google Scholar and 34 from Scopus) were eliminated because their full-text versions were unavailable. Out of the remaining 30 eligible articles, a final detailed screening by the researchers resulted in 20 articles being selected as the most relevant and thus included in this literature review.

The selected articles comprised primarily quantitative studies (17 publications), along with two qualitative studies and one mixed-methods study, all specifically focusing on adolescent subjects. The findings from these selected articles served as the core materials for the subsequent analysis, aiming to identify and classify the most frequently cited internal and external factors influencing adolescent happiness, analyze the contribution of each factor, and uncover existing research gaps.

3 RESULTS

Twenty publications meeting the criteria, all published between 2021 and 2025, were included in this study. The majority of these publications were quantitative studies (seventeen publications). Additionally, there were two qualitative studies and one mixed-methods study, all of which focused on adolescent subjects. In this research, the results of the selected articles, which served as references and research materials, are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Results of the Analysis of the Reviewed Adolescent Happiness Study (2021–2025)

Author(s) & Year	Title	Sample	Methodology	Key Findings
Kamilah, A. N., & Rahmasari, D. (2023)	Emotion regulation and adolescent happiness	214 students from a high school in Lumajang, Indonesia	Quantitative correlational	Emotional regulation was positively associated with happiness. It contributed 38.9% to adolescent happiness.
Rini (2023)	Family function quality and love language fulfillment as predictors of adolescent happiness	456 adolescents aged 13–18 from Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) Indonesia	Non-experimental quantitative	Psychological and educational functions, as well as quality time and physical touch, strongly predicted happiness.
Wang, X., et al. (2022)	Optimism and friendship quality as mediators in the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction	1.609 adolescents from Sichuan, China	Quantitative, two-wave longitudinal	Emotional intelligence (EI) predicted life satisfaction, optimism, and friendship quality mediated this relationship.
Sharma, G. (2021)	Gratitude and emotional intelligence as predictors of adolescent happiness	100 adolescents from Delhi NCR, India	Quantitative, correlational	Gratitude and Emotional Intelligence were significantly related to adolescent happiness.
Rosyidi, H., & Fitriana, Q. A. (2023)	The role of optimism and religiosity on adolescent happiness	105 adolescents in Mojokerto, Indonesia	Quantitative, descriptive	Optimism and religiosity significantly predicted adolescent happiness ($R^2 = .421$).
Ruan, Q.-N., et al. (2023)	Self-acceptance, social comparison, and attributional style in adolescent mental health	242 adolescents with left-behind and incomplete families	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Low self-acceptance and negative social comparisons predicted depression and anxiety.
Zhang, J., et al. (2022)	Problematic social media use and happiness: Lifestyle habits as mediators	58,976 adolescents in Italy	Quantitative, path analysis	Social media use negatively impacted happiness through sleep issues and low physical activity.

Gomez-Baya, D., et al. (2023)	Leisure time and subjective happiness in early adolescents	1,174 adolescents from Chile, Brazil, Spain	Quantitative, cross-national correlational	Family time and outdoor play were protective of subjective happiness.
Master, L., et al. (2023)	Sleep duration/efficiency and next-day mood in adolescents	525 adolescents in the U.S.	Quantitative, micro-longitudinal	Better sleep predicted higher happiness and lower anger the next day.
Díaz, L.D., et al. (2023)	Emotional Intelligence and subjective happiness in adolescents	333 students from Spain	Quantitative	Emotional Intelligence predicted happiness through positive and negative affect.
Hakokongas, E., & Puhakka, R. (2023)	Adolescents' conceptions of happiness and nature	184 written responses from Finnish adolescents	Qualitative	Nature linked with happiness through physical and emotional restoration.
Keller, J., et al. (2024)	Forest bathing and adolescent mental well-being	24 high school students	Mixed-method	Forest bathing reduced stress and improved well-being.
Puhakka, R., & Hakoköngäs, E. (2024)	Adolescents' experience in nature and well-being	15–16-year-olds in Lahti, Finland	Qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenology	Nature experiences provided emotional calm, stress relief, and reflection space.
Yang, J.-E., & Moon, S. (2024)	Predictors of adolescent happiness via Roy's Adaptation Model	324 Korean adolescents	Quantitative, longitudinal	Happiness declined over 3 years; peer support buffered academic stress.
Yap, C.-C., et al. (2021)	Self-esteem and motivation as predictors of adolescent happiness	480 students from Malaysia	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Motivation partially mediated the relationship between self-esteem and happiness.
Tabbasam, U., et al. (2023)	Self-strength, help-seeking behavior, and happiness among adolescents	809 adolescents from Pakistan and China	Quantitative, causal-comparative	Self-strength and help-seeking positively influenced happiness.
Haspolat, N. K. (2023)	Emotion dysregulation as mediator between parent-adolescent	338 high school students in Turkey	Quantitative, correlational, SEM	Parent-child relationship influenced happiness via

	relationship and happiness			emotional regulation.
Yin, N., et al. (2025)	Happiness, emotional symptoms, and exercise among adolescents in therapy	392 adolescents in Shandong, China	Quantitative, cross-sectional with mediation analysis	Exercise improved happiness directly and via reduced anxiety and depression.
Vianez, R. K., et al. (2023)	Psychological entitlement and adolescent happiness	91 adolescents in Yogyakarta	Quantitative, correlational	Higher entitlement predicted lower happiness.
Lesinskienė, S., et al. (2025)	School environment and adolescent happiness	1,992 students in Lithuania	Quantitative	Bullying and lack of teacher intervention reduced school happiness.

3.1 Factors Determining Adolescent Happiness

Based on the literature review, adolescent happiness is influenced by a number of factors that can be grouped into three main aspects: psychological, social-relational, and lifestyle. From a psychological perspective, various studies highlight the importance of emotional regulation, gratitude, optimism and religiosity, self-acceptance, self-esteem, personal strengths, help-seeking tendencies, and emotional intelligence as key components contributing to adolescent happiness. Meanwhile, in the social-relational dimension, the quality of relationships with parents and peers has been shown to play a significant role in shaping adolescents' sense of happiness. On the other hand, lifestyle factors also demonstrate a significant influence, where habits such as uncontrolled social media use, poor sleep patterns, lack of physical activity, and unhealthy eating behaviors can reduce adolescents' levels of happiness. Therefore, understanding these various factors is essential as a foundation for designing programs or interventions aimed at holistically enhancing adolescents' psychological well-being.

Individual psychological factors have been proven to play a crucial role in shaping happiness during adolescence. A number of studies have shown that variables such as optimism, religiosity, emotional regulation, gratitude, and emotional intelligence significantly contribute to the enhancement of subjective well-being. Rosyidi and Fitriana (2023) found that adolescents with higher levels of optimism tend to experience greater happiness. Religiosity also serves as a source of emotional support and life meaning, thereby supporting adolescent happiness. Furthermore, Kamilah and Rahmasari (2023) stated that adolescents' ability to regulate emotions is strongly and positively correlated with their level of happiness. This finding is supported by Sharma (2021), who identified gratitude and emotional intelligence as key predictors of adolescent happiness. Moreover, the study by Diaz, Cabello, Gomez-Leal, Gutierrez-Cobo, Megias-Robles, & Fernandez-Berrocal (2023) adds that the influence of emotional intelligence on happiness is mediated by the positive and negative affects experienced by individuals. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of strengthening adolescents' capacity to manage emotional experiences adaptively as a foundation for developing happiness during adolescence.

In addition, other psychological factors related to self-concept and coping strategies also show a significant contribution to adolescent happiness. A study by Yap, Som, Sum, Tan, and Yee (2021) found that self-esteem has a significant positive relationship with happiness, with motivation acting as a mediator in this relationship. In other words, adolescents with high self-esteem and intrinsic motivation tend to experience higher levels of happiness. Tabbasam, Amjad, Ahmed, and Qiang (2023) found that adolescents with greater self-strength and a tendency to seek help (help-seeking behavior) reported significantly higher levels of happiness. This suggests that adolescents with adaptive coping skills are better able to maintain their happiness. On the other hand, Ruan, Shen, Yang, and Yan (2023) revealed that low self-acceptance and a high tendency for negative social comparison are predictors of depressive and anxious symptoms, which potentially reduce happiness. These findings strengthen the position of self-concept, self-strength, and coping skills as key components of individual psychological factors that shape adolescent happiness. Overall, these studies indicate that adolescent happiness is shaped by a variety of interacting internal psychological factors.

In the social-relational aspect, adolescent happiness is significantly influenced by the quality of interpersonal relationships, both within the family and among peers. A study conducted by Rini (2023) found that the quality of family functioning and the fulfillment of love languages have a significant impact on adolescent happiness. Psychological and educational functions were identified as the strongest family indicators of happiness, while quality time and physical touch were the most contributing expressions of love language. These findings are supported by Haspolat (2023), who showed that a positive relationship between adolescents and their parents not only increases happiness but also reduces difficulties in emotional regulation. Furthermore, Diego, Gaspar, and Garcia (2023) found that regularly spending leisure time with family has a positive effect on happiness, regardless of gender or cultural background. In addition, activities such as playing outdoors and participating in household chores were also identified as protective factors that strengthen adolescents' subjective happiness. In addition to family relationships, friendships also play an important role in contributing to adolescent happiness. A study by Wang, Lu, Hu, Xue, and Tang (2022) revealed that the quality of friendships serves as a significant mediating pathway between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adolescents. This finding highlights that adolescent happiness is shaped not only by intrapersonal factors but is also heavily influenced by social support and the quality of interactions within their immediate environment, including both family and peers.

Meanwhile, lifestyle factors also play a significant role in determining adolescents' levels of happiness. A study by Zhang, Marino, Canale, Charrier, Lazzeri, et al. (2022) found that problematic social media use has a negative relationship with adolescent happiness. This negative relationship is mediated by two factors: low frequency of physical activity and sleep disturbances, with the mediating effect being stronger through poor sleep quality. These findings suggest that unhealthy sleep habits are a major barrier to maintaining adolescents' emotional well-being. Research by Master, Nahmod, Mathew, Hale, Chang, et al. (2023) further reinforces the importance of sleep quality. Their study showed that adolescents who slept longer than usual reported lower levels of anger the following day. Conversely, those with higher sleep efficiency reported greater happiness. This underscores that both the quality and quantity of sleep directly affect adolescents' daily emotional states. Furthermore, a study by Yin, Zhang, Ren, Wang, Zhao, et al. (2025) revealed that adolescent happiness is strongly influenced by emotional health conditions (particularly symptoms of anxiety and depression), lifestyle factors (such as regular exercise and healthy eating habits), and family support, especially the quality of the parent-child relationship. Regular physical activity was found not only to have a direct effect on increasing happiness but also an indirect effect through reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Overall, these findings highlight that healthy lifestyle interventions including proper sleep regulation, consistent physical activity, and mindful social media use are essential strategies for holistically supporting adolescents' psychological well-being.

Overall, the literature findings suggest that adolescent happiness does not stand alone; rather, it results from the complex interaction between individual psychological capacities, the quality of social relationships, and daily lifestyle routines. Factors such as emotional regulation, supportive relationships with parents and peers, and healthy habits like sufficient sleep and regular physical activity all contribute to shaping adolescents' levels of happiness. These findings provide a comprehensive picture of the importance of a multidimensional approach to understanding and enhancing adolescent happiness, where each aspect of their lives interacts dynamically and cannot be separated from one another.

3.2 *Barriers to Adolescent Happiness*

In addition to the contributing factors, the literature also reveals various barriers that can diminish adolescents' levels of happiness. One of the primary obstacles is problematic social media use, as found in the study by Zhang, Marino, Canale, Charrier, Lazzeri, et al. (2022), where excessive use of social media was negatively correlated with happiness, with this negative effect mediated by sleep disturbances and low levels of physical activity. Another psychological barrier arises from the trait of psychological entitlement an excessive sense of deservingness which, according to Vianez, Afiati, & Anggawijayanto (2023), is negatively correlated with happiness and is associated with negative emotions and stress. From an environmental perspective, feeling unsafe at school and experiences of bullying are also major deterrents to adolescent happiness. The study by Lesinskiene, Sambaras, Ridzvanaviciute, Juraityte, Skabeikaite, et al. (2025) emphasized that the intensity of bullying and the lack of teacher responsiveness in addressing bullying have a direct impact on the decline of students' happiness and overall well-being. Other equally significant barriers include academic pressure, lack of emotional support from family, and difficulties in emotional regulation, all of which make adolescents more vulnerable to stress and life dissatisfaction. Yang & Moon (2024) reported that in a three-year longitudinal observation, adolescents' levels of subjective happiness declined, with neglect and academic stress identified as the primary triggering factors. Depression and anxiety emerged as cognitive responses, while peer attachment served as a role function indicating that peer relationships can protect or improve adolescents' psychological condition under pressure. These findings highlight the importance of interventions aimed at enhancing emotional support, preventing neglect, managing academic stress, and strengthening peer relationships. Overall, the results suggest that the barriers to adolescent happiness may stem from both internal and external factors, and both must be addressed in efforts to holistically improve adolescents' psychological well-being.

3.3 *Implications of Findings for Intervention and Policy*

Based on the findings of this literature review, several important implications can be drawn for the development of interventions and policies aimed at enhancing adolescent happiness. First, psychological interventions are needed that emphasize the strengthening of internal factors such as emotional regulation, self-esteem, self-compassion, optimism, and gratitude. Self-development programs that include social and emotional skills training, strength-based counseling, and positive psychology-based learning can be designed to reinforce adolescents' resilience and emotional well-being. Second, education and mental health policies must become more responsive to social-relational factors. This includes creating safe and inclusive school environments, strengthening family communication, and providing spaces that support healthy social interaction among adolescents. Third, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, such as adequate sleep habits, regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and digital literacy for responsible social media use should be integrated into school curricula and community-based programs. In addition, findings from various studies also show that adolescents' interaction with nature contributes significantly to their happiness and psychological well-being. Research by Hakokongas and Puhakka (2023) revealed that adolescents experience peace and happiness through nature-based activities, such as walking leisurely, enjoying the scenery, or simply being still in silence. This finding is supported by Keller, Kayira, Chawla, & Rhoades (2024), who showed that the practice of forest bathing significantly improves adolescents' mental health after only a few sessions. Similarly, Puhakka and Hakokongas (2024) found that everyday experiences in nature, such as exploring, playing, or socializing in open spaces, serve as sources of positive emotions, relaxation, and stress management. Based on these findings, it is strongly recommended that interventions and policies aimed at enhancing adolescent happiness also incorporate nature-based approaches. This can be achieved by providing access to green spaces within school environments and public areas, as well as by organizing structured outdoor recreational activities. Such a holistic and cross-sectoral approach not only contributes to increased happiness but also supports the development of emotional resilience and strong social connections during adolescence. These findings offer a solid foundation for educators, counselors, parents, and policymakers to design evidence-based strategies that foster a happier, healthier, and more resilient younger generation.

4 DISCUSSIONS

Happiness is one of the key indicators of adolescents' psychological well-being. In the context of psychology, Diener, Oishi, and Tay (2018) state that subjective well-being is popularly referred to as happiness or satisfaction. Diener, Suh, Eunkook, Lucas, Richard, et al. (1999) define happiness as an individual's subjective evaluation of their life, consisting of a cognitive component in the form of life satisfaction and an affective component involving the frequency of positive affect (such as joy and gratitude) and low levels of negative affect (such as anxiety, anger, and frustration). Happiness is not merely a fleeting emotional state, but rather reflects a stable and sustained psychological condition. Within the framework of Subjective Well-Being Theory (Diener, 1984), happiness consists of three main components: life satisfaction, which refers to a cognitive evaluation of one's overall life; positive affect, which reflects the frequency of experiencing positive emotions such as joy, calmness, and pride; and negative affect, which refers to the intensity and frequency of negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, and anxiety. In line with this approach, Seligman (2002), in his Authentic Happiness theory, states that happiness arises from three core dimensions: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. All three require a strong psychological foundation for happiness to be sustained over the long term.

4.1 *Individual Psychological Factors*

Based on the analysis of 20 articles, psychological factors emerged as the primary determinants of adolescent happiness. Among the various variables, the ability to manage emotions adaptively occupies a central role. Emotion regulation enables adolescents to respond more flexibly to both internal and external pressures, thereby reducing the intensity of negative affect and strengthening the tendency toward positive affect. This function not only contributes to emotional balance in daily life but also serves as a foundation for building healthy social relationships and enhancing the perception of life meaning. As an integral component of emotional intelligence (EI), emotion regulation contributes to the individual's ability to recognize, understand, and direct emotional responses constructively. In this context, EI affects happiness not only directly but also through indirect pathways such as optimism and the quality of social relationships. For example, Wang et al. (2022) found that emotional intelligence enhances life satisfaction through optimism and friendship quality two essential elements in adolescent adaptation to the complexity of social life. These findings are consistent with Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, which posits that positive emotions broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires and help them build long-term psychological resources such as resilience, creativity, and positive meaning-making from life experiences. Over time, this process strengthens adolescents' capacity to face challenges with greater resilience and hope.

In addition to emotion regulation, several other psychological variables also play a role in shaping adolescents' subjective well-being. Gratitude and optimism have been shown to contribute to increased positive affect and the ability to find meaning in everyday life (Sharma, 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Religiosity also plays a significant role by offering a value

system and spiritual support that provide a sense of calm and direction in life, as highlighted by Rosyidi et al. (2023). Furthermore, self-esteem and intrinsic motivation are crucial in helping adolescents fulfill their basic psychological needs. Within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), psychological well-being is achieved when three core needs are met: competence (feeling capable and effective), autonomy (the ability to make independent decisions), and relatedness (feeling accepted and valued in social relationships). Fulfilling these needs fosters intrinsic motivation, which ultimately strengthens adolescents' sense of satisfaction and meaning in life. Yap et al. (2021) found that intrinsic motivation can also serve as a mediator between self-esteem and happiness, emphasizing that internal drive plays a critical role in sustaining long-term well-being. On the other hand, self-strength and help-seeking behaviour are also relevant psychological aspects in the adolescent context. Self-strength refers to psychological resilience in facing pressure, while help-seeking behaviour reflects an individual's willingness to seek support during emotional difficulties. According to Tabbasam et al. (2023), both variables significantly contribute to adolescent happiness, as they represent adaptive coping strategies that enhance positive affect and reduce the impact of negative emotions. In the context of positive youth development, the courage to seek help is not a sign of weakness, but rather an expression of self-awareness and mature emotional regulation.

However, not all psychological characteristics contribute positively. A study by Vianez et al. (2023) revealed that psychological entitlement defined as an excessive sense of deserving special treatment has a negative correlation with happiness. Adolescents with this tendency are more prone to experiencing frustration, engaging in social conflicts, and feeling dissatisfied when reality does not meet their expectations. This suggests that fostering happiness requires not only reinforcing positive aspects but also addressing dysfunctional thought patterns that can hinder emotional well-being. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating adolescents' internal psychological resources as a foundation for their happiness. Rather than viewing traits such as emotional intelligence, gratitude, or self-esteem as isolated predictors, it is more constructive to understand how these capacities interact and reinforce one another within the adolescent developmental process. Psychological strengths appear to function not only as protective factors but also as active drivers of meaning-making, emotional regulation, and social functioning. Therefore, interventions should go beyond symptom reduction and focus on building internal competencies that enable adolescents to navigate life with greater resilience and emotional clarity.

4.2. Social-Relational Factors

Adolescent happiness is also strongly influenced by the quality of their social relationships, whether within the family, among peers, or in the school environment. The quality of family functioning, particularly in psychological and educational aspects, along with the fulfillment of love languages such as quality time and physical touch, contributes significantly to happiness (Rini, 2023). Warm relationships with parents not only provide emotional support but also influence adolescents' ability to regulate their emotions, which in turn affects their happiness (Haspolat, 2023). In this context, social bonds with peers have been shown to serve as protective factors against declines in happiness amid environmental pressures, including academic demands and family-related challenges (Wang, Lu, Hu, Xue, Xu, et al. 2022). Another relational factor that contributes to adolescent happiness is the sense of safety within the school environment. Bullying and the lack of intervention from teachers in addressing such incidents have been shown to decrease students' levels of happiness (Lesinskiene, 2025). Therefore, creating a supportive and safe school environment is an urgent need in developing interventions for adolescent happiness. This aspect is strongly supported by Attachment Theory, developed by John Bowlby (1969, as cited in Urban, 2020), which emphasizes that secure emotional bonds with primary caregivers (such as parents) form the foundation for healthy social and emotional development. Children and adolescents with secure attachment tend to be more capable of forming healthy interpersonal relationships, experience lower levels of anxiety, and demonstrate greater psychological well-being (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In the context of adolescence, warm and responsive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers can foster a sense of safety and self-confidence that supports overall happiness.

4.3. Lifestyle Factors

Lifestyle is a crucial dimension that must be considered in efforts to understand adolescent happiness. Habits such as engaging in regular physical activity and maintaining good sleep quality have been shown to not only directly increase happiness but also indirectly reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Research indicates that sufficient sleep duration and high sleep efficiency are associated with reduced negative emotions and enhanced positive mood the following day. Conversely, excessive or problematic social media use (Problematic Social Media Use/PSMU) has emerged as one of the factors that may hinder adolescent happiness. The negative effects of PSMU tend to arise from reduced physical activity and disrupted sleep patterns (Yin et al., 2025; Master et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). These findings reinforce the importance of digital literacy education and the ability to manage screen time among adolescents. On the other hand, engaging in regular physical exercise has been proven to enhance happiness while also serving as an effective means of reducing stress and anxiety (Yin et al., 2025). This aligns with Behavioral Activation theory in clinical psychology. According to Kanter, Manos, Bowe, Baruch, Busch et al. (2010), active engagement in structured and meaningful activities as emphasized in the Behavioral Activation approach has been proven effective in improving mood and reducing

symptoms of depression, including through activities such as exercise that enhance positive reinforcement from the environment. Overall, the findings of this review affirm that a healthy lifestyle encompassing sufficient sleep, regular physical activity, and mindful use of social media is a key strategy in supporting adolescents' mental well-being in a holistic and sustainable manner.

4.4. Major Obstacles That Lower Happiness Levels

In addition to various promotive factors, adolescent happiness is also vulnerable to decline due to a range of psychological barriers, both internal and external. Affectively, a high intensity of negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and sadness is closely associated with a decrease in subjective well-being. Yin et al. (2025) found that anxiety and depression significantly impact the reduction of life satisfaction among adolescents. From a neuropsychological perspective, the persistent dominance of negative affect triggers activation of the limbic system (particularly the amygdala), which is associated with heightened stress responses and diminished executive brain function. This condition, in turn, can impair decision-making, emotional regulation, and the ability to form healthy social relationships. Conversely, positive affect plays a role in broadening thought patterns and enhancing flexible cognitive processing (Fredrickson, 2001), yet its intensity can easily diminish if an individual is repeatedly exposed to unresolved stress. The situation becomes more complex when adolescents exhibit low self-acceptance and are accustomed to engaging in negative social comparisons, especially through social media. This phenomenon not only reduces positive affect but also increases vulnerability to feelings of worthlessness and depression. Furthermore, the attitude of psychological entitlement defined as the belief that one deserves special treatment without equivalent effort is negatively correlated with happiness. Vianez et al. (2023) reported that adolescents with this mindset are more likely to experience frustration when expectations are unmet, thereby reducing their tolerance for reality. This mismatch between expectation and reality may further exacerbate dissatisfaction with life. In terms of lifestyle factors, problematic social media use (PSMU) has also been shown to mediate the decline in happiness through disrupted sleep and reduced physical activity. Findings by Master et al. (2023) further emphasize that poor sleep quality contributes to increased negative emotions and a diminished ability to experience positive affect optimally. If left unaddressed, this pattern may lead to a self-reinforcing cycle of emotional dysfunction. Overall, these findings underscore that adolescent happiness must not only be cultivated through the strengthening of internal psychological resources but also safeguarded against maladaptive lifestyles and dysfunctional thinking patterns that can undermine emotional stability and the sustainable development of positive affect.

4.5. Implications of Findings for the Development of Effective Happiness Intervention Programs for Adolescents

Based on the findings of this review, happiness intervention programs for adolescents should be designed holistically, targeting psychological, social, and lifestyle dimensions. Interventions should include training in emotional regulation, optimism, and emotional intelligence; the strengthening of healthy family and peer relationships; and the promotion of balanced lifestyle habits such as quality sleep, physical activity, and mindful social media use. In addition, nature-based approaches such as outdoor activities are also important for naturally enhancing positive affect (Hakokongas & Puhakka, 2023). Interventions must also address specific psychological barriers such as academic stress, low self-acceptance, as well as the impacts of bullying and social comparison. This comprehensive approach is in line with the principles of Applied Positive Psychology, which emphasize the development of individual strengths and social environments to enhance overall well-being (Lomas, Hefferon, & Ivtzan, 2014).

4.6. Research Gaps and Limitations

Although this review provides a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing adolescent happiness, several gaps remain that should serve as a foundation for future research. The cultural and geographical representation within the analyzed studies is still limited, particularly from regions in Indonesia. Therefore, further exploration in more diverse local contexts is needed to capture the contextual dynamics of adolescent happiness more accurately. In addition, most of the studies reviewed are correlational or cross-sectional in nature, which limits the ability to draw strong causal inferences. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs and experimental interventions to more thoroughly assess the effectiveness of happiness-related programs. Aspects such as digital literacy, healthy eating habits, and the impact of specific types of social media content on adolescent happiness have also rarely been examined in depth. Similarly, vulnerable adolescent populations such as those living in extreme poverty, with disabilities, or experiencing chronic mental health conditions remain underrepresented in current research. There is also a need for approaches that explore the complex interactions among psychological, social-relational, and lifestyle factors simultaneously, including the role of teachers and learning environments as key determinants of happiness. Addressing these research gaps will enrich scientific understanding and strengthen the foundation for developing more effective and contextually relevant interventions.

This literature review also presents several strengths. First, it offers a thematic synthesis of recent empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025, reflecting the latest developments in adolescent happiness research. Second, the integration of psychological, social, and lifestyle dimensions provides a more holistic perspective on adolescent well-being. Third, the use of established theories such as the Subjective Well-Being Theory and the Self-Determination Theory

enhances conceptual clarity and the practical applicability of the findings for evidence-based program development. Nevertheless, this review has certain limitations. It only includes articles published in English and Indonesian, which may overlook relevant literature in other languages. Moreover, the absence of quantitative approaches such as meta-analysis renders the findings descriptive and reliant on the authors' interpretive synthesis. These limitations open up opportunities for more in-depth future research, including mixed-method studies, quantitative analyses, and culturally grounded exploration within the context of Indonesian adolescents.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This literature review concludes that adolescent happiness is a multidimensional construct influenced by individual psychological factors (such as emotional regulation, gratitude, optimism, religiosity, self-acceptance, self-esteem, self-strength, help-seeking behaviour, and emotional intelligence); social-relational factors (such as family support and the quality of peer relationships); and lifestyle factors (such as sufficient sleep, physical activity, and healthy social media use). Barriers to happiness also stem from academic pressure, relational conflicts, sleep disturbances, problematic social media use, and a lack of safety within the school environment. The implications of these findings highlight the need for holistic, evidence-based intervention strategies that involve the roles of schools, families, communities, and policymakers. Programs that integrate internal psychological strengthening, supportive social relationships, and healthy lifestyle practices will serve as effective measures in fostering happier and emotionally healthier adolescents. Future research is encouraged to develop cross-sectoral intervention models and to explore the growing influence of cultural factors and digital technology.

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