

African Journal for the Psychological Studies of Social Issues

Volume 29 Number 3, August, 2026 Edition

Founding Editor- in - Chief: Professor Denis C.E. Ugwuegbu
(Retired Professor of Department of Psychology.
University of Ibadan.)

Editor- in - Chief: Professor Shyngle K. Balogun.
Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan.

Associate Editor: Professor. Benjamin O. Ehigie
Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Professor S. S. Babalola	University of South Africa
Professor S.E. Idemudia	University of South Africa
Professor Tope Akinawo	Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria
Professor O.A Ojedokun	Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria
Professor Catherine O Chowwen	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Professor. Grace Adejunwon	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Professor. A.M. Sunmola	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Professor. B. Nwakwo	Caritas University, Nigeria
Professor. K.O. Taiwo	Lagos State University, Nigeria
Professor. Bayo Oluwole	University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Journal of the African Society for THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SOCIAL ISSUES % DEPT OF Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

SELF COMPASSION, GRATITUDE AND PERCEIVED PARENTAL SUPPORT AS PREDICTORS OF EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN OSOGBO, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

Adekemi Adebola Nweke

**adekemmynweke@yahoo.com*

and

Retta E. Akingbade

retta_akingbade@yahoo.com; akingbade.retta@lcu.edu.ng

Department of Psychology, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

**Corresponding Author: adekemmynweke@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

This cross-sectional study investigated the predictive influence of self-compassion, gratitude and perceived parental support on emotional, social and psychological well-being among in-school adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.

A total of 376 adolescent students in public and private secondary schools completed self-report measures. Respondents' age ranged from 11-19, with a mean age of 14.5. Linear regression was used to examine the predictive influence of the independent variables on emotional well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being.

Self-compassion significantly predicted emotional well-being ($\beta = .32, p < .01$), social well-being ($\beta = .22, p < .01$), and psychological well-being ($\beta = .28, p < .01$). Gratitude also significantly predicted emotional well-being ($\beta = .28, p < .01$), social well-being ($\beta = .11, p < .05$), and psychological well-being ($\beta = .34, p < .01$). Further, perceived parental support was a significant predictor; perceived father support significantly predicted emotional well-being ($\beta = .30, p < 0.01$), social well-being ($\beta = .17, p < .01$), and psychological well-being (with $\beta = .37, p < 0.01$), and perceived mother support significantly predicted emotional well-being ($\beta = .42, R^2 = .18, p < 0.01$), social well-being ($\beta = .31, R^2 = .10, p < .01$), and psychological well-being ($\beta = .41, R^2 = .17, p < 0.01$).

Maternal support, however, emerged as the strongest single predictor. Interventions that strengthen these psychological resources in adolescents and those that foster parental support and are recommended.

Keywords: *Self-compassion, gratitude, perceived parental support, emotional well-being, social well-being, psychological well-being, adolescents.*

INTRODUCTION

Evidence shows that most psychopathologies commence before the age of fourteen, and suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15 – 29 year olds (World Health Organisation, 2021). Among the aetiology of suicide ideation and completed suicides, emotional factors are part of the most crucial, because most suicides in youths are preceded by mood disorders (Williams et al.,

2023). Furthermore, substance abuse has become a disturbing phenomenon, considering that the global youth tobacco survey found up to 15 percent prevalence of tobacco smoking among adolescents in the four regions of Africa where the survey was carried out (Gana et al., 2018). Beyond emotional factors, the reasons for substance abuse and suicide are multidimensional, driven by emotional, psychological, social and environmental factors. That being the case, positive mental health, comprising emotional, social and psychological well-being, all play critical roles in adolescent development.

While the psychological factors that determine positive mental health in adolescents have been extensively studied in western cultures, an existing gap identified in the literature is that there is a scarcity of empirical findings on its predictors among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, studies indicate that many adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive, struggle to achieve a meaningful level of positive mental health, due to a range of economic and psychosocial challenges (United Nations, 2021; Anselimus et al., 2025). Empirical evidence from extant literature also shows that positive mental health, as well as its predictors, are generally not absolutely homogenous across all cultures and all countries of the world. (Shenderovich et al., 2021; Backman et al., 2024; Weinberg et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, the sociocultural landscape is characterised by communal living, respect for elders, and religious practices, all of which contribute to a communal identity. These cultural practices often foster a sense of belonging and purpose, which are pivotal for adolescents to develop resilience and maintain psychological stability (Ojedokun & Akinlolu, 2022; Abikoye & Sholarin, 2021). However, despite these strengths, systemic challenges such as poverty, low socio-emotional awareness, limited access to affordable quality education, high parental stress, high unemployment rates and other challenges with the national economy present significant barriers to the thriving of adolescents in the region. In line with this, the World Bank reports that over 40 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line, and adolescents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face significant challenges that limit their opportunities for positive development (Fadele et al., 2024). Consequently, adolescents in developing countries such as Nigeria are more likely to encounter impediments to their thriving. For adolescents living in such resource-limited settings, functioning optimally emotionally, socially and psychologically would be clearly beneficial in making up for deficits that are largely beyond their control. Moreover, societal stigma surrounding mental health issues may prevent at-risk adolescents from seeking the support they need to build resilience, further compounding their vulnerabilities. This necessitates the exploration of the factors that are promotive of positive mental health among adolescents in Nigeria.

Furthermore, adolescents existing at optimal levels of emotional, psychological and social well-being are more satisfied with their value-based choices and less likely to be negatively influenced by other people. In line with this, research on youth mental health has identified peer influence as a significant predictor of the commencement of substance use (Gana et al., 2018). Beyond its influence on the commencement of substance use and other adolescent health risk behaviours, negative peer pressure has long been established as a pivotal variable in the lives of adolescents, additionally being associated with bullying behaviours, negative body image, exposure to violence and a general compromise of adaptive values. Positive mental health protects against the negative outcomes of negative peer pressure, which are diverse and significant.

Besides, adolescence is a stage where sensation-seeking behaviour is often escalated; unprotected sex, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use and other health risk behaviours negatively influence not only present lives, but the deficits created by these behaviours ripple into

adolescents' adulthood as well as the life outcomes of their offspring (Mytton et al., 2024). Considering the significant short and long-term negative impacts of teen health risk behaviours, and the protective role of emotional, social and psychological well-being against these, regions with a large proportion of adolescent population certainly have more compelling reasons to promote adolescents' positive mental health. Sub-Saharan Africa is one such regions, with about 23 percent of the population made up of adolescents, and Nigeria alone having approximately 30 million adolescents, who constitute about 22.5 percent of the population (UNICEF, 2023).

Promoting positive mental health in adolescents is a critical endeavour that requires targeted interventions, and the exploration of pertinent psychological constructs that could be its correlates is advantageous. While self-compassion, gratitude and perceived parental support have been established by investigations in western countries as being correlated with positive mental health in adolescents, evidence suggests that positive mental health, comprising of emotional, social and psychological well-being, as well as their predictors, are generally not absolutely homogenous across all cultures and all countries of the world (Shenderovich et al., 2021; Backman et al., 2024; Weinberg et al., 2021).

Therefore, the need for further research into the positive mental health of adolescents in Nigeria is vital. This study aimed to investigate self-compassion, gratitude, perceived parental support as predictors of emotional, social and psychological well-being, among in-school adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. The study aimed to test the following hypothesis;

- i) Self-compassion would significantly positively predict emotional, social and psychological well-being among in-school adolescents in Osogbo.
- ii) Gratitude would significantly positively predict emotional, social and psychological well-being among in-school adolescents in Osogbo.
- iii) Perceived father support and perceived mother support would significantly independently predict emotional, social and psychological well-being among in-school adolescents in Osogbo.

METHOD

A cross-sectional survey was adopted for this study. The independent variables in this study were self compassion, gratitude and perceived parental support. The dependent variable was emotional, social and psychological well-being. The research participants were senior secondary students in the selected schools.

Participants and Procedure

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among senior secondary school students in public and private schools from two local government areas in Osogbo, Osun state, Nigeria. Participants comprised male and female adolescents in the selected secondary schools. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. In the first stage, two local government areas were purposively selected because they constitute the main Osogbo city area and because the use of English language is more widespread among adolescents within the city compared with the peri-rural areas. A stratified sampling technique was utilised for the second stage to randomly select five private secondary schools and three public secondary schools. Among the schools, administrators who gave permission for the study to take place, after reviewing the questionnaire to evaluate its suitability, constituted the final sample of schools; and all available senior secondary students who voluntarily gave informed consent participated in the study.

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: section one measured demographic variables, section two assessed self-compassion, section three measured gratitude, section four was the perception of parents scale (with two subscales, one measuring perception of mother support and the second measuring perception of father support), while section five was the mental health continuum short form, which assessed overall positive mental health, comprising emotional well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being. Questionnaires were distributed through personal administration to adolescents in the selected schools who voluntarily indicated interest to participate.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion was measured using the self-compassion scale short form. The scale is a 12-item scale developed by Kristin Neff in 2003 (Neff, 2003). It is a psychometrically sound and theoretically valid measure of self-compassion in individuals who have attained a reading level of at least 8th grade (Neff, 2003), and it has been used in many studies across various cultures. The scale has the following subscales: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation and mindfulness. However, this study adopted the composite score for self-compassion. Neff (2003) reported acceptable internal consistency for the original scale, with a Cronbach alpha of .87 for the total self-compassion score. In the present study, the self-compassion scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of .71.

Gratitude

Gratitude was measured using the gratitude questionnaire, a six-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess dispositional gratitude, that is, the proneness of individuals to experience gratitude in life. This scale was developed by McCullough, Emmons and Tsang in 2002 (McCullough et al., 2002). Each item is answered based on a 7-point Likert rating scale, with a response format ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The authors reported good internal consistency for the original scale, with Cronbach alpha values ranging from .82 to .87 across different populations. In the present study, the gratitude questionnaire yielded a Cronbach alpha of .73.

Perceived Parental Support

The perceived parental support scale comprised a subscale for fathers and a subscale for mothers. Perceived father support was measured using the perception of father subscale developed by Grolnick, Deci and Ryan in 1997 (Grolnick et al., 1997). It is a self-report scale completed by adolescents and youths to describe their fathers. It evaluates adolescents' perception of the extent to which their father practises an optimal parenting context, including the degree of autonomy support and parental warmth provided, as well as the adolescent's perception of parental involvement. The perception of father scale has subdimensions of father warmth, father autonomy support and father involvement; however, this study utilised participants' scores on the composite perceived father support scale. The authors reported good internal consistency

for the original subscale, with a Cronbach alpha of .93. In the present study, perceived father support yielded a Cronbach alpha of .84.

Perceived mother support was measured using the perception of mother subscale of the perception of parents scale, also developed by Grolnick, Deci and Ryan in 1997 (Grolnick et al., 1997). It is a self-report scale completed by adolescents and youths to describe their mothers. It evaluates adolescents' perception of the extent to which their mother practises an optimal parenting context, including the degree of autonomy support and parental warmth provided, as well as the adolescent's perception of parental involvement. The perception of mother scale has subdimensions of mother warmth, mother autonomy support and mother involvement; however, this study utilised participants' scores on the composite perceived mother support scale. The authors reported good internal consistency for the original subscale, with a Cronbach alpha of .91. In the present study, perceived mother support yielded a Cronbach alpha of .84.

Emotional, social and psychological Well-being

Emotional, social and psychological well-being was measured using the mental health continuum short form (MHC-SF). The MHC-SF was developed by Keyes (2005) as a brief, psychometrically sound self-rating tool that measures overall positive mental health. It comprises of three theoretically grounded dimensions; emotional well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being. On the mental health continuum short form (MHC-SF), emotional well-being score is obtained via scoring of items 1-3 which is the emotional well-being subscale, these three items assessing emotional well-being cover happiness, interest in life and life satisfaction. Social well-being score is obtained via scoring of items 4-8 which is the social well-being subscale, these five items assessing social well-being cover social contribution, social integration, social actualization, social acceptance and social coherence. Psychological well-being is obtained via scoring of items 9 to 14; the psychological well-being subscale, these six items assessing psychological well-being cover self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, personal growth, autonomy and purpose in life.

An example of items on the emotional well-being scale is “during the past one month, how often have you felt satisfied with life?”, an example of the items on the social well-being scale is “during the past month, how often have you felt that you belonged to a community (like a social group or your neighbourhood)?”, an example of the items on the psychological well-being scale is “ during the past one month, how often have you felt that you are confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions?”. Respondents are expected to rate the frequency with which they have experienced each described feeling in the past month on a six-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (every day).

The MHC-SF has demonstrated sound psychometric properties across diverse cultural contexts. A Cronbach alpha value of 0.82 was reported among a Nigerian population (Nnubia et al., 2020), providing support for its applicability within the present study's cultural setting. In this study, the overall MHC-SF Cronbach alpha was .87, with subscale alphas of .82 for emotional well-being, .85 for psychological well-being and .81 for social well-being, all indicating satisfactory to good internal consistency.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS version 27. Linear regression was conducted to examine whether self-compassion, gratitude and perceived parental support predict emotional well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Osun State Health Research Ethical Committee (OSHREC/PRS/569T/1069). Approval was obtained from the school administrators of the selected schools, following their assessment of the research objectives and the content of the questionnaire for suitability for adolescent students. Participation was entirely voluntary, and only respondents who gave informed consent participated in the study. Respondents were assured of their privacy through an ethical statement that clearly expressed the purpose of the study and how the data would be used.

Results

Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis Showing the Relationship between Self-Compassion and Emotional, Social and Psychological Well-being

Variables		β	t	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	df	F	P
Self-Compassion	Emotional well-being	.32	6.44	.32	.10	.10	1,370	41.46	<.01
	Social well-being	.22	4.30	.22	.05	.05	1,370	18.49	<.01
	Psychological well-being	.28	5.63	.28	.08	.08	1,370	31.69	<.01

Source: fieldwork 2025

The results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1 provide strong support for hypothesis one. The results reveal statistically significant relationships between self-compassion and all dimensions of positive mental health. For instance, self-compassion emerged as a strong predictor of emotional well-being, with a standardised beta coefficient of $\beta = .32$, $t = 6.44$, and an R^2 value of .10, suggesting that adolescents who treat themselves with kindness and understanding are more likely to experience emotional stability and positive affect.

Self-compassion also showed a significant predictive relationship with the social well-being dimension of positive mental health ($\beta = .22$, $t = 4.30$, $R^2 = .05$, $p < .01$). Although the strength of the relationship is weaker compared to emotional well-being, this result still indicates that self-compassion contributes to adolescents' sense of social connectedness, acceptance, and integration within their communities.

Self-compassion was also a significant predictor of psychological well-being, with $\beta = .28$, $t = 5.63$, and $R^2 = .08$, suggesting that adolescents who are more self-compassionate tend to feel more autonomous and can sustain a sense of purpose in life. Confirming the broad influence of self-compassion across emotional, social, and psychological well-being domains, these results

collectively affirm Hypothesis One and show self-compassion as a significant predictor of adolescents' positive mental health.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis Showing the Relationship between Gratitude and Emotional, Social and Psychological Well-being

	Variables	β	t	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	df	F	P
Gratitude	Emotional well-being	.28	5.68	.28	.08	.08	1,374	32.21	<.01
	Social well-being	.11	2.10	.11	.01	.01	1,374	4.42	<.05
	Psychological well-being	.34	6.98	.34	.12	.11	1,373	48.72	<.01

Source: fieldwork 2025

The results of the regression analysis presented in Table 2 reveal statistically significant relationships between gratitude and all dimensions of positive mental health. For emotional well-being, gratitude emerged as a significant predictor with a standardised beta coefficient of $\beta = .28$, $t = 5.68$, and a coefficient of determination $R^2 = .08$. This suggests that adolescents with higher levels of gratitude tend to experience more frequent positive emotions and greater emotional stability.

Gratitude also showed a statistically significant but weaker predictive relationship with the social well-being dimension of positive mental health ($\beta = .11$, $t = 2.10$, $R^2 = .01$, $p < .05$). Although the strength of the relationship is modest in comparison with its relationship emotional well-being, it's significance still suggests that gratitude contributes to adolescents' sense of social integration and belonging, albeit to a lesser extent than other positive mental health dimensions.

Gratitude was a particularly strong predictor of psychological well-being, with $\beta = .34$, $t = 6.98$, and $R^2 = .12$. This indicates that grateful adolescents are more likely to feel purposeful, competent, and self-accepting. This finding aligns with existing literature linking gratitude to enhanced psychological functioning and personal growth. Confirming the broad influence of gratitude across emotional, social, and psychological well-being domains, these results collectively affirm Hypothesis Two and reveal gratitude as a significant contributor to adolescents' positive mental health.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis Showing the Relationship between Perceived Father Support and Emotional, Social and Psychological Well-being

	Variables	β	t	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	df	F	P
Perceived Father support	Emotional well-being	.30	6.02	.30	.09	.09	1,374	36.20	<.01
	Social well-being	.17	3.40	.17	.03	.03	1,374	11.58	<.01
	Psychological well-being	.37	7.64	.37	.14	.13	1,373	58.39	<.01

Source: fieldwork 2025

Results of the regression analysis presented in Table 3 provide strong support for this hypothesis, demonstrating that perceived support from fathers is a significant predictor across all domains of adolescent positive mental health. For emotional well-being, father support showed a substantially strong predictive relationship, with a beta coefficient of $\beta = .30$, $t = 6.02$, and an R^2 value of .09. This suggests that adolescents who perceive their fathers as emotionally supportive are more likely to experience positive emotions and emotional stability.

Father support also emerged as a significant predictor of social well-being, though with a comparatively weaker relationship in comparison with emotional well-being ($\beta = .17$, $t = 3.40$, $R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$). This implies that paternal support contributes to adolescents' sense of social belonging and connectedness, albeit to a lesser extent than other dimensions of positive mental health.

Father support was a particularly strong predictor of psychological well-being, with $\beta = .37$, $t = 7.64$, and $R^2 = .14$. This indicates that adolescents who feel supported by their fathers tend to report higher levels of self-acceptance, autonomy, and purpose. This finding reveals the critical role of paternal involvement in fostering psychological resilience and personal growth.

Confirming the broad influence of perceived father support across emotional, social, and psychological well-being, these results affirm Hypothesis Three and show the importance of father support in promoting the overall positive mental health among adolescents.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Analysis Showing the Relationship between Perceived Mother Support and Emotional, Social and Psychological Well-being

	Variables	β	t	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	df	F	P
Perceived mother support	Emotional well-being	.42	8.96	.42	.18	.17	1,374	80.25	<.01
	Social well-being	.31	6.29	.31	.10	.09	1,374	39.58	<.01

Psychological well-being	.41	8.59	.41	.17	.16	1,373	73.82	<.01
--------------------------	-----	------	-----	-----	-----	-------	-------	------

Source: fieldwork 2025

Results of the regression analysis presented in Table 4 provide strong empirical support for this hypothesis, revealing that perceived maternal support is a highly significant predictor across all domains of adolescent positive mental health. For emotional well-being, mother support demonstrated a strong predictive relationship, with a beta coefficient of $\beta = .42$, $t = 8.96$, and an R^2 value of .18. This suggests that adolescents who perceive their mothers as emotionally supportive are more likely to experience frequent positive emotions and emotional stability. This is the highest R^2 value among all emotional well-being predictors tested in the study, demonstrating the central role of maternal influence in shaping emotional health.

Perceived mother support also showed a significant predictive relationship with social well-being ($\beta = .31$, $t = 6.29$, $R^2 = .10$, $p < .01$). This suggests that maternal support contributes meaningfully to adolescents' sense of social belonging, acceptance, and integration within their peer and community networks. The strength of this relationship shows the importance of maternal warmth and autonomy support in fostering social connectedness.

Mother support was also a strong predictor of psychological well-being, with $\beta = .41$, $t = 8.59$, and $R^2 = .17$. This indicates that adolescents who feel supported by their mothers tend to report higher levels of self-acceptance, autonomy, and purpose.

Mother support not only showed strong predictive relationship with all dimensions of positive mental health, but it was also the strongest single predictor of all domains of positive mental health among all variables tested. This result affirms Hypothesis Four and confirms that maternal support has a broad and substantial impact on adolescents' emotional well-being, as well as on their social and psychological functioning.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed valuable insights regarding the predictors of overall positive mental health of adolescents, comprising emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Self-compassion significantly predicted all dimensions of positive mental health; this aligns with a growing body of literature that positions self-compassion as a protective psychological resource during adolescence (Cruz et al., 2024). This finding also concurs with evidence from a meta-analysis which showed a strong inverse relationship between self-compassion and psychological distress in adolescents, suggesting that cultivating self-compassion can buffer against emotional challenges (Marsh et al., 2018).

Although the relationship between self compassion and social well-being was less pronounced than that between self-compassion and emotional well-being, it remained significant. Evidence supports the position that self-compassion reduces social anxiety and fosters interpersonal trust, thereby enhancing social connectedness (Bluth et al., 2021). Within collectivist cultural contexts such as this study population, where communal identity is emphasised, self-compassion may support social harmony by reducing self-critical tendencies that hinder group participation.

This study concurs with previous studies on the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. Findings from a mixed-methods study revealed that self-compassion

fosters a shift in perspective, enabling adolescents to embrace imperfections and develop healthier self-concept and coping skills (Anggasta & Dharswani, 2023). This study additionally aligns with a study asserting self-compassion as a psychological adjustment modulating construct, noting that self-compassion serves as a regulatory mechanism that not only protects against depressive symptoms but also promotes psychological adjustment in adolescents who are not clinically depressed (Castilho et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, some researchers have forewarned that inferences regarding the benefits of self-compassion on mental health should be considered within broader contexts (Chwyl, C. et al. (2021); Hirano, H. et al. (2025). They highlighted cultural contexts as noteworthy, asserting that certain cultures entrench worldviews that make its members to hold negative beliefs about self-compassion (associating it with reduction in self-discipline and increase in apathy, laid back energy and laxity about self-improvement), which in turn may either alter the potential pathways via which self-compassion is associated with mental well-being, or significantly attenuate its advantages on mental health. This position is supported by the cognitive-environmental coherence theory, which suggests that an interplay of an individuals' cognitive schemas and the external environment plays a role in their mental health. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development underscores that multiple contexts influence mental health.

It is not surprising that the results showed that gratitude was also significantly associated with all dimensions of positive mental health, as this aligns with the existing body of psychological literature. Gratitude, often defined as a disposition to recognise and appreciate the positive aspects of life, has been shown to foster emotional stability and resilience during adolescence, a developmental stage marked by rapid emotional and social challenges and changes (Bluth et al., 2022). Adolescents who regularly express gratitude tend to experience more frequent positive emotions and greater emotion regulation. This study aligns with findings from an empirical investigation which emphasised that gratitude enhances emotional well-being by fostering empathy, joy, and stronger interpersonal relationships (Bluth et al., 2022; Montherow et al., 2025).

The amplification theory of gratitude, which posits that gratitude amplifies individuals' baseline levels of well-being, further affirms these findings.

However, evidence challenging this position indicates that, even with high levels of dispositional gratitude, co-occurrence with significant deprivation of psychological needs and high levels of frustration can preclude gratitude from being positively correlated with emotional well-being ((Unanue, J. et al. (2022).

Although this study revealed a less pronounced predictive power of gratitude on the social well-being dimension of positive mental health than on the emotional and psychological well-being dimensions, the relationship was nonetheless significant. The comparatively weaker strength of association of gratitude and social well-being reflects the position of a previous study which explained that receiving acts of kindness from others can also make the recipient feel indebted to the benefactor, and this feeling of obligation could in turn trigger discomforting emotions in the recipient (Peng et al., 2018). An alternative explanation, in line with the cognitive-emotion theory of gratitude, is that gratitude confers in-person benefits rather than inter-person or social advantages.

The results indicated a significant association between perceived father support and all dimensions of positive mental health, with the correlation being strongest for the psychological well-being dimension. This aligns with existing research showing that father involvement plays a crucial role in enhancing adolescents' emotional health by fostering a sense of purpose and psychological needs satisfaction, and additionally contributes to adolescents' ability to regulate emotions and maintain a positive outlook (Sari et al., 2025).

Of all the psychological variables associated with adolescent emotional, social and psychological well-being, perceived mother support emerged strongest; this aligns with classical beliefs across cultures about the indispensable role mothers play in raising children.

These findings are supported by empirical research on the benefits of mother support to adolescent mental health (Gaur & Gupta, 2024; Wickersham et al., 2025); adolescents who perceive their mothers as emotionally available and nurturing tend to experience greater emotional stability and resilience. Similarly, this study aligns with findings that mothers typically provide higher levels of emotional care, autonomy support, and daily involvement than fathers, making their role particularly potent in shaping emotional and psychological well-being (Gaur & Gupta, 2024).

In terms of social well-being, maternal support plays a critical role in helping adolescents feel accepted and connected within their peer and community networks. Mothers often serve as primary emotional anchors, offering guidance and validation that strengthen adolescents' social confidence when they encounter difficulties resulting from social interactions.

This study is also in alignment with a recent study which highlighted that maternal warmth and open communication are key factors in promoting social integration and reducing feelings of isolation in adolescents (Wickersham et al., 2025).

However, Loes A.C Jansen et al. (2021), based on their study findings, throw caution on the blanket application of the position that parental support would always result in favourable adolescent mental health outcomes. They argued that where parents execute their support in a manner that is perceived by the adolescent as intrusiveness, it may ironically exert a deleterious influence on the latter's mental health.

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be made. First, given that the results of this study showed that self-compassion significantly predict emotional, social, and psychological well-being of adolescents, Mental health professionals should prioritize self-compassion interventions in adolescent cases as this may improve their range of inner psychological coping resources. Second, educational institutions should encourage gratitude among students through structured activities such as gratitude journaling training and classroom discussions on this construct. The findings of this study further suggest that parent influencers such as schools, religious institutions, and community organisations should implement programmes that educate and empower parents to provide consistent support in terms of emotional warmth, autonomy support, and healthy involvement in their adolescents' lives.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

There are several limitations to this study. First, the instruments used to measure the variables were all previously standardized questionnaires with Likert-type responses. The Likert-type responses posed a limit on capturing detailed in-depth responses from respondents, as would

have been obtained if a qualitative method of data collection such as interviews was additionally adopted.

Also, this study was a cross-sectional study that measured the variables at a single point in time. As such, it created the constraint of inability to draw any causal inference between the variables measured.

Future studies should aim at intervention-based investigations, particularly in the areas of self-compassion and gratitude; for instance, an intervention research that involves measuring pre and post-intervention scores on gratitude and outcome variables such as psychological well-being, would provide further evidence regarding the association between these constructs.

Future studies could also explore how cultural norms, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status interact with these psychological traits to influence emotional, social and psychological well-being among adolescents. Addressing these limitations, and conducting the suggested future studies, would provide further practical insights for psychologists and policymakers.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this study provides evidence that relational support, internal psychological resources and cognitive-emotional factors play a central role in shaping the emotional, social and psychological well-being of adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. Perceived mother support emerged as the strongest individual predictor across all domains, underscoring the nurturing and stabilising influence mothers often have during adolescence. Paternal support, while less influential than perceived mother support, also contributed meaningfully to emotional, social and psychological well-being, showing the importance of active father involvement in adolescent development, beyond a sole focus on the provision of financial resources, as is normative in some cultures.

In addition, gratitude and self-compassion were shown to be valuable psychological resources that support adolescent positive mental health across all the dimensions. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving adolescent mental health should not focus on isolated traits but rather adopt a holistic approach that integrates emotional education of adolescents with family engagement.

REFERENCES

- Abikoye, G. E., & Sholarin, A. M. (2021). Adolescent mental health and societal influences: Perspectives from Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of Social Psychology in Africa*, 32(3), 45–56.
- Anggasta, R., & Dharswani, R. (2023). Self-compassion and adolescent mental health: A mixed-methods study. *Asian Journal of Psychology*, 15(1), 22–35.
- Anselimus, S. M. (2025). Mental health in resource-limited settings: Amplifying youths' voices and approaches. *Discover Mental Health*, 5, Article 38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44192-025-00186-8>
- Backman, H., Lahti, K., Laajasalo, T., Kaakinen, M., & Aronen, E. T. (2024). Positive parenting and adolescent prosocial behaviour: A mediation analysis with representative data. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 29(1), Article 2374426.
- Bluth, K., Mullarkey, M., & Lathren, C. (2021). Self-compassion and resilience in adolescents: The protective role against stress and depression. *Mindfulness*, 12(8), 1931–1941.
- Bluth, K., Mullarkey, M., & Lathren, S. F. (2022). Mindfulness and self-compassion training for adolescents: Effects on stress, well-being, and emotional regulation. *Journal of Adolescence*, 49, 1–12.
- Castilho, P., Pinto-Gouveia, J., & Duarte, R. (2017). Evaluating the effect of self-compassion on psychological adjustment in adolescents. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 29(3), 185–197.
- Chwyl, C., Chen, P., & Zaki, J. (2021). Beliefs about self-compassion; implications for coping and self-improvement. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, 47(9), 1327–1342. Doi:10.1177/0146167220965303
- Cruz, S., Sousa, M., Peixoto, M., Meireles, A., Marques, S., Faria, S., & Moreira, P. (2024). The interplay between emotional well-being, self-compassion, and basic psychological needs in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 29(1), Article 2318340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2024.2318340>
- Fadele, K. P., Igwe, S. C., & Toluwalogo, N. (2024). Mental health challenges in Nigeria: Bridging the gap between demand and resources. *Global Mental Health*, 11, Article 29.
- Gana, G. J., Idris, S. H., Sabitu, K., Oche, M. O., Abubakar, A. A., & Nguku, P. M. (2018). Prevalence and perception of cigarette smoking among out-of-school adolescents in Birnin Kebbi, North-Western Nigeria. *Pan African Medical Journal*, 30, Article 304. <https://doi.org/10.11604/pamj.2018.30.304.16641>
- Gaur, N., & Gupta, R. (2024). Maternal support and emotional intelligence in adolescents. *Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 18(2), 102–117.
- Grolnick, W. S., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1997). Internalization within the family: The self-determination theory perspective. In J. E. Grusec & L. Kuczynski (Eds.), *Parenting and children's internalization of values: A handbook of contemporary theory* (pp. 135–161). Wiley.
- Hirano, H., Ishii, K., & Sato, M. (2025). Exploring the influence of self-esteem and self-compassion on daily psychological health: Insights from the experience sampling method. *Personality and individual differences*, 240, 113140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2025.113140>
- Jansen, L. H., Elzinga, B. M., Verkuil, B., Hillegers, M. H., & Keijsers, L. (2021). The link between parental support and adolescent negative mood in daily life: between-person heterogeneity in within-person processes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50, 271–285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01323-w>
- Marsh, C., Chan, S., & MacBeth, A. (2018). Self-compassion and psychological distress in adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Mindfulness*, 9(4), 1011–1027.
- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J.-A. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(1), 112–127.
- Montherow, L., Sowmini, R., & Raju, G. (2025). Gratitude and emotional wellness in adolescents: Implications for school-based interventions. *Journal of Youth Development*, 20(2), 88–102.
- Mytton, O. T., Donaldson, L., & Goddings, A. (2024). Changing patterns of health risks in adolescence: Implications for health policy. *The Lancet Public Health*, 9(8).
- Neff, K. D. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2(3), 223–250.

- Ojedokun, O., & Akinlolu, O. (2022). Communal ties and adolescent well-being: Evidence from Southwest Nigeria. *Cultural Psychology Review*, 28(1), 115–130.
- Peng, C., Nelissen, R. M. A., & Zeelenberg, M. (2018). Reconsidering the roles of gratitude and indebtedness in social exchange. *Cognition and Emotion*, 32(4), 760–772. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2017.1353484>
- Sari, P. P., Rahmawati, R., & Widodo, A. (2025). The role of father involvement in building adolescent mental health. *Egalita: Jurnal Kesetaraan dan Keadilan Gender*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.18860/egalita.v20i1.32914>
- Shenderovich, Y., Piolanti, A., Babii, V., Calovska-Hertzog, N., Evans, R. E., Heinrichs, N., Isakov, A. B., Lesco, G., Moore, G., Mueller, J., Raleva, M., Shimbov, B., Simon, J., Waller, F., Wienand, D., & Foran, H. M. (2023). Family-focused intervention to promote adolescents' mental health and well-being in Moldova and North Macedonia (FLOURISH): Feasibility study protocol. *BMJ Open*, 13(12), Article e080400. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2023-080400>
- UNICEF. (2023). The state of the world's children report: Adolescence and well-being. UNICEF.
- United Nations. (2021). Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Sustainable Development Goal — Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>
- Unanue, J., Oriol, X., & Oyaredel, J. (2022). Basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration prospectively mediate the link between dispositional gratitude and life satisfaction: Longitudinal evidence from a representative sample in Chile. *Personality And Individual Differences*, 193. 111608. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2022.111608>
- Weinberg, D., Stevens, G. W. J. M., Currie, C., Delaruelle, K., Dierckens, M., Lenzi, M., Main, G., & Finkenauer, C. (2021). Country-level meritocratic beliefs moderate the social gradient in adolescents' mental health: A multilevel study in 30 European countries. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68(3), 548–557.
- Wickersham, A., Davis, L. E., & Plomin, R. (2025). Maternal expressions of warmth and negativity and adolescents' mental health: Using longitudinal monozygotic twin difference analyses to approach causal inference. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*.
- Williams, R., Chiesa, M., & Moselli, M. (2023). The relationship between mood disorders, personality disorders and suicidality in adolescents: Does general personality disturbance play a significant role in predicting suicidal behaviour? *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation*, 10(1), Article 32.
- World Health Organization. (2021). Adolescent mental health [Fact sheet]. World Health Organization.