

## **Pathways to Adolescents' Well-being: Optimistic Attributional Style as Mediator of the Effect of Basic Psychological Needs**

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*Background:* What are the sources of adolescents well-being? Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017) suggests that, to the extent that social contexts support a person's basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they facilitate greater well-being. Parents facilitate or hinder the children's well-being through their responsiveness to children's basic psychological needs. Findings from decades of research also suggest that an optimistic attributional style is a protective factor against depression (Hu et al., 2015, Peterson & Park, 2007), is positively related to well-being in adolescents (e.g., Rigby & Huebner, 2003), and is associated with having parents who are supportive and nonrestrictive (Peterson & Bossio, 1991).

*Aim:* The present study used a cross-sectional design to evaluate models investigating reported basic psychological needs satisfaction in family, and adolescents' optimistic attributional style, academic achievement, perseverance and well-being. It was hypothesized the effect of a perceived autonomy supportive, warm, and respectful family environment would influence current well-being, and that these effects would be partially mediated by optimistic attributional style.

*Method:* A sample of 223 adolescents (8<sup>th</sup> graders, 4 schools) was assessed. Basic psychological needs satisfaction in family was measured by BPN-Family questionnaire (Gordeeva et al., 2018),  $72 < \alpha < .80$ ). A short version of CASQ (Thompson et al., 1998) was used to measure attributional style related to positive and negative life events (for both subscales tetrachoric  $\alpha = .66$ ). To measure well-being Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1994; composite for Family, Friends, and Self subscales, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ ) and Competence-based Self-Esteem Scale were used.

*Results:* Using structural equation modeling, we examined the role of attributional style for positive and negative events as partial mediator of the effect of basic psychological needs (composite) on well-being and healthy self-esteem. The model fitted the data very well with CFI = 0,996; NNFI = 0,992; RMSEA = 0,027; 90% CI for RMSEA: 0,000-0,069; PCLOSE = 0,780;  $\chi^2 = 19,676$ ; df = 17; p = 0,291. Also in the model optimistic attributional style for both positive events and negative events predicted well-being, competence-based self-esteem, perseverance and academic performance (GPA).

*Conclusions:* As predicted, research findings suggest that perceived parental autonomy support, respect and warmth are positively related to the emotional and social well-being in

adolescents and this link is partially mediated by the capacity to think optimistically about positive and negative events that happen in life. Findings are discussed from the two theoretical perspectives – SDT and reformulated learned helplessness model. Practical implications on how to enhance adolescents' optimistic thinking will be also discussed.

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