



The Multivariate Role of Character Strengths on Psychological Well-Being: A Study of High School Students in Indonesia

Ayu Riana Sari , Winna Andini Handayani 

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Jenderal Achmad Yani, Cimahi, Indonesia



Abstract

Addressing adolescent problems tends to focus on problematic behaviour and pays less attention to positive aspects of adolescents that can be used as strengths to improve their psychological well-being. This study aims to examine the contribution of character strengths to adolescent psychological well-being. The research method used is quantitative research with a non-experimental design. Data were obtained from 822 students from 25 public high schools in Bandung City using the *Values in Action-Youth* questionnaire to measure character strengths and *The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being* to measure adolescent psychological well-being. Data analysis used multiple regression with *stepwise* regression calculations. Collectively, character strengths explained a significant 56.9% of the variance in psychological well-being ($R^2 = 0.569$, $p < 0.001$). Among these, *gratitude* emerged as the most dominant single predictor, accounting for 32.5% of the variance ($B = 3.26$, $\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [2.42, 4.11]). Unique findings indicate that although spirituality had the highest average score, its contribution to well-being tended to be reduced when interacting with other characters. The results of this study can be used to develop programs improving adolescent psychological well-being by strengthening positive character traits typical of adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescent, character strengths, psychological well-being

Abstrak

Penanganan masalah remaja sering kali cenderung menitikberatkan pada perilaku bermasalah remaja dan kurang memperhatikan aspek positif remaja yang dapat dijadikan kekuatan untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji kontribusi kekuatan karakter terhadap kesejahteraan psikologis remaja. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kuantitatif dengan rancangan non-eksperimental. Data diperoleh dari 822 siswa/i yang berasal dari 25 sekolah menengah atas negeri di Kota Bandung dengan menggunakan alat ukur kuesioner *Values in Action-Youth* untuk mengukur kekuatan karakter dan *The Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing* untuk mengukur kesejahteraan psikologis remaja. Analisis data yang digunakan adalah regresi berganda dengan perhitungan regresi *stepwise*. Secara kolektif, kekuatan karakter memberikan kontribusi signifikan sebesar 56,9% ($R^2 = 0.569$, $p < 0.001$) terhadap kesejahteraan psikologis, di mana *gratitude* (rasa syukur) muncul sebagai prediktor tunggal yang paling dominan dengan kontribusi sebesar 32,5% ($B = 3.26$, $\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [2.42, 4.11]). Temuan unik menunjukkan bahwa meskipun spiritualitas memiliki skor rata-rata tertinggi, kontribusinya terhadap kesejahteraan cenderung berkurang saat berinteraksi dengan karakter lain. Hasil penelitian ini dapat dijadikan masukan untuk menyusun program peningkatan kesejahteraan psikologis remaja dengan memperkuat karakter positif khas remaja.

Kata kunci: Kekuatan karakter; kesejahteraan psikologis, remaja

Corresponding author: Ayu Riana Sari | **E-mail:** ayu.riana@lecture.unjani.ac.id

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, characterized by comprehensive changes in biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects (Santrock, 2019). Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) defines adolescents as those aged 10–19 years. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, under the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 25 of 2014, adolescents are defined as individuals aged 10–18 years. The multidimensional changes in this transition demand a high capacity for self-adjustment. The pressure to adapt to these changes often creates distinct challenges for adolescents. Hall (in

Buchanan et al., 2023) describes adolescence as a period of storm and stress. However, Arnett (1999), through the perspective of modified storm and stress, emphasizes that these characteristics are not universally experienced by all adolescents. Nevertheless, through this reconceptualization, Arnett (1999) asserts that adolescence exhibits a higher prevalence of problems compared to other age phases. This prevalence encompasses three key elements: conflict with parents, mood fluctuations, and a tendency to engage in risky behaviors.

The empirical manifestation of these problems in Indonesia is evident from the *Indonesia-National Adolescent Mental Health Survey* (I-NAMHS) data, which recorded that 1 in 3



adolescents (34.9%) experienced psychological problems within the past 12 months, and 1 in 20 adolescents (5.5%) met the diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder, with anxiety disorders being the most frequently identified condition (Center for Reproductive Health et al., 2022). In urban regions such as Bandung City, this transitional turmoil manifests as an escalation of complex behavioral issues. Adolescents have been reported to engage in a spectrum of maladaptive behaviors, ranging from minor offenses like truancy to extreme actions such as involvement in motor gangs and violence (Jasmisari & Herdiansah, 2022; Santoso & Kristanti, 2000).

From a neurobiological perspective, Steinberg (2020) explains that these impulsive behaviors are triggered by the maturation of the limbic system, which precedes the development of the prefrontal cortex. However, in a modern context, this vulnerability is exacerbated by digital environmental factors. Astutik et al. (2025) found that most adolescents utilize social media with very high intensity, which significantly correlates with a decline in psychological well-being due to exposure to *cyberbullying* and a tendency toward anxiety-inducing social comparisons. Fundamentally, these various deviant behaviors and emotional distress serve as surface indicators of low levels of *psychological well-being* among adolescents.

Within Ryff's (1995) theoretical framework, psychological well-being is operationalized as an individual's positive functioning across six core dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Empirical studies on high school adolescents in Indonesia reveal dynamic outcomes; for instance, research by Nuryami et al. (2025) indicated that many adolescents exhibit high psychological well-being in the dimensions of autonomy or self-acceptance, yet score low in environmental mastery and personal growth. Another study by Widyawati et al. (2022) found that most adolescents fall into the moderate-to-low levels of psychological well-being. This highlights the urgency of addressing adolescent psychological well-being. Hanif and Widiyari (2024) suggest that the high demand among adolescents—particularly Generation Z—for psychological well-being interventions amid modern-day pressures can be addressed by optimizing spirituality, which has been

empirically shown to serve as a buffer against psychological health challenges and stressors.

Nonetheless, efforts to address low adolescent well-being generally remain focused on reducing problem behaviors through punitive approaches. The punitive measures conventionally employed often trigger iatrogenic effects—a condition wherein interventions paradoxically aggravate adolescent behavior through mechanisms of *deviancy training*, or the process of mutual learning and reinforcement of deviant behaviors within a treatment group (Dishion et al., 1999). The failure of threat-based approaches and social control methods (Petrosino et al., 2013; Gatti et al., 2009) shifts attention toward the importance of therapeutic interventions that focus on skill development and the strengthening of internal resources (Lipsey, 2009). Within the framework of positive psychology, the most fundamental internal resources for adolescent development are *character strengths* (Park, 2004, 2009). Character strengths have been shown to tend to serve as protective factors that significantly reduce behavioral problems in adolescents (Qin et al., 2022). Rather than focusing on what is "wrong" with adolescents, the positive psychology approach identifies what is "strong" within them (Park, 2009).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) define character strengths as the psychological ingredients that define six universal virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Through the *Values in Action* (VIA) classification, these six universal virtues are broken down into 24 specific character strengths (e.g., *gratitude*, *spirituality*, and *zest*). As a dynamic psychological construct, character strengths are conceptualized as positive dispositions manifested through thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Park et al., 2004).

Various global studies have examined the effectiveness of character strength constructs in adolescent life; for example, Gillham et al. (2011) found that other-directed strengths and temperance are significant predictors of future well-being. Furthermore, Shoshani and Slone (2013) demonstrated that character strengths operate as crucial protective factors during school transitions, helping adolescents maintain their adjustment and positive emotions amidst environmental stress. Shoshani and Slone (2013) found that the character traits of hope, gratitude, and perseverance correlate strongly with enhanced psychological well-being and

lower symptoms of depression and anxiety. Adolescents who can optimize these internal strengths also exhibit higher resilience against destructive peer pressure (Niemic & McGrath, 2019). Overall, this body of findings underscores that character strengths are fundamental psychological aspects that consistently contribute to enhancing adolescent psychological well-being.

In Indonesia, research on this topic is beginning to grow, with character strengths showing significant contributions to psychological well-being among university students (Septiana & Syakarofath, 2020) and acting as key predictors of adolescent life satisfaction in school environments (Gunawan & Kristiana, 2017). However, when applied to the complex dynamics of high school adolescents, Nuryami et al. (2025) observed contradictory results: character strengths did not significantly influence adolescent psychological well-being. This empirical gap stems from methodological differences in previous studies, which generally analyzed single dimensions—such as gratitude (Nugroho & Wibowo, 2025; Zahara & Yusri, 2020) and spirituality (Hanif & Widiyarsi, 2024)—or viewed character globally by grouping it into the six virtues (Nuryami et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, research on the comprehensive profile of all 24 character strengths in adolescents remains limited. According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), internal strengths, in the form of character, operate dynamically within an individual. Therefore, a deep understanding of adolescents' internal strengths—viewed through the profile of all 24 character strengths and their influence on psychological well-being—is essential for designing more effective preventive interventions for adolescents in urban areas like Bandung City. Given their high exposure to complex social dynamics, public high school (*SMA Negeri*) students in Bandung City represent an adolescent group in a crucial phase of identity development who urgently require a solid foundation in character to cope with such environmental pressures. By mapping the 24 most dominant character strengths, this study is expected to serve as a foundation for strategies to enhance psychological well-being rooted in individuals' internal potential, rather than merely relying on punitive management. Based on these considerations, the hypothesis of this study is that the full spectrum of character strengths significantly contributes to adolescents' psychological well-being.

2. Method

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional design. The researcher aims to examine the contribution of the independent variable, namely the 24 character strengths, to the dependent variable, psychological well-being.

The population for this study consists of public high school (*SMA Negeri*) students in Bandung City. The sample was selected using a *cluster random sampling* technique, with schools as the cluster units, to ensure representation of students from various regions across Bandung. Based on this technique, 25 schools scattered across five main administrative regions in Bandung City were selected, with the sample detailed characteristics presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Distribution Based on Geographical Areas

Daftar Sekolah	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Bandung Utara</i>		
SMAN 1, SMAN 2, SMAN 15, SMAN 19	166	20,2%
<i>Bandung Barat</i>		
SMAN 6, SMAN 9, SMAN 13	43	5,2%
<i>Bandung Tengah</i>		
SMAN 5, SMAN 20	68	8,3%
<i>Bandung Selatan</i>		
SMAN 7, SMAN 8, SMAN 11, SMAN 17, SMAN 18, SMAN 22	208	25,3%
<i>Bandung Timur</i>		
SMAN 10, SMAN 12, SMAN 14, SMAN 16, SMAN 21, SMAN 23, SMAN 24, SMAN 25, SMAN 26, SMAN 27	337	41%
	25	822 100%

The participants in this study comprised 822 students: 352 males (42.8%), 462 females (56.2%), and 8 (1.0%) who did not specify their gender. The respondents' ages ranged from 16 to 18 years.

The data collection procedure was conducted offline, beginning with informed consent from the students and school authorities regarding data confidentiality. The research instrument was a self-report questionnaire that had been adapted into Indonesian. The character strengths measurement tool used the VIA Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA-Youth), developed by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman. This instrument measures 6 virtues, each consisting of specific character strengths: Wisdom (Creativity, Curiosity, Judgment, Love of Learning, Perspective), Courage (Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty, Zest), Humanity (Love, Kindness, Social Intelligence), Justice (Teamwork, Fairness, Leadership), Temperance (Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence, Self-Regulation), and

Transcendence (Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, Spirituality). The VIA-Youth consists of 96 questionnaire items (e.g., *"I treat everyone fairly, even if I do not like them"*) with response options ranging on a Likert scale from 1 = Not like me at all to 5 = Very much like me. This measurement tool demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.954, and the item validity—calculated using corrected item-total correlation—ranged from 0.427 to 0.881.

The measurement tool for psychological well-being utilized the Scales of Psychological Well-being (SPWB) developed by Carol D. Ryff. This instrument consists of 84 statement items (e.g., *"I feel that I have grown a lot as a person over time"*) to measure 6 dimensions of well-being: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance, with response choices ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. This scale demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.924, with item validity values ranging from 0.402 to 0.861.

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to outline the profile of character strengths and the levels of students' psychological well-being (*Mean, SD, Categorization*). Inferential statistical analysis was performed using multiple linear regression with the *Stepwise* method to determine which character strength dimensions were the most dominant predictors. The *stepwise* procedure enters predictors into the model one by one based on statistical criteria ($p < 0.05$) and removes variables that no longer provide a significant contribution ($p > 0.10$) after new variables are added. This approach was employed to generate a final parsimonious model (simple yet possessing strong predictive power), which is subsequently presented in tables and its meaning analyzed. The data analysis techniques were executed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 27).

3. Results

Assumption Testing

Prior to testing the hypotheses through multiple linear regression analysis, classical assumption and linearity tests were conducted on seven regression models examining the effects of the 24 character strengths on psychological well-being. These models comprise the six individual dimensions of psychological well-being and one total psychological well-being score: Model 1 (Autonomy), Model 2 (Environmental Mastery), Model 3 (Personal Growth), Model 4 (Positive Relations with Others), Model 5 (Purpose in Life), Model 6 (Self-Acceptance), and Model 7 (Psychological Well-Being).

The assumption testing results indicated that all seven models are eligible for the primary analysis. Every model was free from multicollinearity (*Tolerance* = 0.338–0.790 > 0.10; *VIF* = 1.266–2.960 < 10.0). Residual normality was satisfied in Models 2, 3, and 6 ($p > 0.05$), whereas deviations in the remaining models were tolerated as the sample size ($N = 822$) guarantees the normality of the sampling distribution via the *Central Limit Theorem*. Furthermore, homoscedasticity (*Glejser test*) was fully satisfied in Model 3, with minor symptoms observed in the other models due to high statistical power. The linearity tests confirmed that the majority of the relationships are linear ($p > 0.05$). The remaining minor deviations can be neglected given the model's robustness and the use of stepwise regression, which automatically filters out non-linear or non-significant predictors.

The Contribution of the 24 Character Strengths to Adolescent Psychological Well-Being

Based on the results calculated using the stepwise regression analysis, the contributions of the 24 character strengths to overall psychological well-being and to each individual dimension are as follows:

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results of Character Strengths on Total Psychological Well-Being

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
(Constant)	127.156	8.373		< 0.001	[110.721, 143.591]
Gratitude	3.264	0.432	0.226	< 0.001	[2.417, 4.,112]
Zest	2.230	0.433	0.162	< 0.001	[1.379, 3.081]
Self-Regulation	2.545	0.383	0.179	< 0.001	[1.792, 3.297]
Love	1.419	0.320	0.131	< 0.001	[0.792, 2.046]
Humility	-1.491	0.304	-0.117	< 0.001	[-2.088, -0.894]
Hope	1.629	0.458	0.104	< 0.001	[0.730, 2.528]
Honesty	1.242	0.398	0.087	0.002	[0.460, 2.024]
Leadership	1.077	0.282	0.111	< 0.001	[0.524, 1.631]
Social Intelligence	1.739	0.458	0.129	< 0.001	[0.841, 2.637]

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
Humor	-0.836	0.308	-0.082	0.007	[-1.441, -0.231]
Perseverance	1.019	0.438	0.074	0.020	[0.159, 1.879]

Note. $R^2 = 0.569$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.563$); $F(11, 810) = 97.119, p < 0.001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The stepwise procedure identified the character strength of *Gratitude* as the primary predictor, entering the model first and accounting for an initial contribution of 32.5% of the variance. In the final model, 11 character strength variables (*Gratitude, Zest, Self-Regulation, Love, Humility, Hope, Honesty, Leadership, Social Intelligence, Humor, and Perseverance*) provided significant contributions, with

$F(11, 810) = 97.119, p < 0.001$. Overall, this model explained 56.9% of the variance in the total Psychological Well-Being score. Within this model, *Gratitude* emerged as the most dominant positive predictor, followed by *Self-Regulation* and *Zest*. Conversely, *Humor* and *Humility* were significantly and negatively correlated with Psychological Well-Being after controlling for other variables in the model.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results of Character Strengths on the Self-Acceptance Dimension

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
(Constant)	17.974	2.039		<0.001	[13.972, 21.976]
Gratitude	1.034	0.110	0.322	<0.001	[0.818, 1.251]
Perseverance	0.299	0.115	0.097	0.009	[0.075, 0.524]
Humility	-0.346	0.083	-0.122	<0.001	[-0.508, -0.184]
Self-Regulation	0.551	0.099	0.174	<0.001	[0.356, 0.745]
Love	0.306	0.078	0.127	<0.001	[0.152, 0.459]
Leadership	0.216	0.072	0.100	0.003	[0.074, 0.358]
Kindness	-0.633	0.117	-0.192	<0.001	[-0.863, -0.402]
Zest	0.300	0.111	0.098	0.007	[0.083, 0.517]
Honesty	0.276	0.105	0.087	0.009	[0.070, 0.482]
Fairness	0.223	0.110	0.074	0.043	[0.007, 0.439]

Note. $R^2 = 0.414$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.406$); $F(10, 811) = 57.185, p < 0.001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The stepwise procedure identified the character strength of *Gratitude* as the primary single predictor entering the model first, accounting for an initial contribution of 27% of the variance. In the final model, 10 character strength variables (*Gratitude, Perseverance, Humility, Self-Regulation, Love, Leadership, Kindness, Zest, Honesty, and Fairness*) provided significant contributions, with $F(10, 811) =$

$57.185, p < 0.001$. Overall, this model explained 41.4% of the variance in the Self-Acceptance dimension score. Within this model, *Gratitude* emerged as the most dominant positive predictor, followed by *Self-Regulation* and *Love*. Conversely, *Kindness* and *Humility* were significantly and negatively correlated with the Self-Acceptance dimension when other variables in the model were controlled.

Table 4. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Purpose in Life Dimension

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
(Constant)	17.278	2.228		<0.001	[12.904, 21.652]
Hope	0.804	0.122	0.227	<0.001	[0.565, 1.043]
Gratitude	0.623	0.114	0.190	<0.001	[0.399, 0.846]
Zest	0.541	0.111	0.174	<0.001	[0.323, 0.760]
Self-Regulation	0.280	0.102	0.087	0.006	[0.080, 0.480]
Honesty	0.226	0.106	0.070	0.033	[0.019, 0.433]
Judgment	0.231	0.101	0.076	0.023	[0.032, 0.429]
Humility	-0.195	0.082	-0.068	0.018	[-0.357, -0.034]
Humor	-0.190	0.071	-0.082	0.007	[-0.328, -0.051]
Perseverance	0.234	0.112	0.075	0.038	[0.013, 0.455]
Love	0.167	0.083	0.068	0.046	[0.003, 0.331]

Note. $R^2 = 0.408$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.401$); $F(10, 811) = 55.946, p < 0.001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The stepwise procedure identified the character strength of *Hope* as the primary single predictor entering the model first, accounting for an initial contribution of 24.6% of the variance. In the final

model, 10 character strength variables (*Hope, Gratitude, Zest, Self-Regulation, Honesty, Judgment, Humility, Humor, Perseverance, and Love*) provided significant contributions, with $F(10, 811) = 55.946, p$

< 0.001. Overall, this model explained 40.8% of the variance in the Purpose in Life dimension score.

Within this model, *Hope* emerged as the strongest positive predictor, followed by *Gratitude*

and *Zest*. Conversely, *Humility* and *Humor* were found to have significant negative relationships with the Purpose in Life dimension when other variables in the model were controlled.

Table 5. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of Character Strengths on the Autonomy Dimension

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
(Constant)	40.042	1.982		< 0.001	[36.151, 43.933]
Bravery	0.409	0.093	0.185	< 0.001	[0.226, 0.592]
Gratitude	0.455	0.107	0.183	< 0.001	[0.245, 0.665]
Spirituality	-0.400	0.111	-0.145	< 0.001	[-0.618, -0.181]
Curiosity	0.353	0.078	0.164	< 0.001	[0.199, 0.506]
Kindness	-0.354	0.114	-0.139	0.002	[-0.577, -0.131]
Honesty	0.358	0.098	0.146	< 0.001	[0.166, 0.549]
Forgiveness	-0.326	0.083	-0.155	< 0.001	[-0.489, -0.163]
Self-Regulation	0.290	0.094	0.118	0.002	[0.106, 0.474]
Humor	-0.221	0.074	-0.126	0.003	[-0.366, -0.077]
Social Intelligence	0.305	0.109	0.132	0.005	[0.092, 0.519]
Love	-0.182	0.075	-0.097	0.016	[-0.330, -0.034]

Note. $R^2 = 0.161$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.149$); $F(11, 810) = 14.084$, $p < 0.001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The stepwise procedure identified the character strength of *Bravery* as the primary single predictor entering the model first, accounting for an initial contribution of 4.2% of the variance. In the final model, 11 character strength variables (*Bravery, Gratitude, Curiosity, Honesty, Social Intelligence, Self-Regulation, Love, Humor, Kindness, Spirituality, and Forgiveness*) provided significant contributions, with $F(11, 810) = 14.084$, $p < 0.001$. Overall, this model explained

16.1% of the variance in the Autonomy dimension score.

Within this model, six character strength variables emerged as significant positive predictors of the Autonomy dimension. The strongest positive predictor was *Bravery*, followed by *Gratitude* and *Curiosity*. Conversely, five character strength variables were found to be significant negative predictors in this model. These variables include *Forgiveness, Spirituality, Kindness, Humor, and Love*.

Table 6. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of Character Strengths on the Personal Growth Dimension

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
(Constant)	20.431	1.920		< 0.001	[16.663, 24.199]
Zest	0.479	0.102	0.172	< 0.001	[0.278, 0.680]
Gratitude	0.484	0.093	0.165	< 0.001	[0.301, 0.668]
Curiosity	0.403	0.092	0.159	< 0.001	[0.223, 0.584]
Love of Learning	0.328	0.089	0.136	< 0.001	[0.154, 0.502]
Self-Regulation	0.336	0.084	0.116	< 0.001	[0.172, 0.500]
Hope	0.367	0.104	0.116	< 0.001	[0.162, 0.571]
Humility	-0.298	0.071	-0.115	< 0.001	[-0.438, -0.159]
Teamwork	0.269	0.107	0.087	0.012	[0.060, 0.479]
Judgment	0.234	0.092	0.086	0.011	[0.053, 0.415]
Humor	-0.150	0.058	-0.073	0.010	[-0.265, -0.036]
Appreciation of Beauty	0.157	0.076	0.060	0.040	[0.008, 0.306]

Note. $R^2 = 0.465$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.458$); $F(11, 810) = 64.079$, $p < 0.001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The stepwise procedure identified *Zest* as the primary single predictor entering the model first, accounting for an initial contribution of 28.3% of the variance. In the final model, 11 character strength variables (*Zest, Gratitude, Curiosity, Judgment, Self-Regulation, Hope, Love of Learning, Humility, Teamwork, Humor, and Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence*) provided significant contributions, with

$F(11, 810) = 64.079$, $p < 0.001$. This model explained 46.5% variance of the Personal Growth score.

The results indicate that *Zest* is the strongest positive predictor, followed by *Gratitude, Curiosity, and Love of Learning*. However, the analysis also revealed two character strengths that exert a significant negative influence on Personal Growth, namely *Humility* and *Humor*.

This indicates that within this research sample, an increase in humility and humor is associated with

a decrease in the Personal Growth scores of adolescents.

Table 7. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of Character Strengths on the Positive Relations with Other Dimension

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
(Constant)	17.868	2.268	-	< 0.001	[13.416, 22.321]
Love	1.002	0.088	0.357	< 0.001	[0.828, 1.175]
Social Intelligence	0.618	0.116	0.178	< 0.001	[0.391, 0.846]
Self-Regulation	0.415	0.102	0.113	< 0.001	[0.216, 0.615]
Gratitude	0.359	0.117	0.096	0.002	[0.131, 0.588]
Teamwork	0.390	0.127	0.099	0.002	[0.142, 0.639]
Humility	-0.325	0.087	-0.099	< 0.001	[-0.496, -0.155]
Bravery	-0.408	0.108	-0.123	< 0.001	[-0.620, -0.196]
Kindness	0.316	0.131	0.083	0.016	[0.059, 0.574]
Perspective	0.417	0.109	0.133	< 0.001	[0.202, 0.632]
Curiosity	-0.237	0.081	-0.089	0.003	[-0.479, -0.095]
Zest	0.327	0.124	0.092	0.009	[0.083, 0.570]

Note. $R^2 = 0.507$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.500$); $F(11, 810) = 75.599$, $p < 0.001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The stepwise procedure identified the character strength of *Love* as the primary single predictor entering the model first, accounting for an initial contribution of 37.1% of the variance. In the final model, 11 character strength variables (*Love, Social Intelligence, Self-Regulation, Gratitude, Teamwork, Humility, Bravery, Kindness, Perspective, Curiosity, and Zest*) provided significant contributions, with $F(11, 810) = 75.599$, $p < 0.001$. Overall, this model explained 50.7% of the variance in the Positive Relations with Others dimension score.

Within this model, *Love* proved to be the strongest positive predictor, followed by *Social Intelligence, Perspective, and Self-Regulation*. Interestingly, the findings revealed three character strengths that exert a significant negative relationship with the Positive Relations with Others dimension, namely *Bravery, Humility, and Curiosity*. This finding demonstrates that an increase in bravery, humility, and curiosity is associated with a decrease in the positive relations scores among adolescents.

Table 8. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of Character Strengths on the Environmental Mastery Dimension

Predictor	B	SE B	β	p	95%CI [LL, UL]
(Constant)	12.812	2.129		<0.001	[8.634, 16.990]
Perseverance	0.464	0.111	0.146	<0.001	[0.247, 0.681]
Gratitude	0.626	0.107	0.188	<0.001	[0.415, 0.837]
Social Intelligence	0.474	0.117	0.153	<0.001	[0.243, 0.704]
Self-Regulation	0.677	0.097	0.207	<0.001	[0.486, 0.868]
Humility	-0.466	0.077	-0.159	<0.001	[-0.617, -0.315]
Zest	0.369	0.107	0.117	<0.001	[0.160, 0.579]
Perspective	0.320	0.101	0.115	0.002	[0.121, 0.519]
Hope	0.309	0.116	0.086	0.008	[0.081, 0.536]
Humor	-0.174	0.079	-0.075	0.028	[-0.330, -0.019]
Honesty	0.223	0.102	0.068	0.029	[0.023, 0.424]

Note. $R^2 = 0.474$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.467$); $F(10, 811) = 73.058$, $p < 0.001$. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit

The stepwise procedure identified the character strength of *Perseverance* as the primary single predictor entering the model first, accounting for an initial contribution of 24.4% of the variance. In the final model, 10 character strength variables (*Perseverance, Gratitude, Social Intelligence, Self-Regulation, Humility, Zest, Perspective, Hope, Humor, and Honesty*) provided

significant contributions, with $F(10, 811) = 73.058$, $p < 0.001$. Overall, this model explained 47.4% of the variance in the Environmental Mastery score.

Within this model, *Self-Regulation* proved to be the strongest positive predictor, followed by *Gratitude, Social Intelligence, and Perseverance*. Conversely, the findings revealed two character strengths that exert a significant negative

relationship with the Environmental Mastery dimension, namely *Humility* and *Humor*. This finding demonstrates that an increase in humility and humor is associated with a decrease in the environmental mastery scores among adolescents.

Character Strength Profiles

Descriptive analysis regarding the distribution of the 24 character strengths among adolescents in Bandung City demonstrates a fairly varied pattern (see Figure 1). A total of 19 character strengths fall within a relatively uniform moderate value range ($M=3.22\text{--}3.93$).

Meanwhile, five prominent signature strengths emerged as distinct hallmarks of adolescents in this city ($M = 4.03\text{--}4.31$): spirituality, gratitude, hope, forgiveness, and *kindness*. This dominant profile reflects characteristics of adolescents who are spiritual, grateful, optimistic about the future, forgiving, and

possess high social concern. Conversely, the least possessed character strength is leadership ($M=2.93$).

Psychological Well-Being Profile

Data shows that the vast majority of psychological well-being among adolescents in Bandung City falls within the moderate level (low=31.1%; medium=40,4%; high=28,5%). This indicates that most adolescents in Bandung City are fairly independent in their actions and thoughts, possess a positive attitude toward themselves—wherein they are reasonably capable of accepting both their flaws and strengths—have a fair sense of direction and purpose in life, are moderately open to new experiences and willing to develop themselves, are adequately capable of building trusting and satisfying relationships with others, and are reasonably competent in managing their environment.

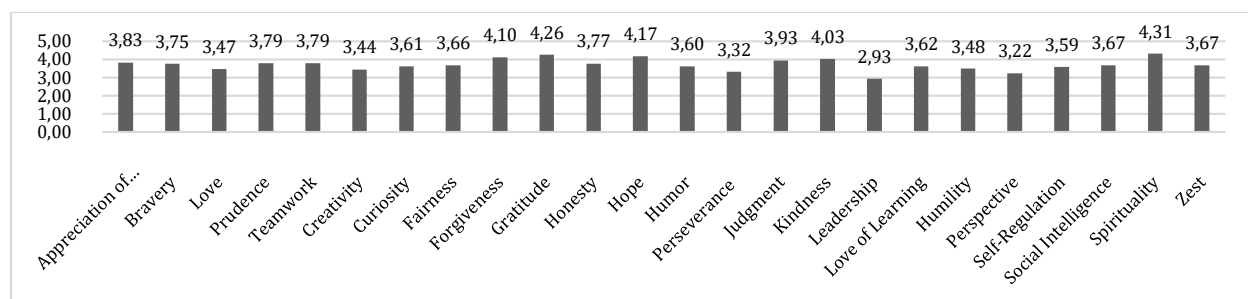


Figure 1. Average Scores of 24 Character Strengths

4. Discussion

The findings of this study support the proposed research hypothesis, demonstrating that character strengths contribute significantly to adolescent psychological well-being. Generally, the integration of character strengths provides a significant contribution of 56.9% to adolescent psychological well-being, with gratitude emerging as the primary predictor (32.5%). This dominant influence of gratitude reinforces previous literature indicating that the capacity for gratitude correlates positively with increases in positive affect and psychological well-being, both in adolescent populations with specific vulnerabilities—such as orphaned adolescents in foster care (Febriani & Harahap, 2024)—and within the general adolescent population (Rahayu & Setiawati, 2019).

An interesting finding in this study is the discovery of an optimal contribution point achieved through the simultaneous integration of 10 to 11 character strengths. This finding indicates that

adolescent psychological well-being is not merely influenced by one or two character strengths standing alone in isolation, but rather by an interacting constellation of characters. Although all 24 character strengths are important to an individual, the role of each strength varies depending on the situation (Niemic & Pearce, 2021). In this study, the configuration of character strengths proven to contribute optimally to adolescent psychological well-being is a combination of *Gratitude*, *Zest*, *Self-Regulation*, *Love*, *Humility*, *Hope*, *Honesty*, *Leadership*, *Social Intelligence*, *Humor*, and *Perseverance*.

Interestingly, the influence of this character constellation is not evenly distributed across all dimensions of adolescent psychological well-being. On a dimension-by-dimension review, character strengths exert the greatest impact on Positive Relations with Others, yet show the lowest influence on the Autonomy dimension. This indicates that each

character element plays a unique, specific role in shaping the psychological well-being of adolescents.

The findings in this study indicate that within the dimension of building relationships with others, the presence of interpersonally-oriented character strengths such as *love* and *social intelligence* proves to play a crucial role. Through these traits, adolescents are able to develop the empathy and interpersonal sensitivity needed to establish positive relationships and gain acceptance within their peer groups. Conversely, within the autonomy dimension—which pertains to the adolescents' ability to act independently, self-direct, and regulate behavior based on personal convictions—character strengths demonstrate a far more limited influence.

Previous research confirms that adolescent autonomy is heavily accumulated and influenced by external factors, such as parental involvement and parenting styles (Beyers et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2025). In Indonesia, which is deeply rooted in a collectivist culture, the authority of the social environment and the family remains prominent even into the emerging adulthood phase, particularly in making crucial decisions such as choosing a university and determining a career path (Arham, 2025; Lestari, 2025; Ramadhani et al., 2024). This provides an understanding that within collectivist societies, adolescent autonomy does not develop in isolation as a mere product of internal character, but rather grows out of connectedness and reciprocal interaction with the surrounding support systems, especially the family.

This study also found that certain character strengths have a negative correlation with psychological well-being, particularly the traits of *humility* and *humor*. Niemiec (2019) notes that character strengths that are overused can have a negative impact on the individual. Adolescents who overuse the character strength of humility tend to engage in self-deprecation. This can hinder them from accepting both their strengths and weaknesses, cultivating personal growth, and building relationships with others. Meanwhile, humor that is expressed excessively—such as self-deprecating humor, offensive jokes, or inappropriate humor—can result in a lack of seriousness in navigating life, thereby obstructing personal growth and interpersonal relationships.

This study also found that the primary signature strengths characteristic of adolescents in Bandung

City are *spirituality*, *gratitude*, *hope*, *forgiveness*, and *kindness*. This indicates that these adolescents possess a strong foundation in transcendence and humanity values, characterized by traits of being spiritual, deeply grateful, optimistic about the future, forgiving, and having high social concern (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The emergence of *spirituality* and *gratitude* as top strengths reflects the robust cultural values and religiosity within Indonesian society, where belief in God and religious attitudes are notably high (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025).

Conversely, the character strength of *leadership* was found to be the weakest trait possessed by adolescents. Based on the neurobiological perspective presented by Riddell (2017), the development of the amygdala and ventral striatum progresses rapidly during adolescence, which correlates with an increase in emotional instability, intensity, and responsiveness to immediate rewards. This influences adolescents' decision-making—a critical component of leadership roles—rendering them prone to impulsivity and more likely to make risky decisions, particularly when they are in emotional situations and/or accompanied by peers (Riddell, 2017). Accordingly, the low leadership character score in this age group does not reflect a lack of potential, but rather a manifestation of a transitional phase of brain maturation that developmentally prioritizes social acceptance over complex executive control functions.

An interesting finding is that although *spirituality* is the strongest character strength possessed by these adolescents, its contribution to adolescent psychological well-being tends to be minimal compared to other distinctive traits such as *gratitude* and *hope*. In contrast, the research findings of Audia et al. (2025) and Hanif & Widiyari (2024) identified a significant correlation between spirituality and psychological well-being. Unlike those two studies, which treated spirituality as a standalone variable, this study examines the interaction of spirituality with other character traits. The results of this study demonstrate that when spirituality interacts with the other 23 character strengths, its individual contribution becomes reduced. According to Kor et al. (2019), spirituality in adolescents serves as a fundamental life foundation, but its tangible contribution to psychological well-being is determined by how those values are

translated into more active and tangible character strengths. In this study, the character traits that contribute more actively to psychological well-being are gratitude and hope.

Despite providing a comprehensive overview, this study is subject to several methodological limitations. First, the *cross-sectional* design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences; therefore, the application of a longitudinal approach is highly recommended for future research. Second, the negative impacts of *humility* and *humor* remain theoretically explanatory because the VIA instrument used does not directly measure the *overuse* aspect. Future studies should integrate specialized scales, such as the *Overuse, Underuse, and Optimal Use of Strengths* (OUOUS) scale. Third, the use of multiple linear regression analysis in this study is limited in mapping indirect pathways or complex interactions among character traits, particularly regarding the *spirituality* variable. Consequently, subsequent research is advised to employ *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) to explicitly test mediation models, positions more active character traits (such as *gratitude* and *hope*) as mediators. Fourth, the sample scope—which was confined to urban adolescents in Bandung City—limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader Indonesian adolescent population, which is highly diverse both culturally and geographically. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the demographic representation of the sample to a national scale.

The findings of this study can be practically applied to adolescents, schools, and educators. Adolescents are advised to optimize their psychological well-being by leveraging their existing character strengths through self-directed activities, such as maintaining a gratitude journal and setting optimistic future goals (*hope*). Schools and educators can support these dynamics by integrating positive education programs into the school curriculum. This can be achieved through group guidance or counseling sessions focused on strengthening student character, providing psychoeducation regarding the boundaries of healthy character application, and reinforcing leadership character through classroom activities or extracurricular programs.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that character strengths contribute significantly to the psychological

well-being of adolescents in Bandung City, with gratitude emerging as the primary contributor alongside 10 other character strengths. Psychological well-being does not rely solely on the presence of a single character strength in isolation, but rather on the adolescents' ability to harmoniously integrate multiple character strengths to achieve optimal psychological well-being. As a practical implication, psychological and educational interventions are recommended to shift from a purely preventive model toward the stimulation of active character strengths—particularly the enhancement of gratitude and hope. Furthermore, future research is advised to investigate the specific factors mediating the relationship between spirituality and adolescent psychological well-being.

Ethical Statement: The research was conducted in accordance with prevailing ethical standards. Prior to data collection, the researcher provided comprehensive information regarding the study to the respondents, encompassing the research objectives, data confidentiality, and data utilization. Furthermore, respondents were granted the full autonomy to withdraw from the study at any point if they no longer wished to be involved. The respondents participated in this study on a completely voluntary basis and completed the institutional informed consent forms.

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Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors utilized generative artificial intelligence (Gemini) for language editing and to enhance the clarity and readability of the text. Following the use of this tool, the authors critically reviewed, revised, and approved the final manuscript, and assume full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of its content.

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