

# The role of parental bonding, social support, spirituality and forgiveness on happiness among undergraduate students of Kolkata

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## ABSTRACT

Happiness is a positive emotional state which is subjectively defined by individuals. According to the Indian tradition happiness is considered as a spiritual pursuit, that is by turning inwards, establishing in one's self, and realizing one's true nature can give happiness. Parental bonding and care seems to be significantly tied up with happiness. "Spiritual personality takes a holistic view, which requires spiritual virtues, positive outlook on life, spiritual discipline, goodness, spiritual service, and moral rectitude. Social support is widely recognized as having beneficial influences on physical health, psychological health and overall well being. People who are inclined to forgive their transgressors tends to be more agreeable, more emotionally stable and some research suggests, more spiritually or religiously inclined than people who do not forgive their transgressors. The purpose of the present study was to study the role of parental bonding, social support, spirituality and forgiveness on happiness among undergraduate students of Kolkata. The sample for the present study consisted of 508 samples (253 females & 255 males). The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship between happiness with forgiveness, social support, parental bonding and spirituality. It can be concluded that no significant difference is found between male and female undergraduate college students of Kolkata in terms of happiness and coincidentally it has been found that the mean of happiness with regard to male and female are found to be closely similar to each other. Furthermore, it has been found that parental bonding, social support, forgiveness and spirituality have a definite role in predicting happiness among undergraduate students of Kolkata. The study can be helpful for conducting appropriate intervention.

**Key words:** Forgiveness, Happiness, Parental Bonding, Social Support, Spirituality, Under- Graduate.

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## INTRODUCTION

The word happiness has its origin in Latin (felicitas), which means fertility, prosperity, abundance or fullness. The philosophical and theoretical literature on happiness is abundant in India. Ancient texts and scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanisads and the Bhagwad Gita have explored the nature of happiness and the insights gained from these writings are still relevant to people of India, influencing their conceptions of happiness and guiding them on how to lead a happy life (Bhawuk, 2011). Since the days of Aristotle, happiness has been conceptualized as being composed of at least two aspects – hedonia (or, pleasure) and eudaimonia (a sense that life is well-lived) (Kringelbach & Berridge, 2010). Parental bonding- Parental bonding can be described as an

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attachment between the child and the parent. Parental bonding is very important for the normal development of an individual. The parent child relationship has a great influence on an individual's development than any other relationship. It tends to be the foundation for all other relationships that an individual forms in life. The bond is the source of love, trust, intimacy and security. This relationship would nourish well – being or may cause a scar in life. Spirituality: It means the process to know the self, the inner self and original self. In early part of twentieth century, IQ was the intelligence talked of which helps in solving intellectual problems, then came EQ, Daniel Goleman, the man behind it said, EQ is equally important to understand one's own and others feelings. Zohar and Marshal (2000), came with the concept of SQ, according to them SQ is the ultimate intelligence. In modern times the emphasis is on the subjective experience. It may denote almost any kind of meaningful activity or blissful experience. It still denotes a process of transformation but in a context separate from organized religious institutions termed 'spiritual but not religious'. Forgiveness- *Micchami Dukkadam* is popularly used on the last day of the annual Jain observations called the "*Paryushana*" by Syetambari Jains and Dasa-Laksana parvan by Digambara Jains. It is held on evenings during the Chaturmasa (monsoon months), usually before one's guru (spiritual) or temple before an image of Tirthankar. It is particularly popular as a community ceremony in Jainism. After *pratikramana*- confession of and repentance for one's mistakes and violations of Jain code of life for laypeople, a Jain seek forgiveness for all life forms of the world whom they may have harmed knowingly or unknowingly by uttering the phrase "*micchami dukkadam*". Researchers have studied forgiveness and have found that the tendency to forgive is a trait linked with certain structural and metabolic characteristics of the brain (Li & Lu, 2017).

**Social Support-** Social support has been described as "those social interactions or relationships that render individual with actual assistance or that embed individuals inside a social system believed to give love, caring or sense of attachment to a valuable social group or dyad (Hobfoll, 1988). This divides the two major facets of social support that are: received social support and perceived social support. Received social support refers to naturally occurring helping behaviors that are being provided. Whereas perceived support refers to the belief that the helping behavior would be provided when needed. In a nutshell, received support is helping behavior that did happen, and perceived support is helping behavior that might happen (Barrera, 1986).

## Rationale of the present study:

Cultural norms and values can significantly influence these psychological constructs, and therefore the results may not be generalizable to individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Cultural Factors). Low levels of happiness among undergraduate students were very common. College life is a special period when students start to be independent, but if they unable to become it disturbs their personal lives and studies, which makes them easily stressed and less spiritual. Less work has been done on this group (Early Adults) till now.

## AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

[i] To find out the significant relationship between male and female undergraduate students in terms of Happiness.

[ii] To find out the significant relationship between happiness & noble attitude towards other & moral rectitude (domain of spirituality), social support, forgiveness and father care, father overprotection, mother care & mother overprotection (domains of parental bonding) among under-graduate male students of Kolkata.

[iii] To find out the significant relationship between happiness & noble attitude towards other & moral rectitude (domain of spirituality), social support, forgiveness and father care, father overprotection, mother care & mother overprotection (domains of parental bonding) among under-graduate female students of Kolkata.

[iv] To find out the role of noble attitude towards other & moral rectitude (domain of spirituality), forgiveness, social support and father care, mother care, father overprotection & mother overprotection (domains of parental bonding) in predicting happiness among undergraduate male and female students of Kolkata.

Research hypothesis :Hypothesis 1- There is no significant relationship between male and female undergraduate students of Kolkata in terms of happiness. Hypothesis [2] (2a) There is no significant relationship between noble attitude towards other (domains of spirituality) and happiness among undergraduate male student. 2(b) There is no significant relationship between moral rectitude (domains of spirituality) and happiness among undergraduate male student. 2(c) There is no significant relationship between forgiveness and happiness among undergraduate male student. 2(d) There is no significant relationship between social support and happiness among undergraduate male student. 2(e) There is no significant

relationship between father care (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among undergraduate male student.2(f) There is no significant relationship between father over protection (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among undergraduate male student .2(g) There is no significant relationship between mother care (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among male undergraduate student.2(h) There is no significant relationship between mother over protection (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among male undergraduate student. **Hypothesis 3-3(a)** There is no significant relationship between noble attitude towards other (domain of spirituality) and happiness among female under-graduate student.3(b) There is no significant relationship between moral rectitude (domain of spirituality) and happiness among female under-graduate student.3(c) There is no significant relationship between forgiveness and happiness among the female undergraduate student.3(d) There is no significant relationship between social support and happiness among the female undergraduate student.3(e) There is no significant relationship between mother care (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among the female undergraduate student.

3(f) There is no significant relationship between mother over protection (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among the female undergraduate student. 3(g) There is no significant relationship between father care (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among female undergraduate student.3(h) There is no significant relationship between father over protection (domain of parental bonding) and happiness among female undergraduate student..**Hypothesis 4-** Domains of spirituality (noble attitude towards others & moral rectitude), forgiveness, social support and domains of parental bonding i.e., father care, father over protection, mother care, and mother over protection, would not significantly predict happiness among undergraduate students of Kolkata

**Methodology: Inclusion criteria-** Only undergraduates from general stream (B.A; B.Sc.; & B.Com.) were selected for the study. The age group was within 19-22yrs. Only students staying with parents in family set up were selected. Only co-educational colleges were selected. Only middle income group students were selected. Only students willing to give data of own were selected. Exclusion criteria: Undergraduates from other streams (Any professional courses) were excluded. Students whose parents were divorced were excluded. Students whose any of the parent were no more were excluded. Married students were excluded. Students with previous mental and physical illness were excluded

## Tools:

[i] **Preliminary Information Schedule-** A preliminary information schedule was first administered to the participants that included criteria's like age, sex, marital status, education qualification, religion and socio economic status. It was self-made.

[ii] **The GHQ-12** (David Goldberg in 1970): Cronbach's alpha, a common measure of internal consistency, is frequently reported as 0.80 or higher, indicating strong reliability. test-retest reliability of 0.78 indicating moderate to high consistency. The self-report GHQ-12 was developed to screen global mental state (Goldberg et al., 1997).

[iii] **Spiritual Personality Inventory (SPI)** (Akbar Hussain, Nadeem Luqman & Mussadiq Jahan, 2012): It has two dimensions- "noble attitude towards others" & "moral rectitude". The split-half correlation of 0.82 was found for the whole sample. The cronbach's coefficient alpha was found to be 0.86. The factorial construct validity of SPI reveal high loadings of each item i.e., more than 0.40.

[iv] **Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)** (Thompson et al., 2003): it is a self-report questionnaire. Test retest reliability was 0.83; cronbach alphas ranged between 0.84 & 0.87 for total score and 0.71 to 0.83 for the sub scales.

[v] **Multi-dimentional Scale for Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)** (Zimet et al., in 1988): It consists of three sub- scales; family, friends & significant others. The reliability was 0.85. Its cronbach's alpha is of 0.81 to 0.98 in non- clinical samples and 0.92 to 0.94 in clinical samples.

[vi]**Parental Bonding Scale (PBS)** (Gordon Parker, Hillary Tupling & L.B. Brown in 1979): It has two dimensions named 'care' & 'over-protection' or 'control'. There are 25 items questions, including 12 care items and 13 overprotection items. The test retests reliability of 0.76 for the care scale & 0.63 for the overprotection scale.

[vii] **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire** (Argyle et al. 1989): This is a 29 item questionnaire measuring the general psychological causes of happiness including its main components; achievement and satisfaction, enjoyment, vigour and health. It has demonstrated a test retest reliability correlation coefficient of 0.79 and an alpha of 0.93.

**Procedure:** After selection of different colleges from 3 zones (north, south & central) of Kolkata randomly, consent for sample/data collection was taken from the authority/principal of respective colleges was taken. Consent from all the participants were taken verbally before administering the tools. After selection of participants, both male and female from different colleges, they were administered with preliminary information schedule and rest of the tools were given after that. They were explained every items of the scale as some students have problems in understanding English. Data were collected individually. Statistical analysis was done by SPSS version 21. **Statistical Treatment:** Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Skewness & Kurtosis), Inferential Statistics (independent sample t-test), Correlational Statistics (Product moment correlation), Prediction Statistics (Linear regression). **Ethical consideration:** Confidentiality was maintained and the informed consent was also taken verbally.

## Results

**Table 1:**

Table 1, showing the mean, standard deviation, skewness & kurtosis for the selected variable among male undergraduate students of Kolkata

	Noble Attitud e Toward s Other	Moral Rectit ud e	Happin e ss	Forgiven e ss	Socia l Supp ort	Fath er Care	Father Overprotecti on	Moth e r Care	Mother Overprotecti on
Mean	50.376	69.925	122.549	79.027	64.792	26.458	18.874	27.611	17.588
SD	5.292	5.798	122.176	9.984	9.229	4.006	3.975	4.401	5.414
N	255	255	255	255	255	255	255	255	255
Skewne ss	.974	.995	.473	.663	-.099	.359	1.991	-.1020	1.202
Kurtosis	1.811	1.126	.341	.634	-.227	-.545	5.506	-.928	1.389

The descriptive table 1, signifies that for male the distribution of skewness and kurtosis were normal as skewness lies between -2 to +2 and kurtosis between -7 to +7 according to Hair et al., (2010) & Bryne (2010).

**Table 2:**

Table 2, showing the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis for the selected variables among female undergraduate students of Kolkata

	Noble Attitud e Toward s Other	Moral Rectitu d e	Happin e ss	Forgiven ess	Socia l Supp ort	Fath er Care	Father Overprotecti on	Moth e r Care	Mother Overprotecti on
Mean	70.205	49.82	122.549	78.419	66.102	27.442	19.181	28.087	16.877
SD	5.487	5.293	12.025	11.269	8.070	4.176	3.8674	4.326	4.932
N	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253
Skewn e ss	.351	-.128	.240	.489	-.141	.210	1.792	-.188	1.045
Kurtosis	.075	.020	.077	-.0396	-.899	-.758	3.813	-.987	.868

The descriptive table 1, signifies that for female the distribution of skewness and kurtosis were normal as skewness lies between -2 to +2 and kurtosis between -7 to +7 according to Hair et al., (2010) & Bryne (2010).

**Table 3: t-test**

Table 3, Showing that no significant difference in mean of happiness between male and female undergraduate students of Kolkata

	Group I (Male) 255		Group II( Female) 253		T	df	Sig. (2tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Happiness	122.176	12.685	122.549	12.025	.340	506	.734

Here in the table 3, there is no significant difference between male and female students in their happiness ( $t=.340$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). The mean and SD of male ( $M=122.18$ ;  $SD=12.69$ ) and female ( $M=122.55$ ;  $SD=12.03$ ) do not differ significantly.

**Table 4:**

Table 4, showing positive and significant correlation found between Noble Attitude Towards Other, Moral Rectitude, Forgiveness, Social Support & Mother care with happiness among undergraduate male students of Kolkata

		Noble Attitude Towards Other	Moral Rectitudes	Forgiveness	Social Support	Father Care	Father Overprotection	Mother Care	Mother Overprotection
Happiness	Pearson Correlation	.211**	.211**	.285**	.199**	.121	-.064	.165*	-.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.000	.001	.053	.308	.008	.507
	N	255	255	255	255	255	255	255	255
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									

In table 4, significant differences were there with noble attitude towards other ( $r=.211$ ;  $p=.001$ ), moral rectitude ( $r=.211$ ;  $p>.01$ ), forgiveness ( $r=.285$ ;  $p>.01$ ); social support ( $r=.199$ ;  $p.001$ ) and mother care ( $r=.165$ ;  $p=>.01$ ) among male undergraduate students of Kolkata.

**Table- 5**

Table 5, showing positive and significant correlation found between Noble Attitude Towards Other, Forgiveness, Social Support, father care, mother care & mother overprotection with happiness among undergraduate female students of Kolkata

		Noble Attitude Towards Other	Moral Rectitud e	Forgivenes s	Social Supp o r t	Father Care	Father Overprotecti on	Mothe r Care	Mother Overprotecti on
Happine ss	Pearson Correlati on	.233**	.125	.219**	.282**	.250* *	.001	.305* *	-.136*
	Sig. (2 - tailed)	.000	0.46	.000	.000	.000	.991	.000	.031
	N	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)									

In table 5, significant differences were there with noble attitude towards other ( $r=.233$ ;  $p>.01$ ), forgiveness ( $r=.219$ ;  $p>.01$ ); social support ( $r=.282$ ;  $p>.01$ ), father care ( $r=.250$ ;  $p>.01$ ), mother overprotection ( $r= -.136$ ;  $p>.05$ ) and mother care ( $r=.305$ ;  $p>.01$ ) among female undergraduate students of Kolkata.

## Regression Analysis

**Table 6:**

Table 6, showing multiple regression analysis of (Dependent Variable) father care, mother care father overprotection & mother overprotection (domains of parental bonding), social support, noble attitude towards other & moral rectitude (domains of spirituality) and forgiveness as predictor variables for happiness (Independent Variable) as a criterion variable among undergraduate students of Kolkata (using enter method)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R square change	F	df	Significance
.416 <sup>a</sup>	.173	.159	.173	13.022	499	.000

Predictors: (constant), MFOP, FFC, HFS, NATO, MSPSS, FFOP, MFC, MR

**Table 7: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Standardized Coefficient B	T	Significance
Constants		5.877	.000
Noble Attitude Towards Other	.058	1.245	.214
Moral Rectitude	.123	2.622	.009
Forgiveness	.208	4.968	.000
Social Support	.156	3.579	.000
Father Care	.094	2.136	.033
Father Over Protection	-.009	-.204	.838
Mother Care	.105	2.317	.021
Mother Over Protection	-.027	-.612	.541



Regression analysis (Enter method) was done to assess the effect of parental bonding, spirituality, forgiveness and social support on happiness among undergraduate students. The model summary is shown in the figure above.

In the present study the result indicates that 15.9% of overall happiness can be predicted by the domains of spirituality (Noble attitude towards other & Moral rectitude), forgiveness, social support and domains of parental bonding (father care, father overprotection, mother care and mother overprotection). In the present study, forgiveness, social support, spirituality and parental bonding are positively related to student's happiness. When students experience higher levels of forgiveness, strong social support networks, a sense of spirituality, and positive parental bonding, they tend to report greater happiness levels.

## DISCUSSION

Happiness is considered as one of the most vital human experiences and the ultimate motivation behind all human endeavours. Despite disagreement over the definition, conception and the relative influence of various psychological, social, demographical, economic and political factors on happiness, there is considerable consensus among the researchers about certain things: a) happiness is subjective experience; b) happiness cannot be defined in a particular way; c) the meaning of happiness is influenced by culture and context; d) happiness can be measured and e) happiness has its positive consequences and is therefore a worthy pursuit (Brown, 2004; Clark, Frijters, & Shields, 2008; Diener, 2000, 2005; Diener & Chan, 2011; Diener, Scollon, & Lucas, 2003; Kesebir & Diener, 2008;

Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Mishra, 2020; Wilkinson, 2005; Veenhoven, 2014). The present research aimed to explore how happiness is understood in India, how people derive happiness and the extent to which happiness is related to spirituality, social support, forgiveness and parental bonding. In simple words, this research was carried out to appraise the meaning and sources of happiness and determine its relationship to spirituality, social support, forgiveness and parental bonding.

The first objective of the study was to find out the significant difference between male and female undergraduates in terms of happiness. There were no significant differences between male and female undergraduate students in terms of happiness. The mean and SD of male and female were similar and do not differ significantly. The findings of the present

study suggest no significant difference between male and female students in terms of happiness, spirituality and forgiveness, which is in accordance to the study by Aragon- Cruz et al., (2023), states that there were no differences in happiness between state University and Private University students when compared by gender, professional area, and age. The second objective was to find out the significant relationship between spirituality (both domains, noble attitude towards other & moral rectitude) and happiness among male undergraduate students. There were a positive and significant relationship between spirituality and happiness among male undergraduates. The third objective was to find out the significant relationship between forgiveness and happiness among male undergraduate students. Here positive and significant relationship was found. The fourth objective was to find out the significant relationship between social support and happiness among male. The fifth objective was to find out the significant relationship between parental bonding (both father and mother) and happiness among male undergraduate students. In parental bonding mother care was positive and significantly related to happiness. Other parameters like father care, father overprotection and mother overprotection were not significant. The sixth objective was to find out the significant relationship between spirituality and happiness among female undergraduate students. Here spirituality (only noble attitude towards other) was significantly and positively related to happiness. The seventh objective was to find out the significant relationship between forgiveness and happiness among female undergraduate students. Here forgiveness is positively and significantly related to happiness. There is no significant difference between male and female students in the propensity to forgive others (Patil, Shaikh & Sanmukh, 2018). The eighth objective was to find out the significant relationship between social support and happiness among female undergraduate students. There was positive and significant relationship found. The ninth objective was to find out the significant relationship between parental bonding (both father and mother) and happiness among female undergraduate students. Here positive and significant relationship was with father care, mother care, and negative but significant relationship with mother overprotection. There was no significant relationship with father overprotection. The tenth objective was to find out the predictors of happiness of undergraduate students. Here around 16% of overall happiness can be predicted by spirituality (domains), forgiveness, social support and parental bonding (domains).

In this study, forgiveness social support, spirituality and parental bonding are positively related to happiness. When students experience higher levels

of forgiveness, strong social support networks, sense of spirituality and positive parental bonding, they tend to report greater happiness levels. So forgiveness and spirituality are positively related to student's happiness (David, Rajsekhar, Singh, Ribeiro & Gomes, 2022). The result found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness and happiness & spirituality and forgiveness (Kudrat, 2022). The findings are similar to the finding that showed happiness to be positively connected with forgiveness (Toor & Rani, 2024).

Studies suggest a positive and significant correlation between forgiveness and happiness among male undergraduate, show greater capacity or willingness to forgive their levels of happiness tend to increase. The reason might be that there is no discrimination between male and females as both were equally treated by their parents in Kolkata. Gender differences on forgiveness and happiness are not significant. This indicates that females are higher on expressions of thankfulness as compared to males. Overall, the study finds that happiness and spirituality are significantly correlated. Positive Orientation and Healthy Interpersonal Relationships appear to promote spirituality. This suggests that people with positive attitude towards life and warm, positive interpersonal relationships are high on spirituality. No significant relationship found between spirituality and happiness with respect to gender (Chougale, 2018).

There is plethora of research on spiritual intelligence indicating its meaning and concept. But a very few studies are available on parental bonding (father care, father overprotection, mother care and mother overprotection) individually, Social support, forgiveness, spirituality (noble attitude towards other & moral rectitude) individually. However, few studies have identified this relationship in context of western world but very limited studies are found in Indian context.

### Implications:

The purpose of the present study is to help in conducting appropriate intervention. There are cultural variations when it comes to gender differences in forgiveness, and spirituality. This study helps to build a culture specific model of forgiveness and spirituality

**Limitations:** [i] Sample size must be more to provide accurate results and hence generalization to the population should be made with extreme care. [ii] Professional courses of the students to be included.

[iii] Married students must also be considered [iv] Other religions students to be considered [v] High and low socioeconomic status students to be given importance. [vi] Post graduate students to be added [vii] Students having single and divorced parents to be also considered.

### Conclusions:

The aim of the present study is to explore the relationship between happiness (Independent Variable) and Dependent variables like forgiveness, spirituality, social support and parental bonding. It can be concluded that no significant difference is found between male and female undergraduate college students of Kolkata in terms of happiness and coincidentally it has been found that the mean of happiness about male and female are found to be closely similar to each other. Furthermore, it has been found that forgiveness and spirituality have a definite role in predicting happiness among undergraduate students of Kolkata.

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