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# IIUM Journal of Human Sciences

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## The Role of Subjective Well-being in Adolescent Academic Achievement: A Qualitative Study

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### ABSTRACT

*Changes in physical, social, emotional, and other developmental stages pose significant challenges for adolescents. Simultaneously, they are tasked with preparing for their future, particularly by achieving high academic achievement. This study delves into the critical role of subjective well-being in adolescent academic achievement, serving as a follow-up investigation to elucidate findings from prior quantitative studies. The methodology employed entailed semi-structured face-to-face interviews with participants aged 15-17. To investigate academic achievement, the researcher selected five high-achieving students from two top-performing high schools in Banten, Indonesia. The research adopted an exploratory design, with qualitative data analysed and interpreted through thematic analysis using NVivo software. The thematic analysis unveiled the pivotal influence of parenting, social support, and spirituality on shaping life purpose, academic aspirations, and interests. These themes, in turn, fostered academic motivation, self-efficacy, and emotion regulation among the participants, facilitating the development of effective learning strategies. Armed with these strategies, participants persevered through the learning process, ultimately attaining academic achievement.*

**Keywords:** *Subjective Well-being, Academic Achievement, Emotion Regulation, Qualitative Study, Adolescents*

### INTRODUCTION

Meeting this morning with some of the highest achieving adolescents at a well-known high school in the Banten region of Indonesia, the researchers were invigorated by their enthusiasm for learning. These adolescents have had impressive academic achievements for at least two years. Not only have they achieved high academic performance, but they are also active in various organizations and other activities at school. The various activities they have do not make their academic values low. On the contrary, the activities they participate in actually bring out the enthusiasm to learn and achieve high achievements.

The two adolescents the researchers met that day, K and N, were very active in the Student Committee and held the highest positions, namely as chairperson and vice chairperson. The chairperson and vice chairperson positions take up a lot of time and energy, for example, organizing activities at school related to students, being a liaison between students and teachers, helping to handle problems between friends, and organizing certain events. Another adolescent named T was also very active in extracurricular traditional dance activities. The routine practice was weekly, so T had to provide more time. Next, adolescents named A and G, although they did not participate in organizational activities at school, had other routine activities at home, such as helping their parents with housework, taking care of younger siblings, and others. Then, a question arose in the researcher's mind: "How can they do that?"

How is it possible that they can participate in so many activities while staying busy and still be able to achieve high academic achievement?"

Adolescents are every nation's future asset. Adolescent academic achievement will determine the quality of human resources and is also closely correlated with national economic growth (Thorson & Gearhart, 2018). In fact, emotional conditions are turbulent at the age of adolescence. This raises the need to examine the influence of subjective well-being on adolescent academic success.

In adolescence, there are various stages of development. Several studies that specifically examine adolescent development include Norris et al. (2022), who studied physical development; Silvers (2022), who studied the development of emotional regulation; Best & Ban (2021), who studied physical changes and brain development; Gleason & Ratner (2022) who studied language development, Bajovic & Rizzo (2021) who studied moral development and many other studies. Navigating these multifaceted changes, adolescents are tasked with preparing themselves to navigate adolescence adeptly. High subjective well-being emerges as a crucial requisite for adolescents to thrive optimally. Subjective well-being delineates an individual's state encompassing joy, sadness and perceived life satisfaction (Proctor, 2024). An individual attains high subjective well-being when they frequently experience life satisfaction and joy while seldom encountering unpleasant emotions like sadness or anger.

Each individual's subjective well-being is pivotal in establishing and cultivating a flourishing and productive society (Das et al., 2020). Adolescents who report elevated levels of subjective well-being typically reap manifold benefits in their quality of life. Research indicates that adolescent subjective well-being is closely intertwined with adolescent development (de Neve et al., 2013) and correlates significantly with mental health (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2019), academic achievement (Steinmayr et al., 2018), and lifestyle behaviours (Pigaiani et al., 2020).

Attaining high academic achievement stands out as one of the dividends of robust subjective well-being (Crede et al., 2015; Bortes et al., 2021). The operational definition of adolescent academic achievement is students' achievements during learning. Students' achievements are based on academic ability scores measured through standardized tests, school grades, or teachers' rankings (Zendarski et al., 2017; Tatar & Düşteğör, 2020). Moreover, high academic achievement tends to profoundly impact adolescents' future trajectories. Academic achievement is a cornerstone in fostering adolescents' transition into adults capable of actively participating in socioeconomic and community endeavours (Oyserman, 2018).

This study aims to identify and analyse the role of subjective well-being in adolescent academic achievement. The research question is: Why is subjective well-being important for adolescent academic achievement? How does the process occur?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Achieving optimal learning outcomes in formal education is known as academic achievement. This can be measured by academic grades (report card grades or GPA). Experts have defined academic achievement in many ways. One of them is Mozammel et al. (2021), who stated that academic achievement is defined as communication skills (reading, writing, and oral) and thinking skills (mathematics, science, and social sciences), which contribute to students' success in school and society.

The process of achieving academic achievement can also be explained by developing and expanding the theory of positive emotions, which states that increased academic achievement can be built from skills and abilities formed through positive emotional experiences (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2018). This positive emotional experience can raise a person's awareness. Subjective well-being also plays an important role in academic achievement. Subjective well-being reflects a person's level of happiness and life satisfaction. Students with high levels of subjective well-being tend to have a more positive view of themselves and their environment. They can better cope with stress, have stronger intrinsic motivation, and find building positive relationships easier. These factors increase academic achievement (Bortes et al., 2021).

Furlong et al. (2018) developed a concept of subjective well-being. This concept puts forward a relatively new theory of subjective well-being, which explains the condition of subjective well-being in adolescence. According to Furlong et al. (2018), subjective well-being is an individual's assessment that includes the presence of positive and negative emotions and feelings, a multidimensional construct. According to this concept, subjective well-being has four dimensions: self-confidence, confidence in others, emotional ability, and life engagement. This subjective well-being model shows that subjective well-being is diverse and complex. Furlong's study offers a new perspective on well-being and methods to improve it.

### ***Characteristics of Banten Society***

This study was carried out in Indonesia's Banten province. Banten is near Jakarta, the nation's capital. One of Indonesia's historic areas is Banten. The Sundanese, Javanese, and Lampung tribes are the many ethnic groups comprising the Banten population. Additionally, the Banten community has a variety of cultural identities that stem from a fusion of Sundanese culture with the influence of immigration from Java, the Arab world, and China, as well as the Banten Sultanate. Banten maintains ethnic peace despite its numerous tribes. The Banten community's culture demonstrates high tolerance and social harmony, which values mutual respect and peaceful coexistence—acceptance of cultural variations among diverse groups in a multicultural society (Juniar et al., 2022).

The Banten community highly respects Islamic values. In general, the Banten community is very religious and has strong family customs and mutual cooperation. These religious values are also firm in schools in the Banten area, even though they are public schools. Banten has a large and growing population, with around 13.1 million people in 2023 (BPS, 2023). However, Banten faces several problems that must be resolved, including the high poverty rate, especially among young workers. It motivates the government to keep working to raise the calibre of human resources, particularly among adolescents.

## **METHODS**

Before conducting interviews, researchers secured permission from the Faculty of Psychology, Gadjah Mada University's ethics commission under protocol number 2676 / UN1 / FPSi.1.3 / SD / PT. 01.04 / 2022. Furthermore, researchers obtained consent from the school authorities to involve students as participants. Parental consent (informed consent) and the children's assent were also obtained before the commencement of the research.

Previous studies have explored the relationship between adolescents' subjective well-being and academic achievement. However, there remains a gap in research that delves into adolescents' perspectives utilizing qualitative methodologies. This study employs a mixed-methods approach. It is

preceded by a scoping review conducted by Hardani and Setiyawati (2022). The research started with the first quantitative investigation, which employed an online survey questionnaire (n=1058). Participants consisted of 613 women (57.9%) and 445 men (42.1%), with a mean age of 16.1 years (SD 0.813). Data were collected through an online survey of high school students aged 15-17 in the Banten region. Using the Cluster Random Sampling method, these schools comprised two public and two private schools (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Four high schools with high national exam scores and two with low national exam scores were selected. Questionnaires were distributed to 1300 high school students, and 1,112 people, or 86% of the total, returned them.

One of the variables examined in Study One is subjective well-being, which is related to academic achievement. The quantitative findings reveal a significant impact of subjective well-being on academic achievement ( $\beta = 0.371$ , p-value = 0.00). However, these statistical results do not explain the underlying mechanisms of this relationship. Following the quantitative study, the subsequent phase involved a qualitative inquiry.

Qualitative research is employed due to its inherent advantages, which include offering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the issue and providing a more thorough explanation. Another benefit of qualitative research is that researchers can directly engage with participants and pose inquiries (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Additionally, qualitative methods can enhance the validity and credibility of the model tests conducted (Husbands et al., 2017). The qualitative study, designated as stage 2, seeks to elucidate the reasons behind the significant role of subjective well-being in attaining academic achievement.

Overall, a mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach was adopted for this work. When developing research questions for qualitative studies (stage two) based on the findings from the quantitative stage (stage one), the data integration stage (blending) was completed. Quantitative approaches are excellent at testing hypotheses and providing a broad picture of study issues. In contrast, qualitative approaches can delve deeper and clarify how variables relate to one another in actual situations. The exploratory study design employed a cross-sectional survey approach (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were used in two offline and in-person interviews to obtain data. Each participant's interview lasted roughly 2.5 to 3.5 hours.

This study involved face-to-face interviews with participants in compliance with the terms and conditions granted by the school. Data collection was conducted twice between February-March 2023 and August 2023. Participants for Study 2 (qualitative study) were selected from participants in Study 1 with the criterion of having the highest academic success in school. This study involved five participants (4 female adolescents and one male adolescent) aged 15-17 years who were studying in grades 11 and 12. This criterion was set to align with the primary objective of examining adolescent academic achievement. A minimum duration of two years was chosen to ensure consistency in effort over a long period rather than short-term gains, such as a semester.

The research design employed was exploratory, which is well-suited for examining the research population's characteristics, attitudes, opinions, or trends (Creswell, 2012). Triangulation was utilized to validate the data (Guion et al., 2011), which was achieved by gathering data from five participants. The research aims to understand individual experiences or perspectives regarding academic achievement. Creswell (2012) states that the number of participants in qualitative research can vary from one to 50 people. This study involved five participants who were considered to have reached data saturation. Before the study, the research team conducted a pilot study on three high-achieving

adolescents. Credibility testing was conducted using a recording device and manual recording during data collection. Data transcription uses manual transcription (listening to recordings and transcribing) and automatic transcription directly via dictation in Google Docs. Additionally, the verbatim transcripts of interviews underwent member checks for accuracy. Data analysis was conducted manually and with the assistance of NVivo software for thematic analysis (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Thematic analysis comprised six stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, review, refinement, and result synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

## FINDINGS

The journey toward academic achievement is intricate and multifaceted, encompassing numerous factors intertwined in the lives of adolescents. High subjective well-being among adolescents can engender elements crucial to attaining academic excellence, addressing why subjective well-being plays a pivotal role in educational achievement. The themes elucidated in this study include the cultivation of interests, academic goals, and life aspirations; the cultivation of academic motivation and self-efficacy; fostering positive social relationships; and the ability to surmount challenges. High subjective well-being manifests in the experience of myriad positive emotions, such as pleasure, love, gratitude, relief, and optimism, alongside a scarcity of negative emotions, culminating in perceived life satisfaction. Furthermore, a zest for learning and engagement in diverse activities is a testament to high subjective well-being.

### **Theme 1: Interests**

Adolescents experiencing more positive emotions tend to derive greater enjoyment from their daily lives. This sense of happiness fosters heightened enthusiasm and cultivates a deep interest in exploring various fields of study.

*"I began to develop an affinity for mathematics while engaging online in junior high school. I found myself studying more frequently outdoors, and lessons felt more engaging. Eventually, it clicked for me: Oh, math can be enjoyable." (Participant A/Male)*

### **Theme 2: Academic Aspiration**

The excitement and enthusiasm participants experienced further propelled them toward achieving academic milestones. A fervent passion for learning fosters a profound curiosity to delve deeper into subjects, laying the foundation for setting and striving toward academic objectives critical for achievement.

*"I am driven to learn because I envision it facilitating a smoother transition to college later on. I am motivated to excel further in high school." (Participant T/Female)*

*"It is imperative to harbour a genuine desire to grasp the material; without such fervour, comprehension remains elusive since, fundamentally, teachers merely present generalized content." (Participant K/Female)*

### **Theme 3: Life Purpose**

Participants also divulged their aspirations for the future. Adolescents' affection and love for their parents emerge as a powerful motivator, propelling them to strive for excellence. Adolescents' life goals often stem from their deep emotional connection with their parents.

*"Perhaps parents tire themselves out thinking about their children; they exhaust themselves working tirelessly, all in pursuit of their children's happiness." (Participant A/Male)*

*"I am also driven by the desire to demonstrate to those around me the nobility of the teaching profession. Teachers possess the ability to impart knowledge and shape individuals' lives. Furthermore, through education, one's quality of life can significantly improve. I aspire to showcase that these achievements are a testament to the values instilled in me by my parents." (Participant K/Female)*

*"I want to be a businesswoman and study Islamic business. I chose that major because my parents have an economic background, and I want to become an agent of change in the Islamic economy. And I want to make them happy" (Participant G/Female)*

#### **Theme 4: Parenting**

Adolescents' feelings of affection from their parents can motivate them to learn. Participants do not want to make their parents feel sad, so their love for their parents encourages them to continue studying.

*"Nevertheless, if I am happy now, I am more into playing, but I always remember that I have a goal. I want the National Examination soon, so I cannot keep playing like that. Then, the most important thing is the motivation for what we should aim for. Then, like my motivation goes back to my parents, how do my parents feel if, for example, I continue to be at the bottom like that?" (Participant N/Female)*

Theme the role of parents emerged as a salient factor in enhancing participants' subjective well-being. Parental contributions encompassed emotional support through affection, praise, and motivation; female vision of a safe space for communication and problem-solving; and facilitation of academic pursuits by female vision of necessary resources, such as computers, conducive learning environments, and financial support for educational expenses. Additionally, parental recognition and celebration of academic accomplishments significantly bolstered participants' overall well-being.

*"Moreover, my parents never incentivized me with gifts for performing well academically. Their stance was that if you excel in school, that is commendable. Consequently, my motivation to excel stemmed from a genuine thirst for knowledge; I pursued excellence not for rewards but because I genuinely enjoyed it." (Participant N/Female)*

Parents play a crucial role in cultivating their children's motivation and enthusiasm for learning. This heightened engagement can, in turn, enhance adolescents' subjective well-being, ultimately leading to improved academic performance.

#### **Theme 5: Academic Motivation**

Adolescents who are happy and satisfied with their lives tend to enjoy their lives more and be more confident with their learning outcomes. This can make them more motivated to continue learning and improve their achievements. Their sense of satisfaction can motivate them to study harder to achieve academic achievement, creating a sense of satisfaction.



*Maybe it is because I want to be perfect. I am determined to excel. The more I get good grades, the more I am eager to learn. (Participant A/Male)*

Academic motivation can arise due to curiosity and high interest in a field. Adolescents with high motivation will study harder and find it easier to understand the subject.

*The general feeling is what may be my curiosity about science. When I study, I want to understand it, but on the other hand, sometimes it motivates me to study even harder. (Participant K/Female)*

*It could be more because of curiosity about the lesson. Since I was a kid, I have been curious, especially about the exact sciences. Especially if, for example, there is math, my curiosity is high, and I want to learn. (Participant A/Male)*

### **Theme 6: Self-efficacy**

Subjective well-being is also manifested in the form of confidence in one's ability to achieve academic achievement. Participants knew their learning weaknesses but remained enthusiastic and tried hard to find a way out. This allowed adolescents to develop self-efficacy to achieve academic achievement. Adolescents who feel happy and satisfied with their lives tend to have higher self-confidence, making them more confident in their learning and achievement.

*Especially during senior high school, it is already more specific; there are science and social studies. I have to improve in the mathematics. So, I have to work hard to learn it from YouTube. But I always believe that everyone can excel in their respective fields. (Participant K/Female)*

*Yes, I got up again. I convince myself that the value of my life is not only judged by one point, but I have to be able to do it. I believe I am getting closer to it (ideals), but I do not have to be like a burden on my mind. (Participant N/Female)*

### **Theme 7: Social Support**

Adolescents who have high subjective well-being will tend to have more friends. Positive feelings such as happiness, joy, and cheer make establishing good social relationships with people in the surrounding environment easier. Friendship can support academic achievement because adolescents feel more supported and thus motivated to study well.

*Friendship is essential because they are the ones who remind me to study; they are the ones who remind me if I am getting lazy or if I am losing motivation. (Participant N/Female)*

*For example, I also have friends who often joke around; when studying, they joke around but still study. (Participant N/Female)*

*Maybe it's because I see that my friends are already smart, so I don't want to be left behind. None of my friends are elbowing each other. If there is a complex problem, we discuss it. Support each other (Participant A/Male)*

Adolescents who feel happy and satisfied with their lives tend to feel secure and comfortable, making them more confident about interacting with others.

*Also, I like to go to school if I have good friends. (Participant T/Female)*

*The way I learn is to find supportive friends so we can help each other with material we don't understand. (Participant K/Female)*

### **Theme 8: Ability to Manage Emotions**

Adolescents are undergoing a developmental stage characterized by unstable, often changing, or turbulent emotional conditions. In this phase, adolescents are also responsible for preparing themselves to enter the next, more challenging level of academic education. For this reason, self-regulation of emotions, which can support conditions of high subjective well-being and encourage the process of achieving academic achievement, is needed. When they were sad or angry, participants said they found learning challenging in these conditions.

*Alternatively, doing my hobbies can relieve my stress. Usually, I postpone it because when I am studying, it is the same as if I did not come in, ma'am. After all, I am still sad I am so late. So, I calmed down beforehand, was in the mood again, and started studying again. (Participant N/Female)*

*Yes, it is very influential. If I am sad, it is hard to want to study, I do not go in. However, I will be more enthusiastic about studying if I feel happy and comfortable. (Participant T/Female)*

#### **Sub-theme 1: Doing Something Fun.**

Participants do pleasant things to manage their negative emotions until their feelings become stable again. When participants have a high level of subjective well-being, participants have stronger self-confidence to overcome stress. Participants looked for various ways to manage their negative feelings well.

#### **Sub-theme 2: Writing Journal**

Participants said they would do hobbies when they were not feeling well. Their hobbies are quite diverse, including painting, writing journals, listening to music, and sports.

*Furthermore, when I write, I usually journal; I write what I feel in a book, and after that, the feelings subside. Because my emotions have been experienced daily, I try to write something in this book about my feelings, what I should be grateful for today, and what I am sad about today. Usually, it is like that. (Participant K/Female)*

*I overcome it with exercise and daily push-ups to eliminate negative thoughts in my brain. (Participant A/Male)*

*So usually I paint like that, find something else to do, paint or sleep. So, it is like healing your brain on holidays. After that, I also enjoyed listening to songs as a hobby. Apart from that, I watch movies too. (Participant G/Female).*

### **Sub-theme 3: Expressing Feelings**

When participants feel sad, annoyed, or have other negative emotions, they cannot learn. They try to overcome this by describing how to reduce negative emotions. Ways to express these feelings include crying until you feel relieved.

*I learned to give myself time, so do it now if I want to cry. Then I can learn later. So, like that, I control my emotions not by holding them in anymore but by letting them cry out, but only at this time. Moreover, I do not cry out tonight when I want to study. That was the emotional control I had during the exam. (Participant G/Female)*

### **Sub-theme 4: Acceptance of the Fact**

One participant told the story of the failure he experienced. Participant G shared his experience of failure, which required him to push himself several times to get up and get up again. Failure is hard when not accepted by invitation to enter a state university. Simultaneously, participant G had to take the final school exam. Participant G described his condition as very sad and crying very often, even during exams. Participant G tried hard to manage his emotions in various ways to learn still and get the highest score. At that time, he found studying difficult because he felt unfortunate. However, at that time, participant G revealed that he remembered a lecture by a religious teacher who succeeded in giving rise to a feeling of accepting reality and all provisions from Allah.

*However, even if I do my hobby, it does not affect me when I am at my down point. What played a role at that critical point was a religious teacher, parents who listened to stories well, and parents who reminded them of their targets and provided direction in this way (Participant G/Female)*

## **Theme 9: Spirituality**

### **Sub-theme 1: Able to Deal with Problems**

Adolescents who have a high level of subjective well-being tend to be calmer in dealing with problems. The number of positive feelings felt tends to make adolescents more relaxed and confident in their ability to solve problems. Participants face obstacles from within and outside themselves. Internal obstacles include health conditions such as feeling sick or exhausted, difficulty understanding lessons they do not like, and difficulty remembering material they have studied. Obstacles from outside oneself include too many challenging assignments, friendship problems, changes in the curriculum, and taking part in too many activities at school. Participants described difficulties with the many tasks given. To overcome this, creative participants sought teaching materials from various sources, such as textbooks, the internet, or social media content (YouTube and Instagram).

*But at certain times, if, for example, there are two concurrent tasks, I think about which one is more important, then choose based on priorities so that everything can run (Participant K/Female)*

*I teach my friends related materials such as history, biology, and so on in English, and vice versa; my friends teach me materials related to mathematics. So, that's the complementary process that I use to deal with difficulties in learning (Participant K/Female).*

### ***Sub-theme 2: Belief in God's Help***

Parents have instilled belief in God Almighty in the participants since they were small. Parents always give directions to remember Allah in the learning process. When facing failure, they pray tahajjud and hope Allah's blessing. Participants also consistently expressed gratitude to Allah in response to their achievements.

*According to humans, it is difficult, but with God's help, it becomes easy. Other people could drive, whether it is any obstacle. If tahajjud and Allah make our steps easier, it can be overcome after tahajjud feels like there is help. You still have to study hard. However, the one who makes the path easier is still Allah. (Participant G/Female)*

## **DISCUSSION**

Study two research is qualitative research aimed at explaining the quantitative results of the previous study. It has been found in earlier studies that subjective well-being plays an essential role in academic achievement. The subjective well-being theory put forward by Furlong et al. (2018) identifies subjective well-being using four dimensions: belief in self, faith in others, emotional competence, and involvement in life (living engagement). The concept of subjective well-being developed by is also based on positive psychology theory regarding the critical role of social-emotional competence in adolescents' ability to live meaningful, purposeful, and exciting lives. Then Furlong et al. (2018) also complement the theory of identity development (Waterman, 1993). According to Diener et al. (2006) and Ryff (1989), this theory includes more cognitive criteria and combines subjective well-being criteria. According to Ryff (1989), the subjective well-being theory includes life goals, self-development, self-acceptance, independence, positive relationships with other people, and mastery of the environment. Meanwhile, according to Diener et al. (2006), subjective well-being includes many positive, life satisfaction, and few negative feelings.

Furlong et al. (2018) complemented the Self-identity Development Theory proposed by adding subjective well-being criteria. According to Waterman (1993), identity development theory focuses on the process of individual exploration and commitment in various domains of life, such as social roles, values, and life goals. Furlong et al. (2018) added a subjective well-being dimension to this theory, stating that individuals who successfully achieve a strong identity also tend to have a high level of subjective well-being. Furlong's theory, reviewed from the basic concept of subjective well-being according to Diener et al. (2006) and Ryff (1989), is more comprehensive because it combines the criteria for subjective well-being. Ryff (1989) defines subjective well-being through six criteria: life goals, self-development, self-acceptance, independence, positive relationships with others, and environmental mastery. Diener et al. (2006) define subjective well-being as an affective condition that includes a lot of positive feelings, life satisfaction, and a few negative feelings. In the context of this study, Furlong et al.'s theory (2018) is relevant because it shows that subjective well-being is not only a consequence of identity development but also an important factor that influences the process of identity development itself. The results of this study support this theory by showing that factors that influence adolescent subjective well-being, such as parental care, social support, and spirituality, also play a role in developing adolescent life goals, academic ideals, and interests, which are important aspects of identity formation.

Furthermore, research findings show that strengths-based parenting—which includes affection, a caring environment, active learning, instillation of moral and religious values, and support in creating academic and life goals—significantly impacts adolescents' subjective well-being. In addition, social

support from friends, seniors, teachers, and tutoring mentors also plays an important role in developing adolescent life goals, academic ideals, and interests. Spirituality, manifested in internalizing and applying religious values, helps adolescents accept themselves and recover from failure. These findings support the criteria for subjective well-being of life goals and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989).

This study also shows that positive adolescent relationships with friends and their environment, characterized by positive support and interactions, affect subjective well-being. Furthermore, adolescents with life goals, academic goals, interests, understanding of religious values, and support from the social environment tend to have more positive emotions, which are one of the indicators of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2018).

This study provides new insights into parenting, social support, spirituality, and positive relationships in improving adolescent subjective well-being through developing life goals, academic goals, interests, and self-acceptance. Specifically, parenting that can recognize and encourage the development of adolescent strengths, support from friends and teachers, and understanding religious values are important factors in improving adolescent subjective well-being. Religious values are important in helping adolescents overcome failures and obstacles in the learning process. Given that subjective well-being plays a crucial role in teenage identity formation, this study significantly advances our understanding of identity development theory. The following is an explanation of the themes found based on the concept of subjective well-being developed by Furlong et al. (2018).

### ***Belief in Self***

The first thing participants stated in achieving academic achievement was the existence of apparent interests, life goals, and educational aspirations. It then becomes the driving force for participants' efforts to achieve academic achievement. Participants said they had life goals or academic aspirations they wanted to achieve. Having clear life goals and educational aspirations is one manifestation of participants' subjective well-being. Adolescents' dreams make the desire to achieve academic achievement very strong.

### ***Academic Aspirations***

Academic aspirations are the targets a person wants to achieve in the educational field. Academic goals can be in the form of a desire to achieve academic achievements, such as good grades, scholarships, or graduating cum laude. Academic aspirations can also be the desire to continue their education to a higher level, such as a state university, foreign university, or postgraduate program. Academic goals can have a positive impact on a person's educational achievement. Academic goals can be a motivation to learn and achieve. The existence of academic goals can reduce school dropout rates (Zava et al., 2022). Tang et al. (2021) state that a solid commitment to ideals influences adolescents' academic achievement. Some of the dreams participants had, for example, being accepted into a well-known state university or receiving a state scholarship. Research conducted by Ratsameemonthon (2013) showed that having many achievement targets can directly contribute to academic achievement.

### ***Purpose of Life***

The purpose of life is a life that is directed by goals that are based on beliefs and values that are believed in. Adolescents with a sense of purpose and who are dedicated to achieving a goal greater than themselves show higher levels of religiosity, a stronger sense of identity, and a more profound sense of meaning than those who do not have a sense of purpose (Damon et al., 2019). Furthermore, the sense

of purpose for oneself persists well beyond adolescence and throughout life. It suggests that purpose helps a person develop and contribute to society. It leads a person's life to be focused on achieving meaningful and valuable goals. Some of the life goals expressed by participants included the desire to make their parents happy and to become an agent of change in the Islamic economy.

Research conducted by Blau et al. (2019) found that one thing that drives adolescents to achieve academic achievement is the desire to make their parents proud. The educational achievements that have been achieved give rise to a sense of pride and satisfaction in adolescents (Li, 2022). Life goals and academic aspirations cause participants to have strong motivation to achieve academic achievement. Searching for self-identity and having a purpose in life is very important in adolescence (Erikson, 1979). The existence of clear life goals in this research was proven to play a crucial role in achieving academic achievement. Research by Wang et al. (2023) in China demonstrates that at the age of 16, it is a significant period to find a purpose in life. Since the age of 13, adolescents have questioned the purpose of life and found that the role of the family is vital.

### ***Interest***

Participants expressed interest in something (for example, a subject or activity), which encouraged the emergence of learning motivation. It is a feeling of liking or strong interest in something. Interest can arise naturally or develop through a process of learning and experience. Interests (passions) can include various things, from hobbies and activities to fields of study or work. A strong interest can drive motivation to pursue long-term goals. Interest in subjects is also stated as one of the internal factors that play a role in academic achievement.

Participants shared their interests, such as interest in the sciences, extracurricular activities in saman dance, and participation in organizational activities at school. Interest that is initially only in certain subjects can eventually increase interest in other subjects and achieve academic achievement. Research by Jhong, Kim, and Lee (2021) shows that enthusiasm can help improve academic achievement.

### ***Self-efficacy***

Self-efficacy is a belief in one's abilities, including the ability to solve female problems faced in learning. Self-efficacy is a person's confidence or belief about their ability to perform a task or achieve a goal. Research results show that self-efficacy has a positive and significant relationship with academic achievement (Zysberg & Schwabsky, 2021). High self-confidence in achieving targets can also be a driving force for achieving educational achievement. Previous studies support the results of this study. Mailhot and Feeney (2017) have researched the fact that strong self-confidence encourages academic achievement.

Participants in this research also showed confidence in succeeding in academics, studying well, passing exams, and solving female problems. Good self-knowledge, including self-concept and self-efficacy, is positively related to subjective well-being (Céspedes et al., 2021). A systematic literature review using fifty-nine eligible articles found that self-efficacy in academics was moderately correlated with academic achievement (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). From the results of this research, several factors were obtained, including mediators and moderators, work regulations, goal orientation, and deep female assessing strategies.

### ***Belief in Others***

The process of achieving academic success in adolescents cannot be separated from the important role of the people in their lives. Participants stated that the role of parents as the closest people in everyday life is significant. Various problems, sadness, anxiety, confusion, and feelings that adolescents feel, both positive and negative, were told to their parents.

### ***Parenting***

Parental attention is also provided in the form of emotional support. Parents' support gives adolescents happiness, acceptance, appreciation, and support. This positive feeling is significant for adolescents in the learning process. It can increase self-confidence and self-esteem, which in turn can increase motivation and interest in learning.

They are providing a conducive environment. Providing a conducive environment at school and home plays a significant role in the participants' learning experiences. Parents contribute to this by providing facilities that support learning for females, including basic needs, school fees, and study equipment. These resources foster a sense of comfort, calmness, and enthusiasm for learning among the participants. Acknowledging that access to such facilities suggests that the participants likely come from more privileged backgrounds is important. This socioeconomic advantage could substantially influence their well-being, potentially impacting their stress levels, self-efficacy, and academic performance. Future research might consider exploring the interplay between socioeconomic factors and well-being within this context.

Parental care also manifests in guiding adolescents directly. In the learning process, parents also teach lessons that are not understood and help find solutions. Parents' guidance is beneficial for increasing children's self-confidence and ability to understand lessons. Involvement and supervision from parents help participants stay focused and disciplined in studying. It can improve learning abilities, which can ultimately increase academic achievement.

### ***Social Support***

Social support is a form of assistance other people provide to someone, whether emotionally, instrumentally, or informatively. Social support can be provided by those closest to you, such as family, friends, teachers, seniors, and school. Participants also stated that people, such as friends, teachers, upper-level students, and mentors at the tutoring centre, provided support.

Some participants felt happy when doing activities with friends. This is understandable because building friendships is very important during adolescence. Research conducted by Sullivan & Huettel (2022) shows that adolescents' prosocial behaviour can be encouraged to become more extraordinary by the presence of friends. Activities carried out with friends can increase subjective well-being (August, Hellryd & Kjell, 2022). Participants said they felt happy doing activities with friends, such as walking, chatting, and playing. The positive influence provided can be in the academic field or other fields. In the educational field, research by Kim, Hyungmin, and Lee (2021) shows that a positive peer group influences academic achievement.

Participants complained that the effects of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic made them unable to play with friends. It often makes participants feel sad and annoyed. This finding aligns with Mitra, Waygood, and Fullan's (2021) research that lack of access to friends, space/places to play, and exercise during the pandemic correlates with adolescents' low well-being. The pandemic from 2020 until 2022 forces students to study from home, thereby losing the opportunity to meet face-to-face friends. All

school activities, including assignments, can only be done online. Group assignments with friends can also increase adolescents' academic achievement (Linn et al., 2022). However, this cannot be done during a pandemic. While Rogers, Ha, and Ockey (2021) highlight the significant influence of the pandemic on adolescents' socio-emotional and academic achievement, this study further reveals that these effects were directly experienced and acknowledged by the participants. During the interviews, they examined how the pandemic negatively impacted their emotions, social connections with friends, and, to some extent, their learning process and pursuit of academic achievements.

The critical role of social support from the people around one's life is explained in the ecological systems theory put forward by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), which states that the surrounding environment dramatically influences children's development. The results of this research are in line with this theory. The surrounding community and school environment also influence academic achievement. Likewise, vice versa, if the people around adolescents are not conducive, such as lazy friends, teachers who do not understand adolescents' conditions, or school activities that are not focused, then adolescents' enthusiasm for achievement also tends to be low based on research conducted by Johnson (2019) stated the importance of school climate in improving student academic achievement. This research found that participants' social support from friends, teachers, upper-level students, and tutoring mentors also influenced academic interests and aspirations.

### ***Emotional Competence***

Mood is another thing that is no less important and plays a role in adolescents' achievement. An excellent emotional condition can make adolescents more enthusiastic about learning. Adolescents' fluctuating emotions, quickly feeling sad or happy, of course, impact achieving high achievement. Emotional changes experienced by adolescents can cause discomfort, unstable emotions, and decreased enthusiasm for learning, which can impact adolescents' academic achievement (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2020). Xie & Kuo's (2021) research also shows the importance of managing emotions for academic achievement. Many feelings of joy and enthusiasm when studying and while studying support the achievement of the process (Năstasă et al., 2022).

In addition, early adolescents need an environment that encourages social and emotional growth (Yeager, 2017) and opportunities to reflect on their identity and life goals (Hatchimonji et al., 2020). Positive emotional states (e.g., feelings of joy, relief, satisfaction, comfort, and enjoyment) can give rise to subjective well-being. Positive feelings that emerge in adolescents tend to increase subjective well-being (Navarro et al., 2017). Regulating one's emotions helps manage the negative emotions that participants feel. Some of the ways participants manage emotions include managing thoughts, managing behaviour, expressing, maintaining health, and choosing positive mass media content. Participants manage their thoughts by diverting thoughts, changing points of view, accepting reality, looking for the causes of problems, and re-evaluating.

Another way participants manage emotions is by controlling behaviour, for example, by pursuing hobbies or doing activities with friends. One of the hobbies that participants do is listening to music. Research conducted by Cook et al., (2019) shows that listening to music can help manage adolescents' emotions. Then, expressing negative emotions (for example, sadness) and maintaining a healthy body can also help manage emotions.

Participants also chose positive social media content to manage emotions. Positive social media content, for example, content created by scholarship recipients abroad. By viewing this content, participants become more enthusiastic about learning. Other examples include watching YouTube



videos or films sent on social media and chatting with friends on social media. Apart from that, there is also content on social media that inspires you to achieve. It turns out that this is in line with research results which prove that social media is considered a positive tool by young people because it can help them to stay connected with friends and family, access the latest information, and find inspiration to develop themselves (Pew et al., 2018; Weinstein, 2018; Hoffman et al., 2023).

These findings support the results found in this research that there is a feeling of usefulness, giving rise to satisfaction. One example is the participants' OSIS activities, creating feelings of usefulness. A sense of usefulness and a meaningful life tends to increase subjective well-being (Kim et al., 2022) and feel less stress (Sutin et al., 2024). Participants stated that feeling satisfied made them more enthusiastic, and they enjoyed the learning process and felt happy.

Of course, adolescents face many challenges or problems in the learning process. Several challenges participants explored were high expectations from the environment, busyness or other activities, changing emotional conditions, friendship problems, health problems, problems that arose during the last pandemic, and failure to achieve academic achievement. For this reason, learning methods or strategies are needed. Several factors influence participants' ability to create learning strategies: academic motivation, self-efficacy, and emotional regulation.

The participants' academic motivation encourages them to think creatively and find various ways to overcome obstacles. Participants overcome these obstacles by utilizing various accessible resources. Subjects related to numeracy, such as mathematics or physics, are often complex subjects. It is also what happened to several participants. Mathematics is an abstract subject, so it is difficult for many students to understand and is of interest (Yeh et al., 2019). Apart from being abstract, mathematics can also cause anxiety for some students. This anxiety can contribute to a dislike of mathematics subjects (Summer, 2020). It can cause low student achievement. However, participants tried to overcome difficulties in understanding the lesson with their self-efficacy to find solutions. Participants attempted to find a way out by asking friends, practicing many questions, and making the method easy to understand. It is in line with the research results of Yarhands et al. (2022), which prove that learning with the help of peers can help students understand mathematics better.

The busyness of participating in organizational activities or extracurricular activities means that participants need more time for studying. However, participants felt confident they could overcome this with self-efficacy. Apart from that, health conditions are sometimes also an obstacle. A strong desire to learn but not balanced with health conditions often causes participants to fall ill. This condition can be overcome by creating a strategy for learning materials in instalments in advance. Apart from that, participants also summarized lessons when their bodies were healthy. Participants create a priority scale and prepare a study schedule so academic and non-academic activities can continue running smoothly.

Research by Pekrun et al. (2019) shows that emotions influence a person's efforts to achieve goals. When facing obstacles and failures, participants continue to try hard and remember the life goals they want to achieve. By recognizing this goal, participants can get up and become determined to study hard. When facing failure, participants stated that the role of parents is vast and belief in religious values is very important. All participants stated how important the role of parents is during the learning process. Some parental care plays a direct role in the learning process, for example, by teaching lessons that are not understood, paying for additional tutoring, providing supportive learning facilities, and providing encouragement and a place to vent sadness when facing failure. Parental care indirectly influences

academic achievement, for example, by frequently giving advice, providing information about college or work, providing affection, and teaching religious values, all of which participants feel are very beneficial.

The process of encouraging oneself to continue trying hard to learn in any condition and recover from failure is influenced by many other factors. Participants always return to their academic goals and aspirations when obstacles hinder learning. The attitude of surrender and acceptance of the provisions of Allah SWT becomes the guideline for the participants so that their hearts become calm, and they are enthusiastic about getting up again.

When adverse emotional conditions are often felt, participants cannot accomplish learning activities optimally. Participants will try to stabilize their feelings, after which a new learning process can be carried out by reinforcing the ideals and life goals they want to achieve. Subjective well-being can also increase if individuals manage emotions better (Mandal et al., 2017; Amjad & Dasti, 2020).

### ***Living Engagement***

Adolescents with high levels of life engagement tend to engage in activities that align with their values, interests, and life goals. They may find satisfaction and meaning in these activities, whether work, hobbies, social activities, or contributions to society.

### ***Spirituality***

Spirituality can be defined as a person's relationship with something bigger than themselves, for example, a relationship with God, the universe, or something else. Spirituality can direct a person to life goals, peace, and happiness from religion, tradition, and personal experience. A person's spirituality is reflected in behaviour, actions, and attitudes. Spirituality has cognitive, experiential, and behavioural aspects. Overall, research suggests that personal spirituality can be the foundation for positive psychological traits in most people (Barton & Miller, 2015).

In this research, spirituality plays a role in generating life goals. Based on the results of this research, clear life goals give rise to motivation and emotional regulation in participants to achieve academic achievement. Participants' motivation is manifested in several things, including a strong urge to learn that arises from themselves and a passion for learning. Spirituality can also play a role in managing one's emotions. This study also found that participants held beliefs in religious values, such as believing in God's help. This belief helps participants in the process of managing emotions. Some forms of faith in spiritual values include being diligent in worship (for example, midnight prayers and praying), surrendering to Allah SWT, believing in good fortune from Allah, being grateful, and accepting that Allah SWT has decreed everything. Participants also always give back to Allah for the results of their achievements. Strong belief in religion makes participants calmer, more sincere, and more comfortable facing difficulties. Research conducted by Vishkin, Bigman, and Tamir (2014) showed that religious values can influence emotional self-regulation, including in the form of gratitude, the ability to self-regulate, strategies for managing emotions, and the existence of a supportive community. Furthermore, the results of this research also explain that religion's role in controlling emotions has implications for well-being.

Based on the results of interviews conducted with participants, explanations were obtained for the questions that emerged after conducting the quantitative study about the urgency of subjective well-being on academic achievement. The main thing that drives participants to achieve academic

achievement is the existence of life goals and clear academic aspirations they want to achieve. Having interest also supports the learning process to be enjoyable. Parental care, social support, and spirituality play a role in forming life goals, academic aspirations, and participants' interests. This encourages the emergence of academic motivation, self-efficacy, and the participant's ability to manage emotions. These factors support participants in developing learning strategies to achieve their life goals and dreams. Then, with this learning strategy as capital, participants undergo the learning process seriously, are focused, are consistent, work hard, and are disciplined.

Participants' subjective well-being is reflected in their life goals and academic aspirations, feelings of support from the people around them, spirituality that gives rise to calm and self-confidence, and the ability to develop learning strategies to solve their problems. Participants also felt that parental care was essential, including providing love, encouraging learning, and financing. Their interest and strenuous learning efforts demonstrated the participants' persistence. Another thing that also plays a role in academic achievement is good emotional regulation. With stable emotional conditions, participants can learn to use the right strategies to achieve academic success. This research focuses on the importance of subjective well-being in educational achievement.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows the importance of high subjective well-being for adolescents to achieve academic success. Some forms of manifestation of high subjective well-being in adolescents are the existence of life goals, academic ideals, and precise interests. In addition, adolescents also need to develop self-efficacy, the ability to regulate emotions and utilize social support and spirituality in facing academic challenges. The implication of this study is the importance of parenting that focuses on adolescent strengths in developing subjective well-being. Parents must recognize and encourage potential development, provide emotional support, facilitate learning, instill moral and religious values, and help adolescents formulate life goals and academic ideals. Teachers and mentors must also create a supportive learning environment, provide positive social support, and help adolescents develop effective learning strategies.

The limitation of this study is that data collection was conducted during the transition period of face-to-face learning after the pandemic. This condition may affect participant responses and dynamics at school. For example, participants may still adapt to returning to face-to-face school after undergoing online learning for a long time. It can affect their focus, motivation, and social interactions. In addition, the time given by the school for data collection is limited to maintain student safety. It may cause the interview duration to be shorter and limit the depth of information that can be obtained from participants.

The research team suggests expanding the scope of space in further research. A more comprehensive picture of the adolescents' subjective well-being and academic success will be obtained by involving participants from more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Further research can also extend the duration of the study, for example, by conducting a longitudinal study to see the development of adolescents' subjective well-being and academic achievement in the long-term study. In addition, it can also explore other themes that can potentially influence adolescents' subjective well-being and academic success. Explaining interventions by designing and implementing intervention programs that aim to improve adolescents' subjective well-being and academic achievement would also be very useful.

The results of this study can be used as a basis for developing psychological interventions that focus on improving subjective well-being in adolescents, such as counselling programs, life skills training,

and parental guidance. The findings of this study can be used as input in developing a psychology education curriculum, especially at the high school level. Materials on subjective well-being, the factors that influence it, and its role in adolescent development must be integrated into the psychology curriculum and are expected to improve academic success.

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