

POSITIVITY BEYOND ABSENCE OF NEGATIVITY: SOCIAL COMPETENCE MEDIATES
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN POSITIVE PARENTING AND ADOLESCENT
FRIENDSHIP QUALITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Parenting is important for adolescent friendship development. However, previous research has focused on the adverse effect of negative parenting on adolescents' behavioral problems that undermines their friendships (e.g., Cook et al., 2012). Positive parenting, beyond the absence of negative parenting behaviors, intends to empower the child and strengthen their competencies, including promoting their independence and acknowledging individual strengths. These assets could enhance social competencies that are needed to form and maintain high quality friendships during adolescence (Batool & Lewis, 2020). We propose gratitude (i.e., showing appreciation for others) and empathy (i.e., understanding others perspectives) are two critical social competencies for adolescent interpersonal relationships. Therefore, this study focused on autonomy-supportive and strength-based parenting as two dimensions of positive parenting to examine their predictive effect on friendship, through the mediation of social competence. We used a path model to analyze data of 506 late adolescences (85.4% females; age: $M=18.4$, $SD=0.68$) from the student participant pool collected via SONA program. Participants were asked to report parents' autonomy support and strength-based parenting during adolescence, their social emotional competencies (gratitude, and empathy), and current friendship quality. The latent mediational model of positive parenting, social competencies, and friendship quality had a good fit with the data. Autonomy-support parenting was significantly associated to social competencies of gratitude and empathy. Strength-based parenting was not significantly associated to gratitude and empathy. Both indicators of social competencies significantly predicted adolescent friendship quality. Lastly, latent mediational model suggests

that social competence partially mediates the relationship between positive parenting (i.e., strength-based, and autonomy-supportive parenting) and adolescent friendship quality. This study will contribute to the underdeveloped topic of positive parenting from a strength-based approach and will provide insight how positive parenting influences adolescent friendship quality through the mediation of social competence.

Keywords: positive parenting, social competence, adolescent friendship quality

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to 18 year-old Korina, who thought college was never for someone like her. You would be amazed at what we are currently accomplishing and what we will accomplish in the future.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

β	Standardized regression coefficients
CI	Confidence intervals
\rightarrow	Indicator of directionality
$>$	Greater than
$<$	Less than
$=$	Equal to
\sim	Has the distribution of
M	Mean: the sum of a set measurement divided by the number of measurements in the set
SD	Standard deviation
p	Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
X^2	Chi-square

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INTRODUCTION

Parenting is critical for adolescent friendship development because family is their first developmental context for individuals to experience, observe, and practice how to establish and maintain social relationships (Xia et al., 2018; Markiewicz et al., 2001). Indeed, previous research has shown that parenting behaviors have significant implications for adolescent friendships. For example, parents' supervision is promotive for adolescent's prosocial friendship network (Knoester et al., 2006). Parental supportive behaviors towards their adolescents were found to influence later adolescent supportive behaviors towards their friends and friendship quality (Flynn et al., 2014). Negative parenting, such as psychological control and hostility, were directly or indirectly (via the mediation of adolescent emotional insecurity with parents) associated with friendship competence (Cook et al., 2012).

One important pathway that parents contribute to adolescent friendships is through their contribution to the development of adolescent social skills and behaviors (Cui et al., 2002). As proposed in the Development of Early Adult Romantic Relationships (DEARR) model, adolescents' family experiences (e.g., parenting or parent-child interactions) have an important effect on social relationships outside of family through cultivating an individual's interpersonal skills (Bryan & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 2000). In line with this theory, empirical studies have demonstrated how parenting behaviors may affect adolescent social skills and behaviors that, in turn, influence the development of their friendships. For example, one study revealed that parents' supportive behaviors (i.e., prosocial, listener responsiveness, positive communication) had influenced adolescent supportive behaviors towards their friends, which in turn, enhanced

the quality of their friendships (Cui et al., 2002). Similarly, Engels and colleagues (2002) found that parenting practices such as responsiveness and autonomy, were associated with adolescent social skills (e.g., expressing positive or negative emotion), and both were predictive of adolescent friendship quality.

Although the pathway of parenting influencing friendship through social skills and behaviors has been established in literature, there are two major gaps in this area of research: first, most studies have only focused on adverse effects of negative parenting, little is known about the promotive effect of positive parenting. Second, most studies have only focused on deficits of social skills or the presence of basic social skills (e.g., express emotion appropriately), little is known about relationship-promotive social competence (such as appreciation, empathy) beyond the basic social skills and how they may promote friendship quality. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how positive parenting may enhance social competence that in turn promotes adolescent friendship quality from the strength-based approach.

Positive Parenting

Positive parenting aims for cultivating the individual's intrinsic motivation and providing supportive environment for the individual to grow into their optimal versions of themselves (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Kyriazos & Stalikas, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Researchers have focused on different aspects of positive parenting in their definition and measurement. For example, Kirby (2019) proposed that positive parenting needs to create a safe and supportive environment that is sensitive to adolescents' needs and respond appropriately. Pastorelli and colleagues (2016) described positive parenting as a reciprocal relation between parents' and adolescents' behaviors that promote individual pro-social tendencies. As a step further, Seligman (2002) proposed that positive parenting involves increasing children's positive emotions, life satisfaction, and flourishing, as well as identifying and fostering children's' strengths. Even

though there are diverse descriptions of what positive parenting is, there is a shared underlying theme of supporting, empowering, and fostering positive growth through parenting. In line with these themes, we will focus on autonomy-supportive parenting and strength-based parenting as two core components of positive parenting in this study.

Autonomy-supportive parenting is when parents encourage their children to seek their interest and make appropriate decisions based on their free will while still providing support and communication (Deci & Ryan, 2013). This component stresses the theme of supporting and empowering the child to grow into who they are. Such parenting practice elicits adolescents' intrinsic motivation and is found to be promotive for better executive function and well-being in general (Distefano et al., 2018; Golnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997; Neubauer et al., 2021). Strength-based parenting is the tendency for parents to acknowledge and encourage their children's strengths (Jach et. al., 2018). This component highlights the theme of fostering individual positive growth through acknowledging and enhancing their strengths, which strengthens individual self-efficacy and empowers them to be a better version of themselves (Loton & Waters, 2017; Waters, 2017). In this study, we are particularly interested in how these positive parenting practices may promote adolescent positive growth in social domain via cultivating their social competence.

Social Competence

Social competence is defined as the ability to have successful interactions with others by generating and coordinating adaptive responses to demands, as well as capitalizing on opportunities within the environment (Waters & Sroufe, 1983). In line with this definition, previous research has studied how social competencies such as empathy and gratitude are important for developing positive relationships. For example, Ford (1982) found that empathy is a salient characteristic in socially competent adolescence in terms of promoting social welfare

and harmony. Empathy is unique in which one must be able to detect one's emotions to feel the same or feel similar emotions to another person to generate an appropriate response within the interaction. Similarly, Balhith and colleagues (2022) found that when Thai adolescents recognize the value of themselves and others, they then utilize the behavioral characteristics of showing gratitude to both their self and others which in turn, lead to the adolescents making better life choices and obtaining happiness. Like empathy, gratitude requires for one to reflect on a relationship that makes them feel connected, safe, and secure within a stable environment to act and respond with a sense of thankfulness. Therefore, in this study we propose empathy and gratitude are two important elements of relationship-promotive social competence.

Empathy

Empathy is an interpersonal skill that enables one to understand other individuals' perspective. The ability to relate to other individuals' experiences sets the foundation for generating appropriate responses so that an increase of trust and quality of social interactions occur (Peters, et al., 2018). It also helps to coordinate adaptive responses during conflict, because being able to put themselves into others' shoes helps to generate solutions to interpersonal issues that is constructive for both parties (Lippman et. al., 2014; Wied et al., 2007).

Gratitude

Gratitude is defined as having an appreciation for positive events that happen in one's life (Lippman et al., 2014). Beyond being able to handle conflict or negative social interactions appropriately, being able to provide positive responses, such as expressing thankfulness, is also important. Showing appreciation benefits both parties involved in the interaction and are likely to elicit improved social integration and prosocial behaviors (Lippman et al., 2014; Peters, et al., 2018). It also encourages ongoing social interactions between parties because positive

recognition during social interactions was found to promote both personal and relationship well-being (Smith & Reis, 2012).

Overall, the abovementioned social competencies are critical to handle social interactions with both negative and positive emotions embedded, which contribute to the initiation, maintenance, and longevity of interpersonal relationships (Duck, 1989; Rose-Krasnor, 2006; Flannery & Smith, 2017). In this study, we are particularly interested if positive parenting practice may be predictive of these social competencies and whether they will lead to better friendship quality.

Positive Parenting, Social Competence, and Friendship Quality

Prior studies have shown some promising associations between positive parenting and social competence. For instance, one study revealed that autonomy-supportive parenting was positively associated to child's social competence, such as cooperating with other peers without being prompted, helping others, and controlling temper in conflict with other peers (Su-Russell & Russell, 2021). Similarly, Engels and colleagues (2002) found that parents who were supportive of their adolescent being autonomous, further stimulated the adolescent to be autonomous and were more often engaged in social situations and were able to express positive emotion. These findings emphasize that autonomy-supportive parenting is critical in supporting the child to grow into who they are, as well as influencing their child's social competencies while supporting them. Additionally, children of parents that use positive parenting (accepting of who their child is, engaged in child's interests, listens to their child, and encourages strengths) have found that their child had higher levels of social wellbeing (i.e., social skills, valuing positive relationships, and adaptive behaviors) (Bernard et al., 2007).

Strength-based parenting, on the other hand, was found to be beneficial for positive development as well. In late childhood, strength-based parenting has been associated to the use

of strengths when coping with minor stress by the individual making the best use of their strengths, skills, emotions, family, and other social resources when faced with stress (Waters, 2015b). Thus, strength-based parenting encourages the child to use their strengths so that when faced with adversity, they can cope by using their strengths rather than engaging in avoidant or aggressive behaviors. Strength-based parenting balances the demands of the environment and the resources the child must meet the demands (Waters, 2015b). These findings allude that while parents encourage and cultivate their child's strengths, parents are also contributing to their child's social competence.

In the meanwhile, studies have also shown that these relationship-promotive social competencies (i.e., empathy and gratitude) are important for friendship quality. For example, Chow and colleagues (2013) found that adolescents who use empathy towards their friends had higher intimacy and conflict management competencies had more friendship closeness. Additionally, adolescents who understand and express gratitude may be more aware and appreciative of others, such as friends, who may provide them with support (Gottlieb & Froh 2019). Despite their being limited literature on competencies mentioned above, these findings indicate that empathy and gratitude are distinct competencies that are relevant for having high quality friendships.

Together, there is empirical evidence to support that parenting practices, such as autonomy-supportive parenting and strength-based parenting, does influence adolescent social competencies. Likewise, there is evidence to show that social competencies (e.g., empathy and gratitude) is associated to adolescent friendship quality. However, the empirical evidence has only indicated indirect evidence that positive parenting may have a role in influencing adolescent relationship-promotive social competencies that in turn, could be linked to adolescent friendship

quality. To our knowledge, there has not been a study to directly investigate how two aspects of positive parenting influences adolescent friendship quality through the mediation of relationship-promotive social competence.

The Current Study

To fill the gap on positive-oriented and strength-based knowledge, this study aims to examine the mediation role of relationship-promotive social competence (i.e., empathy and gratitude) in the association between positive parenting (i.e., strength-based parenting, and autonomy-supportive parenting) and friendship quality. We expect that adolescents whose parents utilize more strength-based and autonomy-supportive parenting will have greater social competencies, and in turn, they will have better friendship quality. Specifically, (H1) we hypothesized that both strength-based parenting and autonomy-supportive parenting would be positively associated with empathy and gratitude, the two indicators of social competence, and (H2) the two indicators of social competence (i.e., empathy and gratitude) would be positively associated with adolescent friendship quality. Therefore, (H3) we also hypothesized that social competence (i.e., empathy and gratitude) will mediate the relationship between positive parenting (i.e., strength-based parenting and autonomy-supportive parenting) to adolescent friendship quality.

METHODOLOGY

Participants & Procedure

Participants were recruited from a student participant pool via SONA system at a large southern region public university. This study was one of the listed studies for students to choose from for fulfilling their research credits; participation in this study was completely voluntary. All participants were informed that; (1) they could withdraw at any time during when completing the survey, (2) data collected would be used only for research purposes. The survey consisted of items that asked about family factors, individual strengths and characteristics, interpersonal skills, well-being, and demographic information. The entire study was conducted online and took about 45 minutes to complete.

The original sample size consisted of 520 late adolescences. After removing incomplete or disinterested entries, the final sample included 506 late adolescents, ages between 18 and 21 years (85.4% females; age: $M=18.4$, $SD=0.68$) and ethnicities reported were the following: 83.4% White American, 13.4% African American, 2.4% Asian American, and 2.6% other. Among them, 66% were in the two-parent household with both biological parents, 12.3% were in two-parent household with one biological parent and their partner, 16.6% were in the single-parent household, and 5.1% listed it as “other”. Their annual household income ranged from less than \$10,000 (2.6%) to more than \$125,000 (35.2%). Parents’ education levels ranged from 7th grade or less (.4%), partial high school to high school graduate / GED certificate (9.9%), partial college / specialized training to standard college or university graduation (53.4%), to graduate professional training / graduate degree (36.4%)

Measures

Strength-Based Parenting. Participants reported 14 items from the Strength-based parenting questionnaire (SBPQ; Water, 2015a) on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). About half of the questions asked about the knowledge of adolescent's strengths ("My parent(s) know what I do best") and the other half asked about the utilization of strengths ("My parent(s) suggest I should use my strengths everyday"). When checking the psychometrics of this measure, one item was removed due to poor factor loading (i.e., "My parent(s) don't know what my strengths are"). The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then computed using 13 remaining items. CFA indicated good model fit in the measurement model (CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.07 [90% CI: 0.06 ~ 0.08], SRMR = 0.05). Standardized factor loadings (range: 0.30~0.59) were all significant ($p < .001$). Items were averaged to create a composite score, so that a higher score represented a higher level of strength-based parenting. Cronbach alpha reliability in the current sample was 0.94.

Autonomy-Supportive Parenting. Participants reported 4 items from the Promotion of Volitional Functioning questionnaire (PVF; Soenens et. al., 2017) on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Sample questions include the following: "My parent(s) let me make my own plans for things I want to do" and "My parent(s) allow me to decide things for myself." Items were averaged to create a composite score, so that the higher score represented a higher level of autonomy-supportive parenting. Cronbach alpha reliability in the current sample was 0.90. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated good model fit in the measurement model (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.06 [90% CI: 0.00 ~ 0.15], SRMR = 0.01). Standardized factor loadings (range: 0.79~0.88) were all significant ($p < .001$).

Gratitude. Participants reported 4 items from the Flourishing children: Gratitude questionnaire (Lippman et al., 2014) on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not at all like me) to 5 (Exactly like me). Sample questions include the following: “I feel thankful for everyday things” and “I find it easy to thank people.” Items were averages to create a composite score, so that the higher score represented a higher level of gratitude. Cronbach alpha reliability in the current sample was 0.85. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated good model fit in the measurement model (CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00 [90% CI: 0.00 ~ 0.12], SRMR = 0.003). Standardized factor loadings (range: 0.67~0.92) were all significant ($p < .001$).

Empathy. Participants reported 4 items from the Flourishing children: Empathy questionnaire (Lippman et al., 2014) on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Sample questions include “I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt” and “It is important to understand how other people feel.” Items were averages to create a composite score, so that the higher score represented a higher level of empathy. Cronbach alpha reliability in the current sample was 0.80. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated good model fit in the measurement model (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.07 [90% CI: 0.02 ~ 0.13], SRMR = 0.02). Standardized factor loadings (range: 0.65~0.81) were all significant ($p < .001$).

Friendship Quality. Participants reported 13 items from the Flourishing children: Friendship quality questionnaire (Lippman et al., 2014) on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Sample questions include “I have a friend who I can do fun things with” and “I have a friend who helps me when I am down.” Items were averages to create a composite score, so that the higher score represented better friendship quality. Cronbach alpha reliability in the current sample was 0.95. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated

good model fit in the measurement model (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.06 [90% CI: 0.05 ~ 0.07], SRMR = 0.003). Standardized factor loadings (range: 0.48~0.95) were all significant ($p < .001$).

Data Analysis

The proposed study used IBM SPSS 28.0 to perform descriptive analysis. The primary analysis was conducted using Mplus (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2013) under the structural equation modeling framework. The study first used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the structure of each construct of interest using the maximum likelihood method (ML; Kline, 2016). Residuals were allowed to correlate one at a time according to modification indices. The model fit was evaluated by using the following indicators: (1) Comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.90 or above; (2) Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) of 0.90 or above; (3) Root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) lower than 0.08 and; (4) standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) lower than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler 1999; McDonald & Ho, 2002).

After obtaining appropriate model fit for each latent construct, the study examined the mediation paths from positive parenting to social competence and then to friendship quality, using structural regression models (see Figure 1). Specifically, empathy and gratitude would be regressed on autonomy-support parenting and strength-based parenting, and friendship quality would be regressed on empathy and gratitude. Same model fit criteria were used as in the CFA step. Additionally, the study tested for indirect, direct, and total effects of strength-based and autonomy supportive parenting on adolescent friendship quality.

RESULTS

Descriptive Information

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are reported in Table 1. All variables were positively correlated with each other in the expected direction. Strength-based parenting was not significantly correlated with empathy, and adolescent friendship quality.

Latent Mediational Model

The latent mediational model revealed a good fit to the data ($X^2(620)$, $p < 0.000$, CFI = 0.946, TLI = 0.939, RMSEA = 0.047, SRMR = 0.059). As shown in figure 2, strength-based parenting was not significantly associated with either gratitude ($\beta = 0.06$, $p = .23$) or empathy ($\beta = 0.03$, $p = .64$). However, higher levels of autonomy-supportive parenting were significantly associated with increases in gratitude ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .01$) and empathy ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .01$). Moreover, higher levels of gratitude ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .01$) and empathy ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < .01$) both were significantly associated with better adolescent friendship quality.

As shown in table 2, the test of direct, indirect, and total effects of the mediational analysis revealed a non-significant direct effect of strength-based parenting to adolescent friendship quality ($\beta = -0.03$, $p = 0.46$). Further, results revealed a non-significant indirect effect from strength-based parenting, to gratitude, and to friendship quality ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.24$) and a non-significant indirect effect of strength-based parenting, to empathy, and to adolescent friendship quality ($\beta = 0.01$, $p = 0.64$). Alternatively, there was a significant direct effect autonomy-supportive parenting to adolescent friendship quality ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.02$). The results further

indicated a significant, indirect effect of autonomy-supportive parenting, to gratitude, and to adolescent friendship quality ($\beta = 0.08, p < .01$), as well as a significant indirect effect of autonomy-supportive parenting, to empathy, and to adolescent friendship quality ($\beta = 0.06, p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The current study had three primary goals. First, we examined whether both autonomy-supportive parenting and strength-based parenting would be positively associated with relationship-promotive social competence (H1). Second, the study examined if such social competence would be positively associated with adolescent friendship quality (H2). Further, the current study tested if the indicators of social competence (i.e., gratitude and empathy) function as a mediator between the relationship between positive parenting (i.e., strength-based parenting and autonomy-supportive parenting) and adolescent friendship quality (H3).

The results from this study have revealed a positive relationship between parenting and adolescent social competence. Specifically, adolescents whose parents support their autonomy are more likely to express gratitude and empathy towards others. This finding extends prior work on autonomy-supportive parenting (Engles et. al., 2002; Su-Russel & Russel, 2021) to show its promotive effect on adolescent social competence. Parents can practice trusting their adolescent ability to use their competencies, being autonomy-granting, and helping adolescents in times of need as a way to promote their adolescent child's utilization of their learned social competencies. Surprisingly, parents who use the strength-based approach does not significantly predict adolescent social competencies. This result could be due to the measurement used to assess strength-based parenting, which focuses on parents' knowledge and encouragement of strengths utilization instead of identifying engagement in positive adaptive processes and or positive interpersonal qualities within their youth (Waters, 2015). Thus, this measure could potentially miss opportunities in capturing positive parenting practices that is related to adolescent positive

development in general. Further, it could also be that general strengths (i.e., natural capacities that one wants to use and enable authentic expression) (Govindji & Linley, 2007) may not be closely related to the development of adolescent social competence (i.e., being empathic or expressing gratitude) due to its interpersonal and interactional nature. In other words, general strengths (e.g., creativity, love of learning, and curiosity) is closer related to the persons character development (Peterson & Segliman, 2006) whereas social competency strengths are closer related to the ability to understand, process, and express the social aspect of one's life (Shek et. al., 2019). Overall, H1 was partially supported. These findings could suggest that autonomy-supportive parenting could be more impactful and developmentally appropriate in developing late adolescent social competencies.

Additionally, findings indicated that adolescents who utilize the social competence of empathy and gratitude reported to have higher friendship quality. In line with previous findings of relationship-promotive competencies contributing to better adolescent friendship quality (Chow et al., 2013; Gottlieb & Froh 2019), this result extended prior research on basic social competence and further demonstrates that encouraging adolescents to use relationship-promotive social competencies such as gratitude and empathy, beyond basic social competence of communication and emotion expression may be a way for adolescents to create a positive foundation for other interpersonal relationships. Therefore, H2 was supported. These findings suggest that having both empathy and gratitude competencies could lead to better adolescent friendship quality.

Results from this latent mediational model suggest that social competence partially mediates the relationship between positive parenting (i.e., strength-based and autonomy-supportive parenting) and adolescent friendship quality. First, social competence mediates the

relationship between autonomy-supportive parenting and adolescent friendship quality. This finding is in line with the developmental contextual approach that emphasizes individuals' experiences with family relationships their functioning in other interpersonal relationships (Conger et. al., 2000). In this context, adolescents who experience autonomy-supportive parenting can feel connected and open to their parents which in turn, positively influences the way adolescents are able to develop competent and meaningful friendships. Moreover, adolescents whose parents use autonomy-supportive parenting could build upon the quality of their friendships through utilizing empathy and gratitude would increase their feelings of being competent within their friendships (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). Second, the direct path from autonomy-supportive parenting to adolescent friendship quality was significant, however the direct path from strength-based parenting to adolescent friendship quality was not significant. This result could be due to autonomy-supportive parenting appeals to the adolescents needs to be competent, autonomous, and relatable, so that they have better socioemotional development in general (Deci & Ryan 2012), but the promotive effect of strength-based parenting may be less pronounced for interpersonal aspect than the intrapersonal growth (Loton & Waters, 2017). Furthermore, it is important to consider that strength-based parenting might be effective for other developmental time periods for instance, previous literature has focused on the effects of strength-based parenting on interpersonal strengths during childhood developmental stage (Waters, 2015). Future research could examine if strength-based parenting is more effective for interpersonal strengths at the early adolescent developmental stage in contrast to late adolescence. Therefore, H3 was partially supported. Despite this finding, this contributes to our understanding of how positive parenting, in particular autonomy-supportive parenting, could

increase adolescent friendship quality through the mediation of social competencies (i.e., gratitude and empathy).

There are some limitations in this study that are worth noting. First, the current study was a cross-sectional study design, which would not be able to inform the directionality of associations among positive parenting, social competence, and adolescent friendship quality. Future research might expand on this theory through a longitudinal or observational study design. Second, measures used for positive parenting primarily focused on strength-based parenting and autonomy-supportive parenting and did not assess other positive parenting behaviors like for example, parental warmth. Similarly, the study only focused on the measurements of gratitude and empathy for social competencies and did not assess other competencies such as cooperation, capitalizing, and compassion. Therefore, future studies with a broader measure of aspects of positive parenting and social competence are encouraged to elaborate the latent mediational model used in this study. Third, this study only used adolescent self-report on all variables, future replication research using caregiver(s) reports on appropriate variables, along with comparison on youth report will strengthen the robustness of these findings. Lastly, the sample used in this was comprised of majority of those who identify as White American and female. Future research could address this issue by recruiting a more diverse sample for the results of this study to be generalizable to multiple ethnic groups as well as gender identities.

Overall, the outcomes of this study contribute to our understanding of how relationship-promotive social competencies (i.e., gratitude and empathy) mediates the association between positive parenting and adolescent friendship quality. Results in this study provide initial evidence on the necessity of considering positive parenting (beyond the absence of negative parenting)

and indicate that positive parenting indeed matters in adolescence and could serve as a foundation for having better relationships with others beyond the family. Findings from this study contributes to the limited literature on empathy and gratitude as well as highlight the importance of adolescents learning and utilizing such relationship-promotive competencies which in turn, enriches the quality of their friendships. Together, this study highlights the importance of multi-contextual nature of adolescent interpersonal relationships with parents and friends, and the development of relationship-promotive competencies that cultivate such relationships. Finally, the current findings may be applied in family-based interventions and familial educational programs in promoting positive parenting, adolescent relationship-promotive competence development, and adolescent friendship development. Specifically, our findings indicate that there are opportunities and or targets for interventions on parents' autonomy support, and/or adolescent empathy and gratitude education and practice; each aspect contributing to fulfilling and long lasting relationships within and beyond the family.

Table1. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

		1	2	3	4	5
1. Strength-Based Parenting (SBP)		--				
2. Autonomy-Supportive Parenting (ASP)		.18**	--			
3. Gratitude (GRAT)		.09*	.28*	--		
4. Empathy (EMP)		0.06	.19*	.47*	--	
5. Adolescent Friendship Quality (AFQ)		0.01	.25*	.45*	.47*	--
	M	4.71	4.11	3.51	5.09	4.62
	SD	0.71	0.84	0.54	0.70	0.56
	Skewness	0.54	-1.11	-1.04	-0.94	-2.08

Note. Statistically significant correlations are indicated as * ($p < .01$) and ** ($p < .05$). Means and standard deviations were calculated on variable after creating a composite score

Table 2. Direct, indirect, and total effects and confidence intervals of mediation analyses.

Indirect pathways	Effect value	S.E	P-Value
SBP→ AFQ (direct effect)	-0.033	0.046	0.464
SBP→ GRAT→ AFQ	0.020	0.017	0.244
SBP→ EMP→ AFQ	0.008	0.016	0.638
Total Effect	-0.006	0.051	0.904
ASP→AFQ (direct effect)	0.103	0.044	0.018
ASP→ GRAT→ AFQ	0.084	0.021	0.000
ASP→ EMP→ AFQ	0.062	0.018	0.001
Total Effect	0.250	0.046	0.001

Notes: SBP = strength-based parenting; ASP = autonomy-supportive parenting; GRAT = gratitude; EMP = empathy; AFQ = adolescent friendship quality.

Figure 1. Hypothesized latent mediational model.

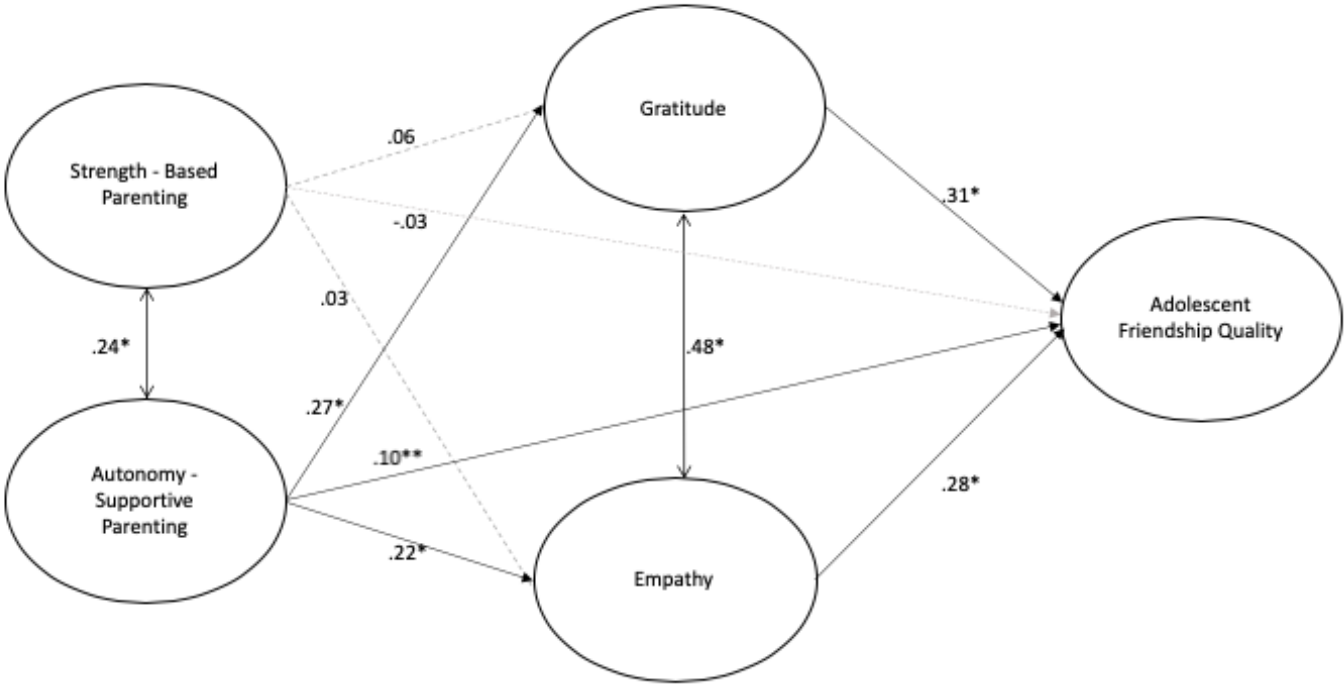
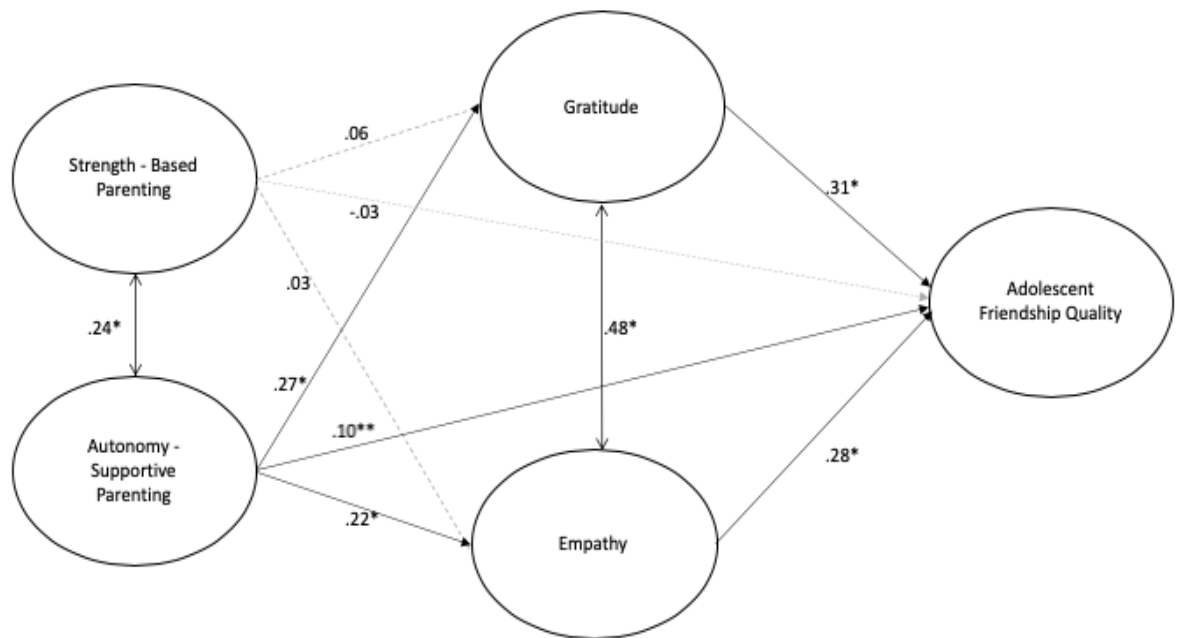


Figure 2. The latent mediational model results.



Notes: The model includes the correlations between strength-based parenting and autonomy-supportive parenting, as well as the correlation between gratitude and empathy. * $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$, dashed pathways are not significant.

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APPENDIX I: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



June 11, 2020

Dr. Mengya Xia
Department of Psychology
College of Arts & Sciences
Box 870348

Re: IRB # 20-04-3493: "Family Enhancing Competence and Strengths for Individual Well-Being Study"

Dear Dr. Xia,

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your application has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under exempt review category 2 as outlined below:

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

The approval for your application will lapse on June 10, 2021. If your research will continue beyond this date, please submit the annual report to the IRB as required by University policy before the lapse. Please note, any modifications made in research design, methodology, or procedures must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please submit a final report form when the study is complete.

Sincerely,

Christopher T. Myles, MSW, CCM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer