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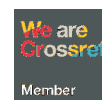
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Enhancing adolescent well-being in the digital age: exploring the interplay of parental and peer relationships with gender as a moderating variabel

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ABSTRACT

The internet has become essential to people of all ages, particularly teenagers, to access information, education, and entertainment. Studying adolescents' well-being has become a hot topic lately, with digital technology and the internet as part of everyday life. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of gender in moderating the relationship between parental and peer relationships with adolescent well-being. Participants in this study were 749 internet user adolescents from various regions in Indonesia, who were selected using convenient sampling techniques. Data was collected online using the EPOCH measure for adolescent well-being, parent-adolescent relationship scales, and friendship quality scales. The results of the hierarchical linear modelling indicate that there is a positive correlation between parent and peer relationships, and adolescent well-being. The findings indicate that the relationship between the two variables is more pronounced among the male population than the female population

Keywords:

Parent-adolescent
Friendship quality
Well-being
Internet use

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Introduction

The Internet has become essential to people of all ages, particularly teenagers, to access information, education, and entertainment. In a survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2022), the number of Internet users in Indonesia reached 215.63 million. This number increased by 2.67% compared to the previous period, which was 210.03 million users. Indonesians use the Internet for an average of 7 hours and 42 minutes daily, and 98.3% access the Internet via mobile phones. A study funded by UNICEF and the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kemkominfo) found that 98 percent of children are Internet users (Hanadian Nurhayati, 2022). Under certain conditions, the Internet provides many conveniences for accessing information and other needs. However, excessive use can trigger problematic internet use, seriously affecting an individual's mental health.

Teenagers frequently struggle with mental health issues like stress (Mohan et al., 2022), anxiety (Yana, 2019), and depression. Despite the fact that Sulistiowati et al. (2019) indicated that the adolescent's well-being was good, improving the well-being of adolescents is a critical issue worldwide (Lindholdt et al., 2022). Scholars and researchers are becoming more aware of the critical importance of adolescent wellbeing specifically in today's digital age, where information flows ceaselessly and social interactions transcend physical boundaries (Hanebutt, 2023). The pervasive influence of digital technologies has significantly reshaped adolescence, which is already recognized as a transformative period. The intricacies of the online environment are now profoundly entwined with this turning point in human development, characterized by a spike in cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Rose et al., 2022). In addition to the changes that teenagers experience of bullying, social pressure and academic pressure can all have an impact on teenagers' wellbeing issues.

Adolescence is a crucial stage characterized by a wide range of changes and difficulties (Ahmed Zaky, 2016). The important connections that teenagers make are at the center of this life-changing experience; these connections weave a complex web that profoundly influences the way that they identify, process emotions, and feel about themselves in general (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Relationships play a critical role in this stage of development, as they provide the foundation for adolescents' self-awareness and help them negotiate the challenges of their environment (Flynn et al., 2017). These relationships whether with family, friends, mentors, or romantic partners significantly impact almost every aspect of an adolescent's life, depending on their quality, nature, and dynamics (Mikami & Szewedo, 2016).

Relationships in the social emotional development of adolescents are characterized as active, autonomous, and responsible towards the formation of the self in social life. Through social interactions, adolescents will experience and understand the emotional expressions of themselves and others, be able to express emotions in appropriate ways, and be able to develop emotion management capacity (Malti & Noam, 2016). As teenagers navigate the challenge of transition from childhood into adulthood, positive interpersonal relationships become crucial for their well-being, especially the relationship between parents and peers (Nagy-Pénzes et al., 2020).

Some research has shown that a high-quality parent-adolescent relationship is crucial in determining adolescent well-being (King et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2020a; Tafà et al., 2022). Some research has shown that a high-quality parent-adolescent relationship is crucial in determining adolescent well-being (King et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2020a; Tafà et al., 2022). McMahon et al. (2020) reported that stressful life events negatively impact adolescents' well-being and are mediated by the relationship between parent-adolescent and peers. In other words, when teenagers have less stressful life events, they tend to have better parent-adolescent and peer relationships, increasing their well-being.

The amount of quality time spent with family and the presence of supportive parental relationships contribute to better emotional well-being in adolescents. Furthermore, the quality of close friendships also plays a critical role in promoting adolescents' emotional well-being. Adolescents who are socially engaged and maintain positive peer relationships tend to have better mental health outcomes, with studies highlighting the powerful impact a single friendship can have on psychological health and resilience (W. Vernon et al., 2018). These findings suggest that the parent-adolescent relationship and friendship quality are essential factors in shaping adolescent well-being (Aoyama et al., 2011)

Even though much research has provided evidence regarding parent and peer relationships that can help improve adolescents' well-being, other research finds that these relationships also contribute to the stress experienced by adolescents (Kort-Butler, 2019; Nagabharana et al., 2021). (Persike & Seiffge-Krenke, 2016) claims that parents-related problems and peers-related problems can lead to more stress in adolescents. He also suggests that teenagers will cope less actively when experiencing parent-related problems rather than their problems with peers. The differences in findings regarding the topic need further investigation.

In addition, more research regarding adolescent well-being has found that gender differences might have a different impact on well-being itself. Recognizing these gender-specific facets is essential to appreciating the complex terrain of youngsters' well-being. Adolescent well-being is influenced by gender in a multitude of ways, such as social interactions, emotional control, identity development, and cultural expectations. These variations frequently show up as unique coping strategies, social interaction patterns, and reactions to external forces (Olsson et al., 2016; Sears & McAfee, 2017). According to multiple studies, female adolescents scored considerably lower on well-being than males (Boraita et al., 2020; Campbell et al., 2021; Indiana & Sagone, 2022)

Teenagers' formation and experience of social relationships are greatly influenced by gender differences, which can have various effects on their general well-being. For girls, friendship quality is more important than boys. Female teenagers tend to develop more profound, personal friendships marked by emotional support, sharing, and discussing personal matters. These friendships frequently center on communication, empathy, and forging deep emotional bonds. At the same time, for male adolescents, the relationship tends to focus on activities like playing games and sports or assisting by working together to solve problems (McMahon et al., 2020b). In terms of psychological distress, chronic stress, little daily annoyances, social support, and eudaimonic well-being, girls outscored boys (Matud et al., 2023).

Given the contradictory findings in existing literature and advised by Prinstein & Giletta, (2020) to examine how peer interactions differ in the digital era in terms of their forms and function this study seeks to investigate the intricate dynamics between parental and peer relationships and adolescent well-being, specifically emphasizing those actively engaged in digital platforms furthermore, the study endeavors to scrutinize the mediating role of gender in these relationships. The novelty of this research lies in its multifaceted exploration of adolescent well-being in the context of the digital age, which is a rapidly evolving. This research specifically addresses the special opportunities and challenges brought about by the digital age, such as social media use, online peer interactions, and digital communication with parents, in contrast to traditional studies on adolescent well-being. The study explores how these two crucial relationships interact to shape adolescent well-being rather than just looking at peer or parental influences separately. This dual focus gives more comprehensive view of adolescent development.

Methods

The population in this study were adolescent internet users. Participants in this study were 749 adolescent internet users consisting of 524 female adolescents and 225 male adolescents aged 12-20 years from various regions in Indonesia. The average age of the participants was 16 years, with the youngest age being 12 and the highest age being 20. The sampling method was convenient sampling. Data collection was carried out online via Google and distributed via social media and networks in each province in Indonesia. Measurements were carried out using three scales, namely the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being Scale consisting of 20 items with an alpha coefficient of 0.92, the Parent-Adolescent Relationship Scale consisting of 8 items with an alpha coefficient of 0.71 and the Friendship Quality Scale consisting of 13 items with an alpha coefficient of 0.79.

The data analysis in this study used hierarchical linear modelling, which is a regression analysis based on two sets of variables. In the first model, the researchers examined how the quality of friendship and the contribution of parents and adolescents to adolescents' well-being behavior. In the second model, the researchers included the gender variable, which was made in the form of a dummy. The researchers examined how the interaction between friendship quality, the parent-adolescent relationship, and gender influenced the prediction of adolescent well-being. If the interaction value is significant, it indicates the presence of a moderating effect (Gavin & Hofmann, 2002) Data analysis was carried out with the help of JASP software version 0.17.3.

Results and Discussion

The result of this study represents the average value of adolescent well-being was 16.47 with a standard deviation of 1.75. Table 1 show the highest score for adolescent well-being is 20 and the highest is 100. The friendship quality score shows a mean of 47 with a standard deviation of 8.36. The lowest score for friendship quality is 13 and the highest is 65. The parent-youth relationship variable shows a mean of 28.88 with a standard deviation of 5.13. The lowest score for the parent-youth relationship variable is 13 and the highest is 40.

Table 1. Statistic Descriptive of the Observable Variables

	Frequency (%)	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum score	Maximum score
Sex					
Male	225(30.04)				
Female	524(65.96)				
Age		16.47	1.75	12	20
Adolescent well-being		78.60	12.74	20	100.00
Friendship quality		47.00	8.36	13.00	65.00
Parents-adolescent relationship		28.88	5.13	13.00	40.00

The results of the correlation analysis showed that the adolescent's well-being was positively correlated with the adolescent's relationship with parents ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), which means that the better the adolescent-parent relationship, the higher the adolescent's well-being. The well-being of adolescents is also positively related to the quality of their friendships ($r = .50$, $p < .01$), which means that the better the friendships that adolescents have, the higher their welfare. The analysis also showed a positive relationship between adolescent-parent relations and the quality of their friendship ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), meaning that the better the relationship between adolescents and their parents, the better the friendship quality. More complete results can be seen in Table 2

Table 2. Data Analysis Result

	Adolescent Well-being	Friendship Quality
Adolescent Well-being		
Friendship Quality	.50**	
Parents-adolescent relationships	.35**	.28**

** = $p < .001$

Hierarchical Linear model results show that parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent friendship quality together can predict adolescent well-being ($F(746, 2) = 158.97$, $p < .001$). The value of $R^2 = .299$ indicates that the two independent variables contribute 30% to the dependent variable. When viewed from the contribution of each dependent variable, the parent-adolescent relationship contributes positively to adolescent well-being ($\beta = .23$, $t = 7.15$, $p < .01$), which indicates that the parent-adolescent relationship can increase adolescent well-being. The friendship quality variable also shows a positive contribution to adolescent well-being ($\beta = .44$, $t = 13.65$, $p < .01$), which indicates that the quality of adolescent friendships contributes to well-being. Both predictors make a positive contribution to adolescent well-being. If we look at the beta value.

Model two also showed significant results ($F(243, 5) = 64.929$, $p < .001$) that parent-adolescent relationship ($\beta = .230$, $p < .001$) and friendship quality ($\beta = .399$, $p < .001$) have positive contributions to adolescent well-being. Gender, on the other hand, did not show significant results for adolescent well-being ($\beta = -.341$, $p > .001$). In addition, gender did not show significant results to moderate the relationship between parent-adolescent and adolescent well-being ($\beta = .004$, $p > .050$). However, gender can moderate the relationship between friendship quality and adolescent well-being ($\beta =$

.373, $p < .050$), with friendship quality being more strongly related to adolescent well-being for males than females.

Table 3. Hierarchical Linier Model Analysis

	B	t	Sig.
Model 1			
Parent-adolescent relationship	.228	7.149	.001*
Friendship quality	.436	13.653	.001*
Model 2			
Parent-adolescent relationship	.230	6.254	.001*
Friendship quality	.399	10.520	.001*
Gender	-.341	-1.473	.141
Gender*parent-adolescent relationship	.004	.023	.982
Gender*friendship quality	.373	2.058	.040*

* $p < .01$

The results of hierarchical linear analysis explain that adolescents' relationships with those closest to them, which is parents and peers, play a positive role in supporting enhanced adolescent well-being. This result is supported by previous research stating that emotional well-being is fostered by a positive parent-child relationship marked by warmth, support, and secure attachment (V Raja Mohan et al., 2022). In another sense, a feeling of trust and open communication encourage teenagers to ask for help, voice their worries, and feel supported—all of which have a good effect on their mental health, indicated with lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Bireda & Pillay, 2017; Wang et al., 2019). Adolescents with secure attachment, who experienced parental warmth and autonomy, developed positive interaction models, establishing friendships based on intimacy, communication, and comfort (Delgado et al., 2022). The result of this study also aligns with socioemotional selectivity theory which emphasizes that focal relationships and their salience can change over the life course, with social support from family members becoming more critically tied to well-being (Shin & Park, 2022).

The result of this study also shows the friendship quality also shows a positive contribution to adolescent well-being. According to research, empathy and emotional support from supportive peers have a major positive impact on adolescents' overall wellbeing (Bean et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2015). Adolescents who are struggling with life issues frequently look to their peers for support, encouragement, and understanding. Research indicates that relationships with supportive peers can serve as a protective factor against stress. Strong friendships help adolescents manage stress and anxiety better and tend to show better coping mechanisms.

The study also discovered that there was a stronger correlation between male adolescents' well-being and their relationships with their peers. According to Gender Role Theory, which holds that cultural expectations influence emotional development differently for male and female, can be used to explain this finding. While girls may develop more internal coping mechanisms or benefit from a wider range of relational and emotional support sources, boys frequently rely on external support systems, especially peers, for emotional regulation (Underwood & Rosen, 2009). These results are in line with earlier research showing the importance of peer acceptance in adolescent mental health. Nonetheless, the gender disparities found in this study contribute to the increasing amount of evidence indicating that male adolescents might benefit emotionally more from social ties, especially those that are close-knit. On the other hand, some research indicates that women adolescents might be more dependent on emotional expression and larger social networks, which could lessen the effect of interpersonal relationships on general wellbeing (Luijten et al., 2023a).

Even though this research result shows both parent and peer relationship have a significant positive influence on well-being in adolescents, the result also implies that the quality of friendship in peer relationship has a greater impact on teens' wellbeing. This relates to how the availability of digital communication media strengthens the sense of connection that teenagers have with their

friends. Online peer interactions may be intriguing, but the essential elements of friendships—self-disclosure, validation, companionship, helpful support, conflict, and conflict resolution—remain (Kekkonen et al., 2020; Luijten et al., 2023b; Yau & Reich, 2018).

Research also shows that activities such as co-viewing, sharing, and discussing content with peers are frequent practices among adolescents and make peers more important than other figures. Peer feedback has an impact not only on a teen's productivity, but also strongly influences how a teen views him/herself (Crone & Konijn, 2018). Due to these reasons, peer relationships frequently have a big influence on adolescents' well-being; however, parent-child relationships are still vital for offering emotional support, direction, and a stable attachment that all go hand in hand with promoting wellbeing. An adolescent's development is shaped by both parent-child and peer relationships, which have complementary but distinct roles. These influences frequently intersect and influence each other dynamically. Depending on a teen's unique circumstances, family dynamics, and personal experiences, the importance of each relationship can change.

To adolescents, the presence of parents is considered important as a source of emotional support and has an effect on their well-being because the relationship between adolescents and parents in this period tends to lead to 'equality', interdependence, and reciprocity (Branje, 2018). Adolescents need to become more independent and reduce parental control over them in order to build self-regulation. When parents are able to balance their control and build independence in their teenagers, there is less conflict between teenagers and parents and both are able to build a better closeness (Branje, 2018).

Conclusion

Empirical studies have repeatedly shown how peer and parental relationships are intertwined in determining adolescents' well-being. Higher levels of life satisfaction, better emotional regulation, better academic performance, and overall psychological adjustment have all been linked to positive relationships with parents and peers. During adolescence, peers take over as the main source of social and emotional support. While parental support is more fundamental, friendships offer immediate emotional validation. These effects may be amplified by gender differences in friendships, making friendships even more important for boys' teenagers. Research also emphasizes the significance of relationships' quality over quantity. The key to improved adolescent well-being is the existence of emotionally responsive, caring, and supportive relationships with peers and parents.

Notwithstanding these insightful observations, this study has certain drawbacks. First, social desirability bias could be introduced by depending on self-reported measures. Second, although the results point to gender differences, these relationships may also be influenced by other variables like personality traits, cultural background, and socioeconomic status. To get a more complex picture of teenage well-being, future studies should use mixed-method approaches or qualitative techniques. Comprehending these empirical results highlights the indispensable function of encouraging social connections in a teenager's life. Interventions and programs designed to build strong relationships with peers and parents can significantly enhance adolescent mental health, resilience, and general well-being.

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