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# Subjective well-being, parent–adolescent relationship, and perceived parenting style among Israeli adolescents involved in a gap-year volunteering service

Vered Shenaar- Golan[a] and Alon Goldberg [b]

[a]Department of Social Work, Tel Hai Academic College, Qiryat Shemona, Israel; [b]Department of Education, Tel Hai Academic College, Qiryat Shemona, Israel

**ABSTRACT**

Introduction: In the past few decades, many older Israeli adolescents have postponed mandatory service in the Israeli Defense Forces to volunteer for a year of civil service during the gap year after high school. They meet, for the first time, the complexity of Israeli society, ethnic diversity, social disparity, and other painful aspects of human life. To date there is no research on the subjective well-being (SWB) of these adolescents, and specifically with regard to the parenting characteristics that contribute to their SWB.

Objective: The present study aims to explore the contribution of parenting style and parent–adolescent relationship to the well-being of these adolescents.

Participants: One hundred ninety-eight Jewish Israeli adolescents participating in 1-year gap-year programs, recruited via email through their program coordinators.

Methods: We collected demographic information and information on parenting style (Parental Authority Questionnaire [PAQ]; Buri, J. R. 1991. "Parental Authority Questionnaire." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 57 (1): 110–119), adolescent SWB (Personal Wellbeing Index [PWI-A]: International Wellbeing Group. 2006. *Personal Wellbeing Index*. 5th ed. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University), and perceived parent–adolescent relationship (Parental Attachment Scale [PAS]; Chapple, C. L. 2006. "Parental Attachment Scale (PAS)." In *Measures for Clinical Practice and Research: A Sourcebook: Vol. 1. Couples, Families, and Children*, edited by K. Corcoran, and J. Fischer, 388–389. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press).

Results: Adolescent SWB was positively correlated with parent–adolescent relationship and authoritative parenting style. Moreover, parent–adolescent relationship partially mediated the relationship between authoritative parenting style and SWB and between authoritarian parenting style and SWB.

Conclusion: Results demonstrate the crucial role of the parent–child relationship in linking parenting style and adolescent SWB during the gap-year period.

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The gap-year phenomenon is likely a new and modern version of Erikson's (1968) concept of institutional moratorium. According to King (2011), 'such transitions remain a core area

**CONTACT** Alon Goldberg galgal.ezer@gmail.com
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of interest in the sociology of youth, forming a part of a wider debate about changes in the status of contemporary young adulthood' (p. 341). The gap year, which occurs between two developmental periods, adolescence and adulthood, confers social approval upon the adolescent's wish 'not to become an adult' right away but to explore potential adult roles without committing long term and to better shape his or her aspirations for the future.

Taking a gap year is increasingly popular in some countries, such as Israel, Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States (Crawford and Cribb 2012; Curtis 2014; Avgar 2015; Parker et al. 2015). Research specifically on gap years suggests many benefits, including cultural and personal development, and educational, occupational, and status attainment (for a review, see Crawford and Cribb 2012).

The Israeli version of the gap year is special because of mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF); to this day, most 18-year-olds postpone their individual educational and occupational aspirations and leave their parents' home for 3 years' mandatory service in the IDF. Yet, similar to the rising phenomenon of adolescents in other Western countries taking a gap year, some Israeli late adolescents postpone their mandatory IDF service to sign up for a year of voluntary civil service in community centers and boarding schools, working with children and youth at risk, individuals with disabilities, or members of weakened populations, for example, African refugees or Holocaust survivors (Avgar 2015). After a 1-year gap they are bound to 3 years in the IDF, after which, usually at age 22, they begin to fulfill their future educational and occupational goals. In 2015, over 3,000 late adolescents volunteered with such projects in many locations across Israel. In recent years, program participation has increased 6% annually on average, and most participants come from middle-class families (Avgar 2015). These adolescents leave home and family for a semi-autonomous life wherever they are needed (sometimes abroad), under the supervision of program staff, and usually return home for the weekend every 2 weeks. They meet, for the first time, the divergence of Israeli society, ethnic diversity, social disparity, and other painful aspects of human life (e.g. abused children removed from their families). Moreover, the Israeli gap-year programs are characterized by authoritarian relationships with program staff (instructors and management) and challenge adolescents with the transition to this kind of environment, which resembles somewhat the transition into army service (Mayseless, Scharf, and Sholt 2003). Therefore, it is vital to examine the well-being of these adolescents during their year of volunteering, and especially their parents' contribution to their well-being, while these young people are experiencing unfamiliar environments.

To date there is no research on the well-being of these adolescents, and specifically on parental contribution to their subjective well-being (SWB) during this challenging service. In this study we explore the contribution of parent–adolescent relationship and parenting style to their SWB, given the importance of fully understanding and developing appropriate interventions that can help meet their unique challenges.

## Adolescent subjective well-being

SWB is 'an umbrella term for different valuations that people make regarding their lives, the events happening to them, and circumstances in which they live' (Diener 2006, 400). Well-being has become a keyword in youth and social policy, as a measure of a

good life (McLeod and Wright 2016). It refers to how people evaluate their lives, both in general and in specific domains such as family, friends, and leisure time. There is widespread agreement that SWB is a multidimensional construct with three distinct components (Diener 1984): a cognitive component related to appraisals of life satisfaction, and two affective components referring to the presence of high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative emotional experiences (Andrews and Robinson 1991; Diener, Lucas, and Oishi 2002). This definition applies equally to adults, adolescents, and children (González et al. 2015; Navarro et al. 2017). Adolescent SWB appears to act as a buffer against a variety of negative outcomes, including psychological disorders, and is not only a key indicator of positive development but also an enabling factor that promotes and maintains optimal mental health (Park 2004; Viner et al. 2012).

The current research explores the contribution of the parent–adolescent relationship to the adolescent's well-being.

Much research showed that families are the primary influence on children's development (Irwin, Siddiqi, and Hertzman 2007). Moreover, there is increasing evidence that parenting behavior is a significant predictor of positive outcomes in adolescence (Smith et al. 2001; Kennedy et al. 2010) and of SWB (Heaven and Ciarrochi 2008; Davis, Carlo, and Knight 2015). Parents play an essential role in helping adolescents develop aspirations, cultivate plans, and succeed throughout this phase of life (Eccles 2007; Helwig 2008) and continue to exert significant influence on developmental outcomes, both emotional and behavioral, beyond adolescence into early adulthood (Goodnow 2005; Melby et al. 2008; Schrodt et al. 2009).

The family environment is most important in shaping future adolescent behavior and SWB (Shek 1998; Park 2004; Heaven and Ciarrochi 2008; Jiménez-Iglesias et al. 2015). Parents who are emotionally warm and available and who balance these qualities with high expectations create an emotional context in which adolescents tend to be more secure, healthier, and safer than peers raised in other settings (Michael et al. 2014). Thus, as children grow, they reach a certain level of SWB based on their experiences with those close to them, beginning with their parents (Navarro et al. 2017). Ryan, Stiller, and Lynch (1994) found that when adolescents felt a strong connection to their parents, they experienced higher levels of SWB than those whose needs for connection with their parents went unsatisfied. Nickerson and Nagle (2004) noted that attachment to parents produces significant, independent effects on greater life satisfaction in adolescents.

Research on adolescent SWB generally examined adolescent feelings of satisfaction with life and indicated the importance of parental support and the parent–child relationship in protecting against poor health outcomes and in increasing levels of SWB (Resnick et al. 1997; Suldo et al. 2009; Shenaar-Golan and Walter 2015). More specifically, high levels of parental support and involvement and low levels of punitive and inconsistent discipline were linked to high levels of both prosocial behavior and SWB during adolescence (Day and Padilla-Walker 2009; Walton and Flouri 2010). Most research on this developmental phase, however, focused on externalizing and problem behaviors, concentrating on the effects of parenting on the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents. Relatively fewer studies examined adolescents' prosocial behaviors (Padilla-Walker et al. 2012) and the effects of parenting on adolescents' SWB (Raboteg-Saric and Sakic 2014). Of the latter, most studies focused on psychopathological outcomes rather than on SWB (Olsson

et al. 2013). Moreover, previous studies of the effects of parenting focused on mothers; only recently have scholars begun to examine both parents (Carlo et al. 2011; Kim, Yang, and Lee 2015).

A theoretical model useful for investigating how parental variables contribute to adolescent SWB is Baumrind's (1971) typology of parenting styles.

## The theoretical perspective: Baumrind's parenting typology

The concept of parenting style refers to parental attitudes toward and beliefs about the child that, as a whole, create an emotional climate in which different parental behaviors occur (Darling and Steinberg 1993). Parenting is also seen as a socialization agent that plays a substantial role in supporting the relationship between perceived needed support and adolescent well-being (Ryan and Deci 2000; Niemiec et al. 2006). Baumrind's (1971) typology has two core dimensions: parental demandingness (or control) and parental responsiveness (or warmth). *Parental demandingness* emphasizes strict regulations, behavioral rules, and standards and refers to 'the extent to which parents desire children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts, and willingness to confront the child who disobeys' (Baumrind 1991a, 61–62). *Parental responsiveness* encompasses the extent to which parents show affection and approval and interact with their children, and it represents 'the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands' (Baumrind 1991a, 62). Baumrind and other researchers identified particular combinations of demandingness and responsiveness using a fourfold classification of parenting styles: (a) authoritarian—high level of demandingness and low level of responsiveness; (b) authoritative—high levels of both demandingness and responsiveness; (c) permissive—low level of demandingness and high level of responsiveness; and (d) neglectful—low levels of both dimensions (Spivey 1967; Maccoby and Martin 1983).

Research on the effects of different parenting styles found authoritative parenting to be most effective for raising healthy children who become healthy adolescents (Baumrind 1991b; Hamon and Schrodt 2012; Panetta et al. 2014). Authoritative parenting was also linked to a strong parent–child relationship and a sense of safety (Houltberg et al. 2016). Children of parents perceived as authoritative tend to be more sociable and more content with their family than children who perceive their parents either as too flexible or as too dogmatic (Hamon and Schrodt 2012). Researchers also linked authoritative parenting to a wide range of positive, adolescent socialization outcomes, such as high levels of prosocial behavior (Baumrind 1991b; Stattin and Kerr 2000; Laible and Carlo 2004; Eisenberg, Fabes, and Spinrad 2006; Laursen and Collins 2009; Walton and Flouri 2010; Houltberg et al. 2016).

Previous studies associated authoritative parenting with positive indicators of adolescent SWB and happiness (Suldo and Huebner 2004; Tennen, Affleck, and Armeli 2005; Milevsky et al. 2008; Jiménez-Iglesias et al. 2015) and found that adolescents from authoritative homes were more likely to report higher life satisfaction than adolescents reared in neglectful homes (Milevsky et al. 2008). Authoritarian parenting was associated with negative indicators such as passive attitudes and lower self-esteem among adolescents

(Shahimi, Heaven, and Ciarrochi 2013). Adolescents from authoritative homes, by contrast, were psychosocially better adjusted, more competent, more confident in their abilities, more sociable, and more accepted by their peers, and they exhibited greater psychosocial maturity and psychosocial competence (Lamborn et al. 1991; Laursen and Collins 2009). These characteristics were shown to contribute to an increased sense of SWB (Tennen, Affleck, and Armeli 2005).

## The current study

The current study explored the relationship between perceived parenting style, the parent–child relationship, and adolescent SWB during adolescents' gap-year service. By voluntarily joining a gap-year program in Israel, the adolescent leaves the family environment for a more authoritarian environment under restrictions and demands that may challenge him or her. Therefore, this study investigated whether the parenting style that adolescents experienced in the family context contributes to their well-being in the new setting. Moreover, during the gap year, adolescents no longer experience many direct parenting practices (i.e. parenting-style behaviors), although parenting-style behavior might establish positive parent–adolescent relationships (e.g. trust, open communication, mutuality) that contribute to better adjustment and well-being during this period (mediating effect).

The study used adolescents' self-reports of their perceptions of these factors in testing the following hypotheses:

1. Adolescent SWB will be positively related to the authoritative parenting style and negatively related to the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles.
2. Adolescent SWB will be positively related to parent–adolescent relationship.
3. Parent–adolescent relationship will mediate the relationship between parenting style and SWB.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were 198 Jewish Israeli late adolescents taking part in a 1-year volunteer community service program between high school and compulsory army service (i.e. a gap-year program). They were 18–20 years old ($M = 18.52$, $SD = 0.68$); 49% were male ($N = 97$), and 51% were female ($N = 101$). Most had married parents (91%), and they had up to 10 siblings ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.80$). Over half (54.4%) grew up in rural areas, small towns, or communal settlements. About 61% were secular ($N = 121$), and the rest were religious to varying degrees.

### *Measures*

#### *Demographic*

We collected background information about participants' age, gender, parental status, number of siblings, location of home residence, and degree of religious practice.

### Parenting style

Parenting style was assessed using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Bun et al. 1988; Buri 1991), a 30-item measure based on Baumrind's (1971) prototypes of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. The 10-item Authoritativeness scale includes items such as 'As I was growing up my (mother/father) directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reason and discipline.' The 10-item Authoritarianism scale includes items such as 'Even if (her/his) children didn't agree with (her/him), my (mother/father) felt that it was for our own good if we conformed to what (she/he) thought was right.' The 10-item Permissiveness scale includes items such as 'As I was growing up my (mother/father) allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from (her/him).' Respondents rate the PAQ items on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alphas for the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles in the current study were .75, .86, and .77, respectively.

### SWB

SWB was measured using the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI-A: International Wellbeing Group 2006). The PWI-A is composed of one overall question on satisfaction with life as a whole and eight items measuring satisfaction in specific life domains: standard of living, personal health, achieving in life, personal relationships, personal safety, community-connectedness, future security, and religion. All items are rated on a scale from 0 (*completely dissatisfied*) to 10 (*completely satisfied*). The scale has a Cronbach's alpha ranging from .70 to .85 (International Wellbeing Group 2006); in the current study, it was .83.

### Parent–adolescent relationship

Parent–adolescent relationship was assessed using the Parental Attachment Scale (PAS) developed by Chapple (2006). The scale is based on the social control theory of Hirschi, which postulates that attachment to parents is primary in life and is the affective dimension of the social bond. Parental attachment in this study was measured with six items assessing the affective component of the parent–child bond in terms of affection, caring, and mutual respect. Higher mean total scores indicate greater attachment to parents. PAS has fair internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .74. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha was .73.

## Procedure

We emailed directors of gap-year volunteering programs to invite their participants to join the study. A copy of the questionnaire was attached. After permission was received from program directors, paper-and-pencil questionnaires were distributed in person to participants. All participants received a description of the study importance, objectives, and procedures and signed an informed consent form. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept anonymous and that the data collected would be used for this research only.

### Statistical analysis

We calculated multiple hierarchical regressions to predict parent–adolescent relationship and SWB, controlling for adolescents' gender and age. Parenting styles served as predictors for parent–adolescent relationship, and parenting styles and parent–adolescent relationship served as predictors for SWB. We used Hayes's (2013) PROCESS procedure with bootstrapping to assess the extent to which parent–adolescent relationship mediated the relationship between parenting style and SWB. All predictors were standardized.

## Results

### Descriptive results

Participating adolescents reported high mean levels of SWB and positive relationships with their parents (see Table 1). The mean score for authoritative parenting style was above the scale midpoint, and mean scores for authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were below the scale midpoint. SWB was higher for males ($M = 8.15$, $SD = 1.04$) than for females ($M = 7.79$, $SD = 1.33$) [$t(188.48) = 2.17$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $d = 0.32$], and all other gender differences were nonsignificant. Age was weakly related to the authoritative ($r = -.17$, $p < .05$) and parenting styles ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) but was unrelated to the other study variables.

SWB was positively related to both parent–adolescent relationship and authoritative parenting and was negatively related to authoritarian parenting. Parent–adolescent relationship was positively related to authoritative parenting and negatively related to authoritarian parenting. The authoritative and permissive parenting styles were positively interrelated and were negatively related to the authoritarian parenting style.

We ran multiple regressions to predict parent–adolescent relationship and SWB (see Table 2). Adolescents' gender (0 = female; 1 = male) and age were entered as control variables. Twenty-six percent of the variance in parent–adolescent relationship was explained by the study variables, such that higher authoritative parenting style and lower permissive parenting style were predictive of better parent–adolescent relationships. Twenty-eight percent of the variance in SWB was explained by the study variables, such that it was higher for males and for older participants. Further, higher authoritative parenting style and better parent–adolescent relationship were predictive of higher SWB.

To assess the extent to which parent–adolescent relationship mediates the relationship between parenting styles and SWB, we ran Hayes's (2013) PROCESS procedure with bootstrapping (see Table 3). Results reveal that parent–adolescent relationship partially

**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Study Variables ($N = 198$).

| | *M* (*SD*) | Parent–adolescent relationship | Authoritative parenting | Authoritarian parenting | Permissive parenting |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subjective well-being (0–10) | 7.97 (1.21) | .45*** | .37*** | −.22** | .02 |
| Parent–adolescent relationship (1–3) | 2.51 (0.40) | | .50*** | −.25*** | −.03 |
| Authoritative parenting (1–5) | 3.84 (0.57) | | | −.40*** | .19** |
| Authoritarian parenting (1–5) | 2.37 (0.69) | | | | −.45*** |
| Permissive parenting (1–5) | 2.74 (0.57) | | | | |

**$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

**Table 2.** Results of Regression Analysis for Parenting Styles, Parent Adolescent Relationship, and Subjective Well-Being ($N = 198$).

| | Subjective well-being | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Item | B | SE | β |
| Gender | 0.32 | 0.15 | .16** |
| Age | 0.40 | 0.11 | .18** |
| Authoritative parenting | 0.44 | 0.16 | .21** |
| Authoritarian parenting | −0.21 | 0.13 | −.12 |
| Permissive parenting | −0.10 | 0.15 | −.05 |
| Parent–adolescent relationship | 1.03 | 0.22 | .34*** |
| | Adj. $R^2 = .28$ | | |
| | | $F(6, 191) = 13.84$*** | |
| | | Effect size (f2) = 0.39 | |

**$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

**Table 3.** Results of Mediation Analyses for Parenting Styles, Parent–Adolescent Relationship, and Subjective Well-Being ($N = 198$).

| | | Direct effect | | Indirect effect | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent variable (DV) | Independent variable (IV) | To DV *B* (*SE*) | To mediator *B* (*SE*) | Estimate (*SE*) | *Z* | 95% CI | Effect size (η2) |
| Subjective well-being | Authoritative parenting | 0.29*** (0.09) | 0.50*** (0.06) | 0.22 (0.05) | 4.27*** | 0.12, 0.32 | .092 |
| | Parent–adolescent relationship | 0.43*** (0.08) | | | | | |
| Subjective well-being | Authoritarian parenting | −0.19* (0.08) | −0.24*** (0.07) | −0.13 (0.04) | 3.03** | −0.21, −0.05 | .046 |
| | Parent–adolescent relationship | 0.53*** (0.08) | | | | | |
| Subjective well-being | Permissive parenting | 0.06 (0.08) | −0.04 (0.07) | −0.02 (0.04) | 0.50 | −0.10, 0.06 | .001 |
| | Parent–adolescent relationship | 0.57*** (0.08) | | | | | |

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

mediates the relationship between authoritative parenting style and SWB and between authoritarian parenting style and SWB. Higher perceived use of the authoritative parenting style was related to better parent–adolescent relationship, and thereby to higher SWB. In addition, lower perceived use of the authoritarian parenting style was related to better parent–adolescent relationship, and thereby to higher SWB. Mediation was not significant for the permissive parenting style.

## Discussion

The primary goals of this study were to investigate the association between adolescent SWB, parent–adolescent relationship, and parenting style in the context of gap-year programs and to explore whether parent–adolescent relationship mediates the relationship between parenting style and SWB.

The results revealed, as hypothesized (H1), a positive correlation between authoritative parenting style, quality of parent–child relationship, and participants' SWB; and a negative

correlation between authoritarian parenting style and participants' SWB. The results yielded, unexpectedly, nonsignificant findings for the relationship between permissive parenting style and adolescent SWB.

The results of this study linking authoritative parenting and higher perceived quality of the parent–child relationship to higher levels of adolescent SWB are congruent with the conclusions of Baumrind (1991a) and others (e.g. Lamborn et al. 1991; Suldo and Huebner 2004; Shahimi, Heaven, and Ciarrochi 2013; Raboteg-Saric and Sakic 2014). One explanation based on extant research (e.g. Tennen, Affleck, and Armeli 2005; Henderson et al. 2006; Paulussen-Hoogeboom et al. 2008; Panetta et al. 2014) is that parenting that is high in warmth, responsiveness, and support and moderate in level of control (i.e. authoritative parenting) promotes positive adjustment, positive outcomes, and greater SWB among adolescents. It is possible that these dimensions (responsiveness and autonomy granting) of parenting style have a stronger effect than parental demandingness on SWB. In contrast, parenting that is extremely controlling (authoritarian parenting) is related to less positive adjustment and low adolescent SWB (McKinney, Milone, and Renk 2011; Jiménez-Iglesias et al. 2015). The findings indicating that low responsiveness and higher control (authoritarian parenting) adversely affect adolescents' perceptions of relationship quality and SWB may be due to adolescents' need for greater autonomy (Raboteg-Saric and Sakic 2014). This explanation finds support in the self-determination theory of Ryan and Deci (2000), suggesting that parental support and encouragement of autonomy (which can be related to authoritative parenting) better meet the basic psychological needs of children, such as their expectation for a warm and supportive family.

There is an important nonsignificant finding in this study: we found no correlation between permissive parenting style and adolescent SWB. This finding (or lack thereof) can be explained by previous studies. A permissive parenting style, in contrast to authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles, was found to be associated with poorer outcomes in adolescents overall (Panetta et al. 2014). It may be that within the positive-outcome context of prosocial behavior, as in the current study, permissive parenting is indirectly linked to adolescents' SWB via emotion-regulatory processes (i.e. emotion regulation and emotion reactivity; Houltberg et al. 2016). It is also possible that through their inconsistent discipline and poor supervision, permissive parents are less effective at teaching and modeling adaptive emotion-regulatory strategies. This is consistent with the findings that both demandingness and responsiveness in the family are important for adolescent positive outcomes and SWB (Kennedy et al. 2010; Davis, Carlo, and Knight 2015).

Given the primary influence of families on children's development (Irwin, Siddiqi, and Hertzman 2007), our study tested the extent to which adolescents' perception of relationships with parents would have a mediating effect on the association between parenting style and adolescent SWB. Our findings confirmed the hypothesis (H2) that the parent–child relationship mediates the association between both perceived authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles and adolescent SWB. This finding is concordant with previous findings that the connection that adolescents feel with their parents is important in protecting against poor health outcomes in adolescence (Mancini 2008; Viner et al. 2012). For example, adolescents who reported ease of communication with their parents were also more likely to report a range of positive health outcomes, such as higher self-rated health and higher life satisfaction (Moreno et al. 2009). Whereas some

studies reported that family influence decreases during adolescence, our findings are consistent with studies from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States (Laursen and Collins 2009; Chan and Koo 2011; Michael et al. 2014) that found that the protective nature of family relationships continues during this developmental stage, resulting in positive behavioral and emotional adolescent outcomes.

Hill and Wang (2015) maintained that parents remain a significant influence throughout adolescence and into early adulthood by supporting children's aims and helping children see how their current endeavors promote longer-term goals and shape identity. Another explanation refers to the effect of these parenting practices (e.g. parental monitoring or supervision), suggesting that they depend on the emotional context of the parent–child relationship (Darling and Steinberg 1993). It is possible that positive and meaningful relationships with parents during this developmental stage provide an emotional foundation for adolescents' sense of security, belief in abilities, and adaptation capabilities, which in turn enable adolescents to experience greater satisfaction with life as a whole compared with their peers reared in other settings.

## Conclusions

Our results indicate that different parenting styles and perceived quality of parent–child relationships correlate differently with SWB among adolescents engaged in gap-year activities. More specifically, the present research clarifies the positive effect of authoritative parenting on adolescent SWB and the mediation effect of quality of the parent–child relationship. It demonstrates the crucial role of the parent–child relationship in linking parenting style and adolescent SWB. Based on the broader empirical literature on adolescent development within the family context, our results confirm that applying clear rules and limits in the context of warm, close, and loving relationships between adolescents and their parents fosters an environment that is predictable, that enables open communication and strong attachment, and that gives adolescents a sense of security. Taken together, these factors are correlated with higher levels of SWB, representing the optimal climate for adolescent development. Conversely, high levels of parental control lead to parenting practices that foreclose open dialogue and reduce the sense of closeness and security, resulting in perceived low levels of family support, less parental involvement, and low quality of parent–child relationships or attachment, in turn leading to negative outcomes and low satisfaction with life as a whole.

### *Implications*

Several implications of the findings should be noted. Psychologists, social workers, and therapists may find them to be informative, as they examine variables that could be targeted to improve positive outcomes in late adolescents. Training and intervention can help parents learn to foster a family climate that maximizes their children's ability to cope with the challenges of late adolescence, such as the challenge of the gap year. Programs could include information on how parental behavior affects children's SWB and guidance in evaluating one's own parenting style and consistencies and inconsistencies. Professionals could work with parents to increase parenting practices proven to boost late-adolescent SWB, such as communicating support and clear structure through

enacting consistent discipline; encouraging warmth, open dialogue, and demandingness / high expectations; enabling autonomy; and becoming involved parents.

Perhaps most important is to make parents aware of their crucial role and substantial influence even in this relatively late period of their children's lives. The power of having appropriate knowledge, tools, and skills can stimulate important changes in parenting style and relationship patterns. Parents can learn to provide an emotional climate that enhances multiple emotion-regulatory processes that are associated with SWB in adolescents and which, in turn, may lead to positive outcomes such as prosocial behaviors.

## Strengths, limitations, and future directions

These findings can be informative both for understanding the influences of family environment on emotional and behavioral outcomes and for developing interventions that will foster increased SWB among late adolescents during the gap year. Several limitations of the present study should be noted. First, most participants rated their parents as authoritative. A larger sample size may be more sensitive to possible differences in and a larger array of parenting-style combinations. A larger study is also needed to increase the generalizability of the findings and conclusions on the moderating effects of parent–adolescent relationship on the SWB of late adolescents. The current study was conducted without comparing the results with those from a control group of participants who were not involved in gap-year programs, and without comparing the different gap-year settings.

Other limitations stem from the methodology used to examine parenting styles. The instrument we used (Baumrind's threefold typology) does not differentiate between neglectful and permissive parenting, which were shown to relate differently to adolescent outcomes (e.g. Lamborn et al. 1991). Defining and measuring parenting styles is challenging, particularly when considering parent versus adolescent perceptions. Future investigations using multiple methods (e.g. direct behavior observation) are desirable. This study focused purposefully on the perspective of the adolescent, but it would be beneficial to assess both parent and adolescent perspectives. It would also be useful to include information on adolescent SWB and on the parent–adolescent relationship from additional informants, such as peers and romantic partners.

Finally, more longitudinal research designs are needed. Future researchers might examine how parents' interactions with adolescents and adolescent temperament alter parenting styles over time and subsequently influence adolescent SWB. They might also examine changes in the absolute and relative importance of parents for SWB in the transition to young adulthood, using more dynamic models of positive developmental outcomes that account for bidirectional influences.

## Compliance with ethical standards

The authors report no potential conflicts of interest relevant to this article. The research was performed in accordance with the ethical standards of the Tel-Hai College research committee in Israel. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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The research performed in accordance with the ethical standards of the Tel-Hai college research committee in Israel.

VSG and AG acquired, analyzed, and interpreted the data; drafted the manuscript; reviewed the manuscript for important intellectual content; and approved the final version of the manuscript submitted. VSG and AG are the guarantors of this work and, as such, had full access to all the data in the study and take responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## ORCID

*Alon Goldberg* http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3267-1947

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