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PORTO

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND HAPPINESS AMONG
PORTUGUESE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS:
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF FAMILY,
PEERS/COLLEAGUES, AND TEACHERS/STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyse the association between social support (family, peers/colleagues, and teachers/students) and happiness among Portuguese students and teachers. The literature related to these social supports and happiness among students and teachers has shed light on how these different social supports influence student and teacher happiness; however, there is scarce literature comparing which of these social supports has the most influence on student and teacher happiness, nor about who displays more happiness between students and teachers.

The sample consisted of 3130 students, between the ages of 9-20 years old ($M= 31.31$, $SD= 2.41$), that attended between 5th to 12th grade, and were from many regions in Portugal. It also consisted of 5038 teachers, between the ages of 20-70 years old ($M= 53.02$, $SD= 7.49$), from many regions in Portugal. These samples answered questionnaires consisting of various scales.

The results indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between social support from family, peers/colleagues, and teachers/students and Portuguese students' and teachers' happiness; as well as familial support having the strongest association with student happiness, and student support having the strongest association with the teacher happiness. These results highlight the importance of Portuguese students and teachers having this type of social support.

Keywords: social support, family, peers/colleagues, teachers/students, happiness.

Social Support and Happiness Among Portuguese Students and Teachers: Exploring the Role of Family, Peers/Colleagues, and Teachers/Students

Introduction

This study forms part of a Master's in Psychology degree, with the specialization in Educational Psychology and Human Development, of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa. This dissertation is sited within a larger project entitled "[Happiness in Portuguese Schools]." This broader project had its main purpose in collecting data from various schools within Portugal to provide a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the happiness of students and teachers. This dissertation had the main objective of understanding the association between social support and happiness among Portuguese students and teachers, by exploring the role of family, peers/colleagues, and teachers/students.

The broader project of "[Happiness in Portuguese Schools]." began in March 2022. This study aids in the analysis of how social supports influence the happiness of these students and teachers; as well as which of these social supports has the strongest association with the happiness of Portuguese students and teachers. This study may be of interest in the fact that it studies both students and teachers together, by exploring the role of family, peers/colleagues, and teachers/students.

Literature review

Factors affecting student and teacher happiness

Kamvar et al. (2009) proposed that the term happiness can have various interpretations and perceptions, and these may vary as an individual ages, and suggested that there is an age-based difference. For example, younger people can view happiness as being associated with delight and excitement, while older people may associate happiness with security (Moussa & Ali, 2021).

A school is not only a place for students to learn and develop academic skills, but it is also a place that enables students to improve their resilience, develop adequate coping mechanisms, work for a better future, and develop interpersonal relationships

(Gramaxo et al., 2023). A happy school is an environment where everyone (i.e., teachers and other staff, students, parents, and the external community) are open to change, where students value learning and where students appreciate their teachers as agents of knowledge, attentiveness, and helpfulness (Gramaxo et al. 2023). When students feel excited to go to school and absorb knowledge, then schools are on the correct path to creating a happy school. Happy schools are comprised of the following: 1) acknowledgement of students' success and progress; 2) active teaching methods; 3) students working collaboratively; 4) teachers happiness; 5) curriculum material; 6) sports grounds; and 7) an organised system (Gramaxo et al. 2023, p., 3 &, Sezer and Can, 2018). In the encouragement of a positive atmosphere, schools may provide equal educational opportunities (Gramaxo et al. 2023). UNESCO (2016) conducted a study called the "Happy School Project", and identified five factors that hinder students' happiness at school, namely: 1) a dangerous environment in which bullying is experienced; 2) a burdensome amount of work and stress due to assessment periods and grades; 3) an aggressive school environment; 4) poorly trained teachers; and 5) bad relationships.

In relation to the views that children have on happiness, younger children associated leisure with happiness, while adolescents associated positive feelings, non-violence, and friends with happiness (López-Pérez et al., 2022). Childrens' views on happiness may also be impacted by the country in which they live, for example, in a study conducted by López-Pérez et al., (2022) in which English and Spanish students' views were compared, English children expressed happiness at school as being autonomous, non-violence, and having positive teacher-student relationships, whereas Spanish students expressed experiencing more harmony and leisure in their definitions.

Mental disorders among students are known to be a common cause of health problems with serious outcomes, such as substance abuse, and increased rates of school dropout, among others (Heizomi et al., 2015). Heizomi et al., (2015), describe happiness as being a key factor in our daily lives, and is related to healthy outcomes, as people feel a powerful desire to, for example, exercise, develop healthy sleeping patterns, and practice a healthy diet. In other words, people who are happy have lower levels of participating in risky behaviour. An example of an aspect that has been related

to happiness among school students is physical attractiveness, however, this was found to only be a modest indicator of happiness, when compared to, leadership and the ability to produce ideas, for example, as noted in a study conducted by O'Rourke and Cooper (2010). They also reported that lower levels of neuroticism were associated with higher levels of happiness.

Virtanen et al. (2019), note how something as simple as school transitions can bring about educational and psychological challenges for students, example of these is: lessened student participation, depressive symptoms, poorer psychological well-being, deteriorating self-esteem, and a chain reaction of externalizing problems and school academic performance. Sezer and Can (2020), argue that a positive school environment is an encouragement for students to display their talents, as well as improving communicative and life skills, enabling lifelong success, and self-fulfilment, apart from encouraging their academic success.

The prioritization of a student's happiness may result in improved learning outcomes and enhanced learner achievements (Ramaswamy, 2023). To enhance the happiness of students, schools need to value the unique strengths and talents of their learners and understanding that there is a diverse range of intelligences (Ramaswamy, 2023). Happy students have been found to be more motivated to actively participate in school, with an increase in creativity and positive relationships among students (Ramaswamy, 2023).

The way students experience their schooling environment is not only impactful on their learning, but also on their personal growth as they work to finding where they belong in the broader society (Vuorinen et al., 2021). When a student's academic abilities are emerging, the schooling community (e.g., school staff and parents) should encourage the student to take note of their strengths and use them. Vuorinen et al., (2021), found that when students were able to use their strengths in their academic life it contributed to the increase in their happiness, as well as them being more engaged in school.

When looking at what affects teacher happiness, Yildirim (2014) found that the following aspects were associated to this: helpful feedback, collaboration among colleagues, adequate assessment, positive school climate, teaching practice aimed at

being appropriate for students, positive classroom spirit, being able to develop personally as an individual, self-efficacy (Yildirim ,2014, & Aelterman 2007). A happy teacher can aid in creating a non-threatening environment for a productive and constructive learning process.

A calm classroom environment enables teachers to fully execute their duties (Al-Bataineh et al., 2021). Mertoğlu (2018) states that for teachers to be positive role models to their students, they should have the following attributes: satisfaction with life, be healthy, be optimistic, experience positive emotions, and have a subjective well-being. Therefore, in order to contribute to the development of happy and achieving students, there is need for happy teachers, and as happiness is a state that can be learned, teachers have an increasing responsibility to instruct their students this (Mertoğlu ,2018).

Aziz et al., (2018) state that individuals can also develop happiness when they are satisfied at work, when looking at teacher job satisfaction this is achieved when their students are able to learn constructively and are able to grow and develop as human beings, they are also able to experience job satisfaction when participating in activities that allow them to exercise their roles fully. It is also important to note that teachers who have reasonable working hours tend to be happier.

The impact of social support from family, peers, and teachers on the happiness of students

Social support such as that found in family, peers, and teachers have been known to be positive sources to help students cope with such a crucial phase of their lives (Virtanen et al., 2019). Myers (2000) states that children with close social connections are happier and handle stresses better.

Positive social relationships may be the strongest psychosocial influence on our mental and physical well-being. Wissing et al. (2014) suggest that people with social networks, which includes family, friends, neighbours, and communities, had a higher status in health, reported less illness symptoms, and lived longer. The availability of family, friends, and other significant people to care for and assist us can be viewed as social support (Wissing et al., 2014). This support can be viewed as an emotional act, or it

may be the ability to give us their time and expertise when we need help. For example, a way we can demonstrate emotional support is by simply listening to someone, giving them the space to speak and feeling heard. When looking at the ability of a person providing their time and expertise when another person needs help, an example may be, a teacher providing extra time to explain work to students that did not understand. Social support has also been associated with the reduction of stress and the increased improvement of coping behaviours (Wissing et al., 2014). Social support from parents, peers, and teachers has been found to have a notable link to anxiety in adolescent boys and girls (Spence et al., 2022).

Support from parents may differ for boys and girls as parents tend to interact differently with each gender and may themselves have different parenting styles as a mother and father (Spence et al., 2022). Elevated levels of social support especially from family, lessened the negative impact of social isolation, exclusion, and rejection of peers (Spence et al., 2022). In a study conducted by Spence and colleagues (2022) they found that students who reported low levels of support from their parents and teachers, had an increased likelihood of being in the class that presented growing anxiety symptoms.

Looking at parental/familial support that impacts a child's academic achievement, the following may be active forms of this type of support: 1) parents reading at home; 2) setting high academic standards due to high expectations; 3) communicating with their children about school matters; and 4) positively encouraging their children to learn (Li et al., 2022). There have been two types of resources within parental support identified, namely: 1) material and time resources; and 2) spiritual resources. Material and time resources can be, for example, extra lessons, providing additional tools that aid in learning, and reading with their children (Barr, 2015). Spiritual resources may include, for example, the increasing expression of love and encouragement to the child, positive and appropriate communication, and a caring family environment (Li et al., 2022). In providing these resources a child can have adequate support outside of the schooling environment, and it promotes the improvement of their academic performance. Datu and King (2018) stated that happy students are more actively involved in school activities. Parents who help children with their schoolwork and work to meet their needs

can lead to an increase in student happiness. An increase in their happiness may also result in more positive relationships with teachers and peers (Demirbatir, 2015).

Li et al., (2022) noted that being liked by peers is an important influential factor that is linked to a students' sense of belonging and worthwhile connections to others. Tepordei et al., (2023) state that when students feel accepted by their peers there are higher feelings of self-worth, and lower levels of feeling negatively anxious or lonely. Tepordei et al., (2023) stated that students that have bigger friend groups are those who display adequate social skills that will enable them to form long-term relationships.

As students spend a significant amount of time interacting with peers, being adequately integrated into their peer class group is quite powerful to their adjustment (Li et al., 2022). Students that exhibit low levels of likability by their peers tend to produce more negative perceptions of school. The peer group can be seen as a starting point of affection, comfort, understanding and moral guidance, a place to experiment, and a space to practice autonomy from parents (Sharon et al., 2018). As students participate in positive relationships with their peers they will begin to improve their emotional well-being, and embrace prosocial behaviours (Sharon et al., 2018).

Froiland et al., (2018), explained that teachers that support positive teacher-student relationships encourage the independent motivation of students to learn. This independent motivation to learn has a positive outcome on achievement as students are more academically committed, this is due to the higher determination to learn by students, for example, preparing to help others. Independent motivation to learn and psychological need satisfaction are associated with emotional well-being and happiness (Froiland et al., 2018). Teacher social support is when teachers encourage equal care, respect, motivation, friendliness, and independence (Bakchich et al., 2022). Teacher social support relates to a sense of belonging to school as well as success and well-being (Bakchich et al., 2022).

The impact of social support from family, colleagues, and students on the happiness of teachers

Within the teaching profession, these professionals are expected to provide adequate information or feedback, within the educational environment and most importantly to

their students (Manasia et al., 2020). When a teacher is happy they are able to produce positive emotions and heighten their motivation (Aziz et al., 2018). Happiness in teachers will contribute to teachers being able to continue their development of positive psychological emotions, as well as create a cheerful outlook towards their profession (Tham et al., 2022). Teachers' social supports may be viewed as a valuable resource when facing stressful situations (Fiorilli et al., 2019). These social supports may be internal (e.g. support from colleagues and other staff), or external (e.g. support from friends and family), when teachers have internal support they may feel committed and have a sense of belonging, and when they have external support they may experience more satisfaction with their career and may also improve their performance (Fiorilli et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Fiorilli and colleagues (2019) it was found that, the more social support teachers had, the less they experienced elevated levels of burnout.

Dwiningtyas and Hajaroh (2023) state that when a teacher was supported by a good family environment they are better able to fully conduct their roles. In a study conducted by Weasmer et al., (2008), they stated that having a balance between work and family inspires teacher happiness. When family was supportive of their family member's teaching profession this encourages the teacher to continue to grow and perfect their profession (Weasmer et al., 2008).

De Stasio et al., (2020) explain that when teachers are presented with compassion, they view their colleagues as considerate as well as the schooling environment as more attentive. Teachers receiving more compassion are able to build positive and meaningful relationships with their colleagues, as well as engaging in their work better and feeling accepted within this organization (De Stasio et al., 2020). Being frequently exposed to positive affect such as that attained from receiving compassion from their colleagues helps teachers to form positive perceptions of the school, are able to build up their emotional health, be more committed to the school, and feeling more accepted in the school (De Stasio et al., 2020). When fellow teachers are able to work together to overcome challenges and meet collective goals this can generate trust within the teaching community, in turn creating positive and collaborative relationships amongst colleagues (e.g., Akinyemi et al., 2020, & Kolleck et al., 2021).

Manasia et al., (2020) explain that interactions with students are a vital source of emotions for teachers, as positive teacher-student relationships are associated with an increase in job satisfaction and self-efficacy in teachers, which in turn heighten a teacher's happiness. In another study conducted by Harding et al., (2018), they state that students who exhibit better well-being result in teachers experiencing lower levels of depressive symptoms. Positive teacher-student relationships are viewed as an important source as it increases motivation and pleasure for teachers (Harding et al., 2018). A study conducted by Kun and Gadanez (2019) suggested that student achievement positively contributed to teacher happiness.

Method

The present study

This study followed a quantitative methodology with a cross-sectional logic as the data was collected at a single point in time, with the aim of analysing the relationship between variables in a given population or sample (De Vos et al., 2011). The research design is correlational and between-subjects, as the goal is to evaluate the relationship between variables of two independent groups (Gravetter & Forzano, 2015).

Specific objectives

This study had three specific objectives: 1) to assess the association of social support from family, peers, and teachers and the happiness of Portuguese students; 2) to assess the association of social support from family, colleagues, and students and the happiness of Portuguese teachers; and 3) to assess which of these categories of social support (e.g., family, peers/colleagues, teachers/students) has the strongest association with the happiness of Portuguese students and teachers.

Research questions and hypotheses

This study aimed to answer several questions:

- (Q1) Is social support from family associated with student happiness?
- (Q2) Is social support from peers associated with student happiness?
- (Q3) Is social support from teachers associated with student happiness?
- (Q4) Is social support from family associated with teacher happiness?
- (Q5) Is social support from colleagues associated with teacher happiness?
- (Q6) Is social support from students associated with teacher happiness?

(Q7) Which social support has the strongest influence on student happiness?

(Q8) Which social support has the strongest influence on teacher happiness?

With reference to the existing literature in this field, some relationships between these variables are to be expected, allowing the following hypotheses to be formulated:

With regard to Q1, as we have seen, research has focused on analysing the effects of support from family on student happiness. Therefore, given that familial support is an important dimension in the experience of happiness for students (Spence et al., 2022), we can hypothesize, that higher levels of familial support is associated with higher levels of student happiness (H1).

With regard to Q2, as we have seen, research has focused on analysing the effects of support from peers on students' happiness. Therefore, given that peer support is another important dimension in the experience of happiness for students (Tepordei et al., 2023), we can hypothesize that higher levels of peer support is associated with higher levels of student happiness (H2).

With regard to Q3, as we have seen, research has focused on analysing the effects of support from teachers on students' happiness. Therefore, given that teacher support is yet another important dimension in the experience of happiness for students (Bakchich et al., 2022), we can hypothesize that higher levels of teacher support is associated with higher levels of student happiness (H3).

With regard to Q4, as we have seen, research has focused on analysing the effects of support from family on teachers' happiness. Therefore, given that familial support is an important dimension in the experience of happiness for teachers (Dwiningtyas & Hajaroh, 2023), we can hypothesize, that higher levels of familial support is associated with higher levels of teacher happiness (H4).

With regard to Q5, as we have seen, research has focused on analysing the effects of support from colleagues on teachers' happiness. Therefore, given that colleague support is another important dimension in the experience of happiness for teachers (de Stasio et al., 2020), we can hypothesize that higher levels of colleague support is associated with higher levels of teacher happiness (H5).

With regard to Q6, as we have seen, research has focused on analysing the effects of support from students on teachers' happiness. Therefore, given that student support is yet another important dimension in the experience of happiness for teachers (Manasia et al., 2020), we can hypothesize that higher levels of student support is associated with higher levels of teacher happiness (H5).

With regard to Q7 and Q8, there is no literature to substantiate which of the social supports (e.g., family, peers/colleagues, teachers/students) has the strongest influence on student and teacher happiness. Therefore, making this an interesting analysis to conduct.

Instruments and measures

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a collaborative study with the World Health Organization (WHO), that intends to examine the lifestyles of adolescents and their behaviours in various contexts of life (de Matos & Equipa Aventura Social, 2018). The adaption of this study in Portugal has resulted in six different studies, the latest having been conducted in 2018, and the questionnaire was entitled "Behaviour and health in school-aged youth". The following areas were examined: 1) mental health and well-being; 2) family; 3) school; 4) friends and leisure time; 5) health and illnesses; 6) violence and injuries; 7) sexuality; 8) body and movement; 9) substance use; 10) platforms and digital networks; 11) social participation; and 12) diversity (de Matos & Equipa Aventura Social, 2018). In regard to the use of this questionnaire with the broader project of "[Happiness in Portuguese Schools]" the questions only focused on the following areas: 1) family; 2) peers; 3) teachers; and 4) school; for the purpose of this study only the first three areas were used in the data analysis. A 5-point Likert Scale was used, in which one was defined as strongly disagree, and five being defined as strongly agree.

The Pemberton Happiness Index (PHI) was developed in 2013 by Hervás and Vázquez, and was created to measure happiness, and consists of two sections. For the purpose of this study, only Section A of this instrument was used in the data analysis. Section A has 11 items focusing on remembered happiness, which is measured with a 10-point Likert Scale, in which zero signified completely disagree and 10 signified completely agree.

Variables included in this study were organized into several groups: students' sociodemographic characteristics; teachers' sociodemographic characteristics; support from family to students; support from peers to students; support from teachers to students; support from family to teachers; support from colleagues to teachers; support from students to teachers; and happiness. Variables are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the main variables of the study

Variables	Measures
Students' sociodemographic characteristics	Age
	Gender
	School year (from 5 th to 12 th grade)
	Type of school
Teachers' sociodemographic characteristics	Age
	Gender
	Type of school
Support from family to students	To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? Please mark only one option for each line using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). • <i>My family really tries to help me.</i> • <i>I get the emotional support I need from my family.</i> • <i>I can talk to my family about my problems.</i> • <i>My family is available to help me make decisions.</i>
Support from peers to students	To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? Please mark only one option for each line using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). • <i>My schoolmates enjoy my company.</i> • <i>Most of my classmates are nice.</i> • <i>My classmates accept me for who I am.</i>
Support from teachers to students	To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? Please mark only one option for each line using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). • <i>I feel that my teachers care about me as a person.</i> • <i>I feel that my teachers accept me for who I am.</i> • <i>I feel confident in my teachers.</i>
Support from family to teachers	To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? Please mark only one option for each line using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

		• <i>My family really tries to help me.</i> • <i>I get the emotional support I need from my family.</i> • <i>I can talk to my family about my problems.</i> • <i>My family is available to help me make decisions.</i>
Support from colleagues to teachers		To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? Please mark only one option for each line using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). • <i>My colleagues enjoy my company.</i> • <i>Most of my colleagues are nice.</i> • <i>My colleagues accept me for who I am.</i>
Support from students to teachers		To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? Please mark only one option for each line using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). • <i>I feel that my students accept me for who I am.</i> • <i>I feel that my students are interested in me as a person.</i> • <i>I feel a lot of confidence in my students.</i>
Happiness		Using the following scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means totally disagree and 10 means totally agree, say to what extent you agree with the following statements. • <i>I feel very satisfied with my life.</i> • <i>I have the energy to carry out my daily tasks well.</i> • <i>I believe that my life is useful and valuable.</i> • <i>I feel satisfied with myself.</i> • <i>My life is full of learning and challenges that make me grow.</i> • <i>I feel very close to the people around me.</i> • <i>I feel able to solve most of the problems in my day-to-day life.</i> • <i>I feel I can be myself when it comes to the really important things.</i> • <i>I enjoy many little things every day.</i> • <i>In my day-to-day life, I have many moments when I feel bad. (scale was inverted)</i> • <i>I feel that I live in a society that allows me to fully develop my potential.</i>

Table 2 and 3 indicate the internal reliability of each scale for both students and teachers.

Table 2. Internal consistency of the support from family, peers, and teachers to students' scale

Scale	N of items	Cronbach alpha
Support from family to students	4	.93

Support from peers to students	3	.88
Support from teachers to students	3	.91
Happiness	11	.90

The original Cronbach Alpha for the first scale's items is .92, in the current study the Cronbach Alpha is .93, indicating it is higher, therefore the first scale's items are dependable. For the second and third scale's items the Cronbach Alpha is the same value as the original, therefore, these items are dependable. For the fourth scale's items the original Cronbach Alpha is .87, in the current study the Cronbach Alpha is .90, indicating that it is higher, therefore the fourth scale's items are dependable.

Table 3. Internal consistency of the support from family, colleagues, and students to teachers' scale

Scale	N of items	Cronbach alpha
Support from family to teachers	4	.96
Support from colleagues to teachers	3	.89
Support from students to teachers	3	.89
Happiness	11	.90

For the first, second and third scale's items the Cronbach Alpha is the same value as the original; therefore, these items are dependable. The original Cronbach Alpha for the fourth scale's items is .895, in the current study the Cronbach Alpha is .90, indicating it is higher, therefore the fourth scale's items are dependable.

Sample

The population of this study was all students and teachers in Portugal and was represented by a sample size of 3130 students and 5038 teachers. The participants were from many regions in Portugal, focusing on students and teachers from fifth grade through to secondary education.

The inclusion criteria are as follows: 1) students and teachers in schools in Portugal; 2) from grades five through to secondary education; 3) private and public schools. The exclusion criteria are as follows: 1) tertiary education; and 2) students and teachers outside of the abovementioned.

In regard to the student sample, 52% were female, 45,1% were male, 0,5% classified as other, and 2,3% preferred not to say. These students were between the ages of 9-20 years old, with a mean age of 13,31 and a standard deviation of 2,41. These

students were between the 5th to the 12th grades. Of these 3130 students 62,8% attended public institutions, 28% attended private institutions, 0,7% attended a private/public association, , and 8,5% were unknown.

In regard to the teacher sample, 85,3% were female, 13,45% were male, 0,1% classified as other, and 0,6% preferred not to say. These teachers were between the ages of 20-70 years old, with a mean age of 53,02 and a standard deviation of 7,49. Of the 5039 teachers, 82,2% worked at public institutions, 7,7% worked at private institutions, 1,1% worked at private/public associations, and 8,8% were unknown. Within this sample 2,7% had between 1-5 years of experience; 3,6% had between 6-10 years of experience; 6% had between 11-15 years of experience; 7,6% had between 16-20 years of experience; 16,8% had between 21-25 years of experience; 21,9% had between 26-30 years of experience; 21,9% had between 31-35 years of experience; 12,8% had between 36-40 years of experience; and 5,9% had more than 40 years of experience. Within this sample, 12,3% taught grades one to four; 5,6% taught arts and expressional arts; 23,8% taught exact and biological sciences; 16,5% taught social and human sciences; 2,8% were special education teachers; 1,8% taught electrical and computer sciences; 2,3% taught physical-motor expression; 27,7% taught language; 6,1% were classified as other; and 0,5% were preschool teachers.

Procedures

1. Data collection

As far as collecting data from students is concerned, this was done via parent/guardian databases, in which parents were asked to encourage participation, but to allow their children to answer independently. The parents/guardians were sent consent forms, informing them about the study and asking for the permission to allow their children to participate. They were informed that all responses were anonymous and confidential. Once the permission was received the invitations of participation were sent out via email to the various entities involved and the questionnaires as well. A Google Forms platform was used to obtain the data.

As far as collecting data from teachers is concerned, this was done by sending emails, with the consent forms informing them about the study and that all responses were anonymous and confidential. Once the permission was received the invitations of

participation were sent out via email to the various entities involved and the questionnaires as well. A Google Forms platform was used to obtain the data.

The Ethics Committee in Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities (CETCH) granted ethical approval for the broader project, no. CETCH2022-27.

2. Data analysis

The statistical program IBM SPSS 28.0 for Windows was used to process the data collected. Quantitative data analysis techniques were used, namely descriptive and inferential statistics. The use of descriptive statistics allowed the data collected to be described succinctly and effectively (Martins, 2011), which is why it was used to characterize the sample. Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions about the target population based on results obtained (Howell, 2010).

Therefore, to test all eight questions a Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used.

Presentation of results and discussion

1. Descriptive analysis

Some descriptive data for the full sample sets of both students and teachers are shown next.

1.1. *Descriptive statistics of support from family, peers, and teachers to students*

Regarding the support from family, peers, and teachers to students the answers are shown in table 4, 5, and 6 for the respective items.

Table 4. Descriptive data of support from family to students

Items	M	SD	MIN-MAX
My family really tries to help me	4.59	.78	1-5
I get the emotional support I need from my family	4.39	.95	1-5
I can talk to my family about my problems	4.28	1.07	1-5
My family is available to help me make decisions	4.50	.85	1-5
Family support total score	17.76	3.30	4-20

In terms of support from family to students the category of “My family really tries to help me” had the highest mean (4.59).

Table 5. Descriptive data of support from peers to students

Item	M	SD	MIN-MAX
My schoolmates enjoy my company	3.86	1.03	1-5
Most of my classmates are nice	3.93	1.05	1-5
My classmates accept me for who I am	3.98	1.07	1-5
Peer support total score	11.79	2.84	3-15

In terms of support from peers to students the item “My classmates accept me for who I am” had the highest mean (3.98).

Table 6. Descriptive data of support from teachers to students

Item	M	SD	MIN-MAX
I feel that my teachers care about me as a person	4.00	1.05	1-5
I feel that my teachers accept me for who I am	3.73	1.13	1-5
I feel confident in my teachers	3.77	1.13	1-5
Teacher support total score	11.50	3.04	3-15

In terms of support from teachers to students the item “I feel that my teachers care about me as a person” had the highest mean (4.00).

1.2. Descriptive statistics from family, colleagues, and students to teachers

Regarding the support from family, colleagues, and students to teachers the answers are shown in table 7, 8, and 9 for the respective categories.

Table 7. Descriptive data of support from family to teachers

Item	M	SD	MIN-MAX
My family really tries to help me	4.22	.91	1-5
I get the emotional support I need from my family	4.14	.98	1-5
I can talk to my family about my problems	4.16	.99	1-5
My family is available to help me make decisions	4.17	.98	1-5
Family support total score	16.70	3.62	4-20

In terms of support from family to teachers the item “My family really tries to help me” had the highest mean (4.22).

Table 8. Descriptive data for support from colleagues to teachers

Item	M	SD	MIN-MAX
My colleagues enjoy my company	3.82	.84	1-5

Most of my colleagues are nice	3.91	.87	1-5
My colleagues accept me for who I am	3.88	.89	1-5
Colleague support total score	11.60	2.36	3-15

In terms of support from colleagues to teachers the item “Most of my colleagues are nice” had the highest mean (3.91).

Table 9. Descriptive data for support from students to teachers

Item	M	SD	MIN-MAX
I feel that my students accept me for who I am	4.15	.79	1-5
I feel that my students are interested in me as a person	3.80	.99	1-5
I feel a lot of confidence in my students	3.73	.97	1-5
Student support total score	11.67	2.52	3-15

In terms of support from students to teachers the item “I feel that my students accept me for who I am” had the highest mean (4.15).

1.3. Descriptive statistics for happiness for both students and teachers

Regarding the happiness of students and teachers the possible answers can be found in table 10.

Table 10. Descriptive data for happiness for both students and teachers

	Students		Teachers		MIN-MAX
	M	SD	M	SD	
Happiness	7.41	1.61	6.83	1.52	0-10

In terms of happiness for students and teachers, the students mean was higher (7.41) than the teachers (6.83).

2. Inferential analysis

2.1. Inferential analysis social support and student happiness

(Q1) Is social support from family associated with student happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 11. Correlation between support from family to students and their happiness

Support from family to students	Happiness
My family really tries to help me	.470**
I get the emotional support I need from my family	.529**

I can talk to my family about my problems	.521**
My family is available to help me make decisions	.486**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11. illustrates that there is a significant positive correlation between support from family to students and their happiness for all four items; with the second item displaying the most elevated value meaning that students that receive the emotional support they need from their families has the strongest association with student happiness (see Table 11); followed by item three, then four, and finally one. Thus, confirming **H1**, that higher levels of familial support is associated with higher levels of student happiness. This data supports the literature in that, for example, parents that help their children with schoolwork and work to meet their children's needs do contribute to their happiness (Datu & King, 2018).

(Q2) Is social support from peers associated with student happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 12. Correlation between support from peers to students and their happiness

Support from peers to students	Happiness
My schoolmates enjoy my company	.497**
Most of my classmates are nice	.390**
My classmates accept me for who I am	.456**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 12. illustrates that there is a significant positive correlation between support from peers to students and their happiness for all three items; with item one having the most elevated value, meaning that peers enjoying the company of a student has the strongest association with their happiness; followed by item three and then two (see Table 12). Thus, confirming **H2**, that higher levels of peer support is associated with higher levels of student happiness. This data supports the literature in that, for example, as students participate in positive relationships with their peers they will begin to improve their emotional well-being, and embrace prosocial behaviours (Sharon et al., 2018).

(Q3) Is social support from teachers associated with student happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 13. Correlation between support from teachers to students and their happiness

Support from teachers to students	Happiness
I feel that my teachers care about me as a person	.449**
I feel that my teachers accept me for who I am	.480**
I feel confident in my teachers	.470**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 13. illustrates that there is a significant positive correlation between support from teachers to students and their happiness for all three items; with item two having the most elevated value, meaning that teachers accepting students for who they are, has the strongest association with student happiness (see Table 13); followed by item three then one. Thus, confirming **H3**, that higher levels of teacher support is associated with higher levels of student happiness. This data supports the literature in that, for example, teacher social support relates to a sense of belonging to school as well as success and well-being (Bakchich et al., 2022).

These results allow us to achieve the first objective of analysing the relationship between support from family, peers, and teachers and the happiness of students.

2.2. Inferential analysis social support and teacher happiness

(Q4) Is social support from family associated with teacher happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 14. Correlation between support from family to teachers and their happiness

Support from family to teachers	Happiness
My family really tries to help me	.358**
I get the emotional support I need from my family	.394**
I can talk to my family about my problems	.369**
My family is available to help me make decisions	.360**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 14. illustrates that there is a significant positive correlation between support from family to teachers and their happiness for all four items; with item two having the most elevated value, meaning that teachers that receive the emotional support they need from their families, has the strongest association with teacher happiness (see Table

14), followed by item three, then four, and finally one. Thus, confirming **H4**, that higher levels of familial support is associated with higher levels of teacher happiness. This data supports the literature in that, for example, when family was supportive of their family member's teaching profession this encourages the teacher to continue to grow and perfect their profession (Weasmer et al., 2008).

(Q5) Is social support from colleagues associated with teacher happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 15. Correlation between support from colleagues to teachers and their happiness

Support from colleagues to teachers	Happiness
My colleagues enjoy my company	.434**
Most of my colleagues are nice	.385**
My colleagues accept me for who I am	.414**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 15. illustrates that there is a significant positive correlation between support from colleagues to teachers and their happiness for all three items; with item one having the most elevated value, meaning that colleagues enjoying the company of a teacher has the strongest association with teacher happiness (see Table 15), followed by item three and then two. Thus, confirming **H5**, that higher levels of support from colleagues is associated with higher levels of teacher happiness. This data supports the literature in that, for example, De Stasio et al., (2020) explain that when teachers are presented with compassion, they view their colleagues as considerate as well as the schooling environment as more attentive.

(Q6) Is social support from students associated with teacher happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 16. Correlation between support from students to teachers and their happiness

Support from students to teachers	Happiness
I feel that my students accept me for who I am	.414**
I feel that my students are interested in me as a person	.409**

I feel a lot of confidence in my students	.449**
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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 16. illustrates that there is a significant positive correlation between support from students to teachers and their happiness for all three items; with item three having the most elevated value, meaning that teachers having a lot of confidence in their students has the strongest association with teacher happiness (see Table 16); followed by item one and then two. Thus, confirming **H6**, that higher levels of student support is associated with higher levels of teacher happiness. This data supports the literature in that, for example, Manasia et al., (2020) explain that interactions with students are a vital source of emotions for teachers, as positive teacher-student relationships are associated with an increase in job satisfaction and self-efficacy in teachers, which in turn heighten a teacher's happiness

These results allow us to achieve our second objective of analysing the relationship between support from family, colleagues, and students and the happiness of teachers.

1.3. *Inferential analysis social support and student and teacher happiness*

(Q7) Which social support has the strongest influence on student happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 17. Correlation between social support totals and student happiness

Scale	Happiness
Family support total score	.566**
Peer support total score	.500**
Teacher support total score	.507**

Here we can see that support from family has the strongest association with student happiness ($r = .566$, $p = .001$).

(Q8) Which social support has the strongest influence on teacher happiness?

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse this data.

Table 18. Correlation between social support totals and teacher happiness

Scale	Happiness
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Family support total score	.395**
Colleague support total score	.452**
Student support total score	.464**

Here we can see that support from students has the strongest association with teacher happiness ($r = .464$, $p = .001$).

These results allowed us to achieve our third objective. With family support having the strongest association with student happiness, and student support having the strongest association relationship with teacher happiness.

Conclusions

In this section dedicated to conclusions, we summarize the main ideas of the study, analyse its practical implications, identify some limitations encountered throughout the study, and highlight some suggestions for future research.

As the title indicates, this study was centred on social support and happiness among Portuguese students and teachers; more specifically this study focused on the role of family, peers/colleagues, and teachers/students in relation to the students and teachers' happiness.

Inferential analysis was used to answer all three specific objectives. With objective one – to assess the association of social support from family, peers, and teachers and the happiness of Portuguese students – the results suggest that there is a significant positive correlation, in other words this social support is associated with the students' happiness.

With objective two – to assess the association of social support from family, colleagues, and students and the happiness of Portuguese teachers' happiness – the results suggest that there is a significant positive correlation, in other words this social support is associated with the teachers' happiness.

With objective three – to assess which of these social supports has the strongest association with the happiness of Portuguese students and teachers – the results indicated that for the students, support from family had the strongest association with their happiness; and for the teachers, student support had the strongest association with their happiness.

Social support such as that found in family, peers, and teachers have been known to be positive sources to help students cope with such a crucial phase of their lives (Virtanen et al., 2019). Myers (2000) states that children with close social connections are happier and handle stresses better. These results strengthen the importance of providing social support to students and teachers (Meyers, 2000; & Tham et al., 2022). When students feel excited to go to school and absorb knowledge, then schools are on the correct path to creating a happy school. Happy schools are comprised of the following: 1) acknowledgement of students' success and progress; 2) active teaching methods; 3) students working collaboratively; 4) teachers happiness; 5) curriculum material; 6) sports grounds; and 7) an organised system (Gramaxo et al. 2023, p., 3 &, Sezer and Can, 2018). UNESCO (2016) conducted a study called the "Happy School Project", and identified five factors that hinder students' happiness at school, namely: 1) a dangerous environment in which bullying is experienced; 2) a burdensome amount of work and stress due to assessment periods and grades; 3) an aggressive school environment; 4) poorly trained teachers; and 5) bad relationships.

When looking at what affects teacher happiness and well-being, Yildirim (2014) found that the following aspects were associated to this: helpful feedback, collaboration among colleagues, adequate assessment, positive school climate, teaching practice aimed at being appropriate for students, positive classroom spirit, being able to develop personally as an individual, self-efficacy (e.g., Yildirim ,2014, & Aelterman 2007). A happy teacher can aid in creating a non-threatening environment for a productive and constructive learning process.

With regard to the study's limitations, it should be noted that this was a correlational study, which does not allow for the creation of casual relationships. Another important note is that due to the non-randomized nature of the sampling process, this does not allow for the results to be generalized, even despite the sample sizes and diversity of institutions involved in the study.

In terms of future directions, it is highly relevant to continue studies and research in this area. It can be of interest to conduct a qualitative study focusing on the effects of social support on teacher happiness, so as to build on existing yet limited literature.

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