

Parental Emotional Support and Adolescent Happiness: Mediating Roles of Self-Esteem and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract This study investigated the influence of parental emotional support on adolescent self-esteem, emotional intelligence and adolescents' happiness along with the possible mediating effects of emotional intelligence and self-esteem between parental emotional support and adolescent happiness. In addition, it explored whether the relationship among the variables differs according to the gender of parents and adolescents. Data were collected from 278 Korean high school students (140 males and 138 females). Multi-group structural equation modeling analyses were used to analyze the data. The results indicated that parental emotional support did not directly affect adolescent happiness, but rather influenced it indirectly through the mediating effect of self-esteem. While both maternal and paternal emotional support had a positive influence on self-esteem, only maternal emotional support had a significant impact on emotional intelligence, indicating that parental emotional support may have different influences on adolescent emotional intelligence according to the parents' gender. The results also indicated that maternal/paternal emotional support may have a different impact according to adolescents' gender. For male adolescents, only paternal emotional support affected happiness through self-esteem. For female adolescents, both maternal and paternal emotional support exerted a significant influence on happiness via self-esteem, whereas maternal support had a direct influence on all other variables.

Keywords Parental support · Emotional intelligence · Happiness · self-esteem

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Introduction

The general interest of the Korean society in recent years has been focused on the quality of life, such as well-being and happiness. Further, increasing attention is being paid to the happiness of youth, as adolescent suicide is emerging as a significant social issue. Statistics Korea recently announced in 2012 that suicide was the number one cause of mortality among young people in South Korea as of 2010. The suicide rate was 13 out of every 100,000 adolescents. The indices of the perceived happiness among Korean adolescents ranked the lowest among the twenty-six members of the OECD in 2012. Material comfort and higher intellectual level do not seem to assure happiness in adolescents. Then, which factors affect their happiness?

According to research, emotional closeness with parents influences children's happiness and satisfaction in life (Amato 1994). Further, parental support contributes much to adolescents' life satisfaction (Young et al. 1995). However, conflicts with parents, parents' excessive intervention and lack of understanding, and corporal punishment are the hindrance factors to the psychological well-being of adolescents (Jun 1996). Furthermore, an increasing number of young people state that discord with parents is the main reason for committing suicide (Song 2010). All of these reasons suggest the need to understand adolescent happiness with regard to parental relationship.

One's living environment is not the sole factor that determines one's happiness. Happiness depends on the psychological process, which is influenced by the interaction between individuals' psychological traits and the living environment (Kim 2010; Song 2010). Individuals may convey different responses to the same living environment depending on their personal psychological traits. One's happiness is affected by how he/she sees happiness in life as well as how he/she reacts to the encountered situation. This notion implies that adolescents living under the same condition of receiving much parental support may feel varied levels of happiness depending on the person.

Then, which individual psychological factors need to be examined along with parental factors? Research shows that emotion is highly associated with subjective well-being (Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough 2002; Austin, Saklofske, and Egan 2005). People with well-developed emotional capability have higher satisfaction with life (Goleman 2005). Moreover, self-esteem is also one of the main psychological factors that influence happiness. People with low self-esteem suffer from feelings of worthlessness, inferiority and emotional instability, thus leading to dissatisfaction with life (Ha 2006). Hwang (2011) also suggested that high self-esteem is a must factor in order to attain the feeling of happiness.

According to previous studies, parental emotional support is directly related to adolescent happiness (Han and Yoo 1996; Amato 1994; Kim, Park, and Kwak 1998; Park, Kim, and Han 2003; Young, Miller, Norton, and Hill 1995). Moreover, personal psychological traits, such as self-esteem and emotional intelligence, are closely linked to happiness as well (Austin, Saklofske, and Egan 2005; Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough 2002; Diener and Diener 1995; Furnham and Cheng 2000). Hence, the current study intends to investigate the influence of parental emotional support on self-esteem, emotional intelligence and adolescents' happiness; further, it aims to explore whether emotional intelligence and self-esteem have mediating effects between parental emotional support and adolescent happiness. Few studies have examined the influence of parental emotional support with regard to the other variables by dividing support into a

maternal and paternal one; they were also not able to identify how each one affects the other variables. Furthermore, there is no research that has investigated how the relationship among the variables could differ according to adolescents' gender. Therefore, this study also aims to identify how the influence of parental emotional support on self-esteem, emotional intelligence and happiness could differ according to parents and adolescents' gender.

Research questions:

1. What is the relationship between parental (maternal/paternal) emotional support, self-esteem, emotional intelligence and happiness?
2. Does the relationship vary depending on adolescents' gender?

Theoretical Framework

Parental Emotional Support - Happiness

Among the environmental factors that affect happiness are parental support and love. Receiving emotional support from parents is positively associated with identity achievement during adolescence (Sartor and Youniss 2002). Further, parents' higher acceptance is related to children's higher psychological well-being, with the acceptance from the same gender parent making a particular great contribution (Lee 2003). Affectionate and autonomous parental rearing styles are associated with a higher feeling of happiness in the offspring (Cheng and Furnham 2004; Furnham and Cheng 2000).

Amato (1994) found that emotional closeness to parents significantly predicted the happiness of the offspring, with both the mother and father having their unique contributions to such happiness. Furnham and Cheng (2000) argued that among maternal and paternal rearing styles, maternal authoritativeness was the only significant predictor of children's happiness. Similarly, Cheng and Furnham (2004) revealed that among maternal and paternal care, maternal care was the only direct predictor of children's happiness. However, Ko's study (2008) reported that both father-child and mother-child attachment were significantly associated with the subjective well-being of middle school students, while there was inconsistency in the correlation patterns according to the children's gender. To be specific, father-child attachment was shown to have a greater impact on male students' subjective well-being, whereas mother-child attachment affected that of female students more.

Parental Emotional Support - Self-Esteem - Happiness

Self-esteem is an important primary motive for human behavior, and is closely related to mental health and social adaptation (Heinonen, Räikkönen, and Keltikangas-Järvinen 2004). Rosenberg (1965) stated that self-esteem is the cognitive and emotional state of respecting oneself and viewing oneself as a desirable and valuable person. He also suggested self-esteem as a means of accepting and feeling one's worth (Rosenberg 1979). Later, he also argued that self-esteem is either a positive or negative attitude

toward the self as one special object (Rosenberg et al. 1995). According to Braden (1987), self-esteem is the most important factor in human behavior; he suggested that self-esteem greatly influences both psychological satisfaction and efficient role performance. He also noted that there is a great difference between people who have positive self-esteem and those who do not in both emotional and behavioral aspects.

Adolescents who have high self-esteem, who describe themselves positively or who have closer personal relationships than others have less worries and anxiety in daily life; thus, they are able to maintain a cheerful emotional state, thereby leading to a high happiness level (Kim and Chung 2008). Healthy self-esteem has the function of keeping a positive emotional state in daily life (Hwang 2011), and is a sound foundation for enduring happiness (Myers and Diner 1995). Therefore, higher self-esteem leads to a higher happiness level (Lee, Park, and Park 2001).

Several studies have shown that parents play an important role in the process in which children develop self-esteem (Chung 2013; Klein, O'Bryant, and Hopkins 1996; Song 2010). Coopersmith (1967) stated that self-esteem develops through respect, acceptance and attention from significant others, particularly emphasizing the parents' role. He also suggested that authoritarian parenting was associated with low self-esteem, whereas the accepting and democratic style of parenting was related to high self-esteem. Hopkins and Klein (1993) pointed out how parental nurturance is positively related to high self-esteem in the family. Children develop self-esteem by receiving unconditional support from parents. Further, when other people outside the family also recognize the person's worth, he/she is well likely to live a positive life (Hopkins and Klein 1993). Lim (2013) also suggested that children who perceive love, acknowledgement and understanding from parents develop self-confidence and look at themselves more positively, thereby leading to an active attitude in any encountered situation.

There have been a fairly limited number of studies investigating the effect of parents' emotional closeness and love on children's self-esteem; further, even those studies have yielded inconsistent results. Verschueren and Marcoen's study (2002) indicated a positive correlation between both father's and mother's attachment and adolescents' self-esteem, whereas Simons et al. (2001) suggested that only the mother's, not the father's, attachment is associated with children's self-esteem. Forsman (1989) examined the effect of parents' positive regard and unconditional love on the self-esteem of male and female adults. The results depicted that the father's unconditional positive regard promoted self-esteem in both male and female adults. In contrast, the mother's unconditional positive regard was not shown to affect the self-esteem of female adults. Rubin et al. (2004) reported that male adolescents' self-esteem was more affected by their affection with their fathers compared to females' self-esteem.

Parental Emotional Support - Emotional Intelligence - Happiness

Emotional state is another factor that influences individual happiness. Salovey and Mayer (1990) first introduced emotional intelligence as a new concept, and divided it into three areas: appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion, and utilization of emotion. The first area, appraisal and expression of emotion, aims to perceive and apprehend one's own and other's emotions accurately as well as to express one's emotions both successfully and accurately. The regulation of emotion refers to the

ability to control one's emotions as well as those of others effectively. Utilization of emotion is the ability to understand and use emotional information properly in order to plan, achieve or solve problems in life.

Several studies have demonstrated that high emotional intelligence is associated with greater well-being (Austin, Saklofske, and Egan 2005; Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough 2002). Children with high emotional intelligence tend to show high subjective well-being. Moreover, it helps them to have confidence in their ability through successful school life adaptation and academic achievement. High emotional intelligence also helps them to understand others' feelings, leading to a successful formation of social relationships and allowing a positive and optimistic view toward oneself and the encountered situation (Choi 2010). Research on high school students also conveyed that their psychological well-being was closely related to emotional intelligence (Lee, Kim, and Park 2012). Other studies indicated that emotional intelligence is related to low depression, optimism (Schutte et al. 1998), positive moods and self-esteem (Schutte et al. 2002).

Emotional intelligence, associated with psychological well-being, is also related to receiving parental love while growing up. Adolescents with high emotional intelligence state that their parents showed great affection (Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey 1999). Learning proper emotional skills starts in the family with an active parent-child interaction (Ha 1997), because parents can help children connect their emotions to social situations (Mayer and Salovey 1997). According to Kernberg (1976), human's emotional characteristics are formed during early childhood, and the people who have the greatest influence in this process are parents. Dunn and Brown (1994) suggested that acquiring emotional skills during childhood is influenced by parents because, for example, children learn how to express their feelings from parents. Goleman (1995) also suggested that the way parents treat their children engenders great and lasting results on children's emotions. Research also suggests that secure attachment has a positive relation to successful emotional skills and high emotional intelligence scores (Kafetsios 2004).

Recent research involving both sides of parents revealed that, considering parents' gender, maternal and paternal affection have different impacts on children's emotional skills (Ross & Fuettes, 2010). Yoon's study (2012) indicated that the emotional expression of fathers and mothers yielded a different influence on the subdomains of children's emotional skills. While fathers' emotional expression has a similar effect on both male and female adolescents, mothers' emotional expression appeared to have more influence on the emotional skills of females than those of males.

Method

Participants

The participants were high school students in grades 10 through 12 recruited from one school located in Seoul, Korea. A total of 278 students provided usable surveys with 140 (50.36 %) males and 138 (49.64 %) females (Mean age =15.43, SD=0.78).

Measures

1) Parental emotional support

The Early Parental Support Scale (EPS) (Shaw et al. 2004) was used to measure parental emotional support. The Early Parental Support Scale (EPS) is comprised of two identical sets, which have 6 items each, measuring the participants' perceived parental emotional support and love. The first set is to be answered in respect to the mother, and the second, the father. The internal consistency of the scale was assessed using the samples of 147 Korean college students (Song 1992). Test-retest reliability (paternal, 0.92; maternal, 0.81) and internal consistency (paternal, 0.90; maternal, 0.87) were revealed to be high. The responses are made on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from (1) not at all, (2) a little, (3) some and (4) a lot. Sample items include the following: "How much love and affection did she/he give you?" and "How much did she/he understand your problems and worries?" For the current sample, the reliability coefficients were 0.84 for the father's subscale and 0.89 for the mother's subscale.

2) Emotional intelligence

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form (TEIQue-SF) was used to assess the participants' emotional intelligence. TEIQue-SF is a short, simplified form of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) (Petrides 2009), designed for adolescent participants. This scale showed high internal consistency ($\alpha=0.901$) using the samples of 124 Korean college students (Ha, Lee, and Choi 2013). Items are on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree~7=strongly agree), and the negatively worded items are reverse-scored. Sample items include the following: "It's easy for me to talk about my feelings to other people."; "I find it hard to control my feelings."; "I'm able to deal with stress."; "I pay a lot of attention to my feelings." For the current sample, the reliability coefficient was 0.86.

3) Self-esteem

Rosenberg's self-esteem scale was used in this study. Recently, in Lee et al.'s (2009) study on a sample of 338 Korean adolescent students, the internal consistency of this scale was high ($\alpha=0.89$). The self-esteem scale (Rosenberg 1965) consists of 10 items, 5 on positive self-esteem and 5 on negative self-esteem. Responses are made on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree. Sample items include the following: "I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others."; "I feel that I have a number of good qualities."; and "I feel I do not have much to be proud of." (reverse-scored item). For the current sample, the reliability coefficient was 0.81.

4) Happiness

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills and Argyle 2002) measures the overall happiness level and assesses items such as the frequency and intensity of positive emotions, satisfaction with life and absence of negative feelings, such as depression and

anxiety. It is a revised version of the Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle, Martin, and Crossland 1989). Recently, in Choi and Lee's (2004) study on a sample of 508 Korean college students, this scale showed high internal consistency ($\alpha=0.91$). The questionnaire has 29 items, and the responses are made on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. Negatively worded items are reverse-scored and high scores indicate a high happiness level. Sample items include: "I feel that life is very rewarding."; "I am very happy."; and "I feel I have a great deal of energy." For the current sample, the reliability coefficient was 0.89.

Analysis

The current study primarily explored the relationship between maternal/paternal emotional support and adolescents' happiness as well as the mediating roles of adolescent self-esteem and emotional intelligence based on previous studies. This study conceptually hypothesized the direct influence of maternal/paternal emotional support on adolescents' happiness and the indirect influence through self-esteem and emotional intelligence. To verify these hypotheses, maternal/paternal emotional support, adolescent self-esteem, emotional intelligence and happiness were set as latent variables; then, the relationship among these variables were examined.

Previous studies provide a clear theoretical basis for the influence of parental emotional support on adolescents' happiness and the mediation by both self-esteem and emotional intelligence. However, the relationship between self-esteem and emotional intelligence needed to be identified. For this, two competition models with different paths in the relationship between self-esteem and emotional intelligence were introduced and compared. After selecting the suitable model, the study investigated whether the relationship among the variables varies according to adolescents' gender within the selected model.

In the first stage, the structural equation model analysis was conducted in order to verify the hypothesized study model. The fit of the measurement model was first examined through a confirmatory factor analysis before verifying the structural model, following the two-step approach (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Maternal and paternal emotional support had six measured variables, self-esteem had ten measured variables and emotional intelligence had five measured variables. Regarding happiness, because the measure was composed of a single factor, the 29 items were divided into five parcels, according to the sequence of factor loadings. Each parcel was used as a measured variable in order to reflect the latent variable. The reason for conducting item parceling is because the measurement error could be overestimated, and the fit may be poor if there are too many items to measure one factor in a structural equation model analysis. Item parceling is a method to decrease the number of measurement items by using the sum or mean of the item group composed of several individual items. This method is used when there are many measurement items or when the sample is not big. It is possible with the premise, that the grouped items have unidimensionality (Bagozzi and Edward 1998; Little et al. 2002).

In the second stage, multi-group structural equation modeling analyses were conducted in order to test the fit of the hypothesized model across gender groups. Subsequently, equality constraints were imposed in order to test if there are significant group differences on the paths (Heck and Thomas 2000; Lomax 1985).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

A summary of the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. The findings revealed that parental support scores, adolescent self-esteem, emotional intelligent scores and happiness scores were highly related with each other. According to the guidelines of severe non-normality (i.e., skew >2 ; kurtosis >7) proposed by West, Finch, and Curran (1995), the normality assumption of all the variables was well met.

Stage I. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The overall measurement model was run. The model yielded an overall $\chi^2(48)$ value of 166.201, with CFI=0.94, NNFI=0.95 and RMSEA=0.06. These findings were indicative of a very good fit of the model to the data. The factor loadings for the measurement model ranged from 0.57 to 0.86 for EQ, from 0.61 to 0.83 for *Happiness* and from 0.64 to 0.83 for *self-esteem*.

Stage II. Structural Equation Model Analysis

Several models specifying the different patterns of relationships among the study variables were tested in order to determine the best-fitting model. These models are shown in Fig. 1.

The initial structural model (hypothesized model) was specified with both direct and indirect paths from the two parental emotional support to happiness. The initial model demonstrated a poor fit with the sample ($\chi^2=433.826$, $df=68$, CFI=0.829, NNFI=0.777, RMSEA=0.139). The alternative models portrayed two different patterns of mediating relationships among the latent variables. These two mediating models

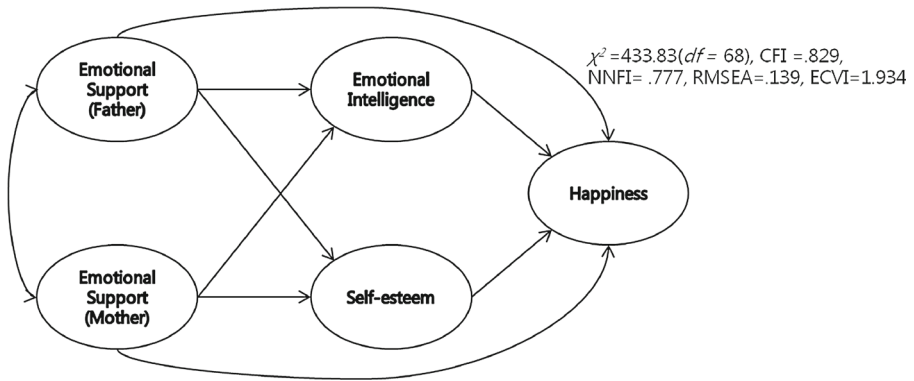
Table 1 Descriptive statistics for the study variables ($N=278$)

	PES	MES	Self-esteem	EQ	Happiness
MES	0.62***				
Self-esteem	0.43***	0.38***			
EQ	0.45***	0.47***	0.76***		
Happiness	0.45***	0.45***	0.80***	0.80***	
Mean	17.35	19.07	28.62	127.98	79.43
SD	3.77	2.87	5.34	18.32	10.53
Skewness	-0.34	-0.19	-0.44	-0.07	-0.13
Kurtosis	0.27	0.25	-0.02	0.38	0.39

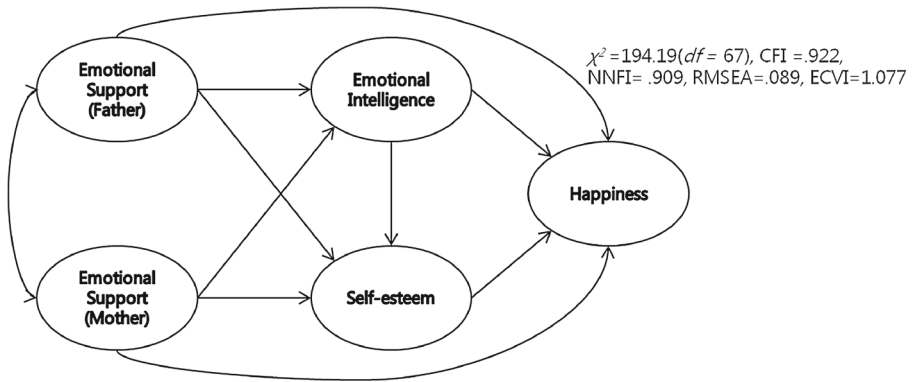
MES maternal emotional support, PES paternal emotional support

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$

a. Hypothesized model



b. Alternative model 1



c. Alternative model 2

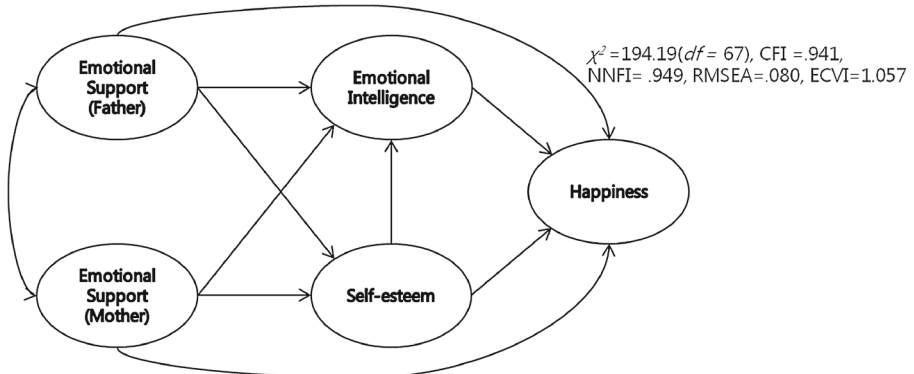


Fig. 1 Theoretical structural models of parental emotional support, emotional intelligence, self-esteem and happiness. **a.** Hypothesized model **b.** Alternative model 1 **c.** Alternative model 2

presented a better fit as compared to the initial hypothesized model. Alternative model 1 was specified with a direct path from emotional intelligence to self-esteem. Alternative model 2 was specified with a direct path from self-esteem to emotional intelligence. *Alternative model 2* showed a better fit with the sample data ($\chi^2=194.19$, $df=67$, CFI=0.941, NNFI=0.949, RMSEA=0.080) compared to *Alternative model 1* ($\chi^2=194.19$, $df=67$, CFI=0.922, NNFI=0.909, RMSEA=0.089). Therefore, *Alternative model 2* was chosen as the final model. The results of *Alternative model 2* are provided in Table 2. Overall, maternal and paternal emotional support did not have direct effects on happiness. However, both maternal and paternal emotional support had significantly affected happiness via self-esteem.

Testing Gender Differences in Structural Model

The final structural model (Alternative model 2) was tested across gender groups (see Table 3). For male adolescents, paternal emotional support had a significant effect on happiness via self-esteem. For female adolescents, both maternal and paternal emotional support had significant effects on happiness via self-esteem. Furthermore, maternal emotional support exerted a significant direct effect on happiness. Finally, we tested the chi-square difference tests in order to evaluate whether each pair of the structural coefficients was different across gender groups. However, the results of the tests did not show significant group differences for any parameters.

Discussion

The current study investigated the influence of parental emotional support on adolescent self-esteem, emotional intelligence and happiness as well as the mediating effects of self-esteem and emotional intelligence between parental emotional support and happiness. This study also examined the relationship between the variables, which came out differently according to parents' and adolescents' gender.

Table 2 Standardized estimated of the final model

			Estimate	(S.E.)	Standardized Estimate
Paternal emotional support	→	Self-esteem	0.26***	(0.05)	0.37
Maternal emotional support	→	Self-esteem	0.20**	(0.07)	0.22
Paternal emotional support	→	EQ	-0.04	(0.03)	-0.07
Maternal emotional support	→	EQ	0.10*	(0.04)	0.13
Paternal emotional support	→	Happiness	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.03
Maternal emotional support	→	Happiness	0.03	(0.05)	0.05
Self-esteem	→	EQ	0.89***	(0.10)	1.02
Self-esteem	→	Happiness	0.56*	(0.22)	0.93
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	→	Happiness	0.04	(0.35)	0.06

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3 Standardized estimated of the final model across gender groups

			Boys	Girls
Paternal emotional support	→	Self-esteem	0.40**	0.32**
Maternal emotional support	→	Self-esteem	0.14	0.28**
Paternal emotional support	→	EQ	-0.12	0.04
Maternal emotional support	→	EQ	0.15	0.17*
Paternal emotional support	→	Happiness	-0.03	-0.13
Maternal emotional support	→	Happiness	0.01	0.59*
Self-esteem	→	EQ	0.98***	0.87***
Self-esteem	→	Happiness	0.67*	0.72*
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	→	Happiness	0.35	0.12

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

The results revealed that both maternal and paternal emotional support had a positive influence on self-esteem. This supports the research by Sillick and Schutte (2006), that parental love is positively associated with self-esteem; it also came out in favor of the research by Hopkins and Klein (1993), that parental nurturance is positively related to the overall self-worth in college students. When the influence of maternal and paternal emotional support was examined separately, paternal support had a statistically significant influence on both male and female adolescents' self-esteem. Maternal support, however, only contributed to female adolescents' self-esteem, having no statistically significant effects on male adolescents' self-esteem. Such result is possibly due to the fact that the Korean emotional value and belief system assigned to different genders affects the process of children's socialization. In the Korean culture, it is not considered desirable for male children to maintain strong emotional closeness with their mothers after childhood. For instance, those who are given much attention and love by mothers or those who have a close relationship with their mothers after a certain age are often labeled as 'mama's boy', which implies psychological immaturity or even a mental problem. This cultural character shares the common ground with Cervantes and Seo's (2005) argument, that the emotion-related belief system of Korea includes emotional reserve, which reflects the Confucian idea of emotional control. In the Confucian emotional value, maternal love, attention and intimacy given to male children are considered not to have a positive influence on his manliness. Consequently, if a mother's emotional expression is too strong, it seems to cause negative emotions in male children (Shin and Jeong 2013).

Previous research on parental emotional support and emotional intelligence reported that receiving parental emotional support is related to the development of emotional intelligence. The current study suggests that only maternal emotional support affects children's emotional intelligence while paternal emotional support does not show such effects. This result partially supports the research (Kafetsios 2004; Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey 1999), which did not divide parental support into a maternal and paternal one, in the sense that close relationship and attachment with parents are related to emotional intelligence. The current study also conveyed that maternal support has a significant influence only on female adolescents' emotional intelligence. This result suggests that

parental emotional support may show varied influences on emotional intelligence according to the gender of both parents and adolescents.

Previous research suggested that emotional closeness with parents predicts children's happiness and satisfaction with life (Amato 1994); moreover, parental support greatly contributes to adolescents' satisfaction with life as well (Young, Miller, Norton, and Hill 1995). Studies also conveyed that the more affectionate and autonomous the parental rearing style, the higher is the children's happiness level (Cheng & Furnham, 2004; Furnham and Cheng 2000). The current study, however, suggests that maternal/paternal emotional support does not have a direct influence on adolescents' happiness when the gender of adolescents was not distinguished. Instead, both maternal and paternal emotional support exerted an indirect influence on happiness through the mediation of self-esteem. This result supports the research by Cheng and Furnham (2004), that self-esteem was the most significantly correlated with happiness among variables, including the parental rearing style. It also supports Kim and Chung's research (2008), that adolescents who have high self-esteem, who describe themselves positively or who have close personal relationships have a high happiness level. The study's result is also consistent with Plunkett et al.'s research (2007), that parents' affectionate and autonomous rearing style is related to low depression through the mediation of self-esteem; this supports Song's study (2010) as well the result, that maternal rearing style perceived by children affects children's happiness through self-esteem.

When male and female adolescents were examined separately, both male and female adolescents' happiness was affected by paternal emotional support through self-esteem; however, only female adolescents' happiness was influenced by maternal emotional support via self-esteem. Previous research portrayed that the father's warm and open attitude toward children had a positive influence on both male and female children (Baek and Kwon 2004; Lee and Kim 2011). However, this notion probably has to do with the current social phenomenon in which fathers have come to play an important role in child rearing, as the paternal role has gradually expanded in the family, which in the past used to be restricted to economic activities outside the family (Ko 2008).

A big difference between male and female adolescents was that for females, maternal emotional support exerted a direct influence on self-esteem, emotional intelligence and happiness as well as an indirect influence on happiness via self-esteem. For males, however, no significant influence was found from maternal emotional support. This result supports the research by Lee (2003), that females feel a psychological well-being when they perceive acceptance from the mother. Females may experience such emotions because they are generally more concerned with emotional bonds and personal relationships than males and, therefore, receive great influence from maternal emotional support (Lee and Kim 2011).

Study Limitations and Future Directions

Data examined in this study were collected primarily from students' self-report. It would have been optimal to include the corroborative information from students' perceptions, parental perceptions and other sources of information, such as observation. Another limitation in this study is that, in terms of causal interpretation, we used a cross-sectional dataset; thus, we can cautiously argue for the validity of the causal path

in our final model. However, if future research was to use more time points, there could be stronger empirical support for the causal influence of parental support on later psychological well-being.

In a future study, a comparison of western countries and eastern countries, in terms of the relationship between parental support and happiness, could also be worth exploring. Future researchers should examine other relevant variables so as to increase the knowledge of how cross-cultural differences affect parent–child relationship and, in turn, their mental health. Researchers must understand the viewpoints of various cultures regarding the importance of parental emotional support, which can lead to differences in the aspects of adolescents' emotional intelligence and self-esteem.

Implications of the Study

The current study has several practical implications. Although parental emotional support did not show a direct influence on adolescents' happiness in the study's result, it still exerted a significant influence on happiness through the mediation of self-esteem. This suggests that parental emotional support helps children develop self-esteem, which ultimately enhances children's happiness. Adolescence can be an emotionally difficult time and therefore, parents can create a supportive family atmosphere in which children can grow their self-esteem through active and loving interactions with parents, which will ultimately contribute to the adolescents' happiness.

Considering that Korean adolescents show fairly low levels of subjective well-being, studies should explore factors that affect their happiness so as to create a society in which adolescents can be happy. In this vein, the current study has its significance in that it investigated variables affecting adolescents' happiness and relationships among these variables as well as their different effect patterns with regard to the gender of both parents and children. Showing that parental emotional support and self-esteem have an influence on adolescents' happiness, the study results suggest the necessity of measures in order to promote parental emotional support for adolescents' happiness as well as educational measures to improve adolescents' self-esteem.

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