

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Adolescents and Their Friendship: How Does Social Interaction Mediate the Relationship Between Mother Attachment and Personal Adjustment?

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents have different personal adjustment skills in coping with changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, we find it urgently necessary to further analyze the factors affecting adolescents' personal adjustment. The present study aimed to examine the role of social interaction as mediating the relationship between mother attachment and personal adjustment. Three hundred eight three adolescents aged 15-18 years old were involved in this study as participants (Mean = 16.2, SD: 0.664). They were students from several schools in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta Province. The data were garnered using three scales, namely mother-adolescent attachment, social interaction, and personal adjustment scales, and analyzed using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS-4. The result showed that social interaction partially mediated the effect of mother-adolescent attachment on personal adjustment. Most adolescents in this study reported low personal adjustment, social interaction, and secure attachment, and moderate avoidant and anxious attachment levels. This research produced a new theoretical model that describes social interaction partially mediates the relationship of mother-adolescent attachment on personal adjustment.

Keywords: Interaction at school, mother-adolescent relationship, peer, personal adjustment,.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period towards adulthood. It is a period full of agitation, challenges, and complex biological, psychological, and socio-emotional changes. During this transitional stage, adolescents will likely face various difficulties in adjusting themselves to changing life patterns, including difficulties in managing time, building social relationships, addressing more complex academic demands, and increasingly competitive environments (Perry, Dollar, Calkins, Keane, & Shanahan, 2020) we tested whether mothers' supportive and nonsupportive reactions to their 5-year-old children's negative emotions were associated with teacher and adolescent self-reported adjustment at age 15 via children's physiological and behavioral emotion regulation at age 10 (N = 404). Individuals need to have a high-quality personal adjustment in order to be mentally healthy. Personal adjustment refers to individuals' creative response to their surroundings in order to yield adequate outcomes through continuous interactions among one's self, other individuals, and their surroundings (Maddux, 2013). Good personal adjustment may help adolescents solve problems and address various challenges arising in their new life situations (Weiten, Hammer, & Dunn, 2012).

Personal adjustment is reported to correlate positively with adolescents' academic achievement (da Costa, Hanurawan, Atmoko, & Hitipeuw, 2018), logical and abstract thinking skills (Weiten et al., 2012). Adolescents with good personal adjustment are reported to have better emotional stability,

self-defense mechanism, hard-working behavior, and rational consideration (Margareta, Hidayati, & Maulana, 2022). Such individuals are likely to exhibit mental wellness and address changing demands and challenges more thoughtfully, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic that forces various changes in many life aspects, including education. Adolescents with high-quality personal adjustment are

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How to cite this article: Muarifah A, Oktaviani F, Agungbudiprabowo, Barida M, Muyana S, Handaka IB, Wahyudi A, Hartanto D, Saputra WE, Widyastuti DA. (2023). Adolescents and Their Friendship: How Does Social Interaction Mediate the Relationship Between Mother Attachment and Personal Adjustment?. Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2023, 164-170

Source of support: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of interest: The authors declares that no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies have been completely by the author.

DOI: 10.47750/pegegog.13.04.20

Received: 18.10.2022

Accepted: 29.12.2022

Publication: 01.10.2023

capable of responding to changes in a thoughtful manner, finding solutions without causing new problems. In contrast, personally maladjusted individuals are reported to be prone to new problems, causing them to sink into poor academic performance and mental health issues.

Several studies have been conducted to examine Indonesian adolescents' personal adjustment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Studies conducted by Haryadi and Zalfa (2021) found that, during Covid-19 pandemic, adolescents with poor personal adjustment found it difficult to understand the learning materials due to new learning situations and environment in the online learning process. On the other hand, Adhiman and Mugiarto (2021) reported that properly self-adjusted, humble, and hardworking adolescents exhibited far better regulation of emotion and resilience. Personal adjustment is reported to negatively affect academic stress (Putri & Hidayah, 2021) and correlate with low frustration level, thus lowering risks of mental health issues.

Based on previous research there were differences in the level of adjustment of adolescents, Haryadi and Zalfa (2021) found the majority of adolescents have low adjustment, while Adhiman and Mugiarto (2021) found the majority of adolescents in medium category of adjustment. Considering that adolescents have different personal adjustment skills in coping with changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, we find it urgently necessary to further analyze the factors affecting adolescents' personal adjustment. This is because adolescent personal adjustments affect behavioral changes and achievement results at school. Previous study found that adolescents with poor adjustments, they show negative changes throughout the school year and lower academic achievement compared adolescents with good adjustments (Olivier, Archambault, & Dup  r  , 2018).

Personal adjustment is not genetic. It is formed through a long learning process involving the parents' role, especially mother. Mothers are reported to have more dominant parenting roles in Asian countries than fathers. In Indonesia, most mothers serve as a child's primary and first caregivers. Although parents' involvement may fade during adolescence, the emotional attachment established since childhood still serves as a valuable source for adolescents' psychological development and personal adjustment (Amato, King, & Thorsen, 2016).

Allen (2008) found that adolescents have more secure attachment with their mothers than with their fathers, which eventually affects their personal adjustment development. A study involving 216 Indonesian adolescents shows that attachment is positively related to personal adjustment, meaning that individuals with a higher attachment will likely exhibit better personal adjustment, while those with lower attachment tend to exhibit poor personal adjustment.

(Nuraini, 2018; Muzdalifah et al., 2019; Notonegoro, 2020). Previous studies have examined the attachment with both parents (i.e., father and mother), while the present study focuses on mother-adolescent attachment because mother is known to have more dominant domestic roles than fathers, especially in the Indonesian context. Mother-adolescent attachment serves as the foundation for building the adolescent's character and potential. Our study scrutinizes the mother-adolescent attachment in certain conditions to extend the existing literature on mother-attachment as one of the primary factors associated with adolescents' personalities.

In this study, we also examine the correlation between peer relationship and adolescents' personal adjustment, considering that peer relationship is known to significantly affect adolescents. Either formal or informal peer support are reported to significantly affect individuals' reasoning development and emotional stability (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2013). A healthy social interaction could help adolescents face stressful situations, and improve their ability to overcome frustration, thus minimizing pathological disorders that adversely affect their adaptive functions (Argyle, 2017). Social interaction is reported to positively relate to personal adjustment (Lingga, 2017). It is also found to affect adolescents' adjustment to the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic (Hanum, 2021).

Other study shows that parent-adolescent attachment, including the mother-adolescent attachment quality, affects adolescents' interaction with their peers. Adolescents may see their parents as a role model in interacting with their peers and environment ((Saleh et al., 2020; Markiewicz et al., 2001). Mother-adolescent attachment quality also affects social interaction, as adolescents tend to imitate their relationships with parents and apply it to their peer interaction (Markiewicz et al., 2001). A strong parent-adolescent secure attachment is found to affect adolescents' social competence and satisfaction, and negatively relate to deviant peer interaction (Kim & Hoppe-Graff, 2001). A previous study shows that adolescents with anxious attachment tend to overestimate the importance of their peer relationship, show overdependence to close friends and fear of separation, whereas those with avoidant attachment tend to understate the importance of a relationship and shows fear of engagement and commitment with others (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

The description above demonstrate how mother-adolescent affects social interaction and personal adjustment and how social interaction affects one's personal adjustment. It can be concluded that existing research explains the roles of attachment, social interaction, and adjustment separately. Beside no research yet and the most studies in Indonesia do not differentiate between maternal and paternal attachments. To answer these limitations, the purpose of this research is to examine the role of social interaction as mediating

the relationship between mother attachment and personal adjustment. There has been no research that analyzes this, while the hypothesis of this research:

- **H1:** mother-adolescent attachment affects personal adjustment.
- **H2:** mother-adolescent attachment affects social interaction
- **H3:** social interaction affects personal adjustment.
- **H4:** social interaction mediates the effect of mother-adolescent attachment on personal adjustment.

METHOD

Research Design

This research was classified as a quantitative approach with Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). The use of PLS-SEM considers that there has been no previous research that examines the role of social interaction as mediating the relationship between mother attachment and personal adjustment with the assumption that the research data is not normally distributed. This is in line with the characteristics of PLS-SEM which can test the theoretical framework from a prediction perspective and there are no distribution assumptions because PLS-SEM is a nonparametric method (Hair et al., 2021). This method can be repeated in future studies if it will test the model with no distribution assumptions or with a small sample.

Participants

Our study involved 383 adolescents (165 male and 218 female adolescents, 15-18 years of age (Mean =16.2, SD: 0.664)). They were 7th to 9th-grade students from ten junior high schools in Sleman, Yogyakarta. This study has been approved by the ethical committee of Ahmad Dahlan University. Participants were recruited with helps from school counselors in each school. Prior to participating in this study, students were asked to state a participation consent

Data Collection Tools

In this study, personal adjustment was measured using a personal adjustment scale consisting of five aspects: objective judgment, sense of humor, responsibility, responsiveness, and satisfaction. The scale contains thirty-nine items with seven alternative responses, ranging from 1 (very low) to 7 (very high). The scale was considered valid following the factor loading of 0.680-0.729 and AVE of 0.512 and reliable (composite reliability = 0.840).

Adolescents' social interaction was measured using the social interaction scale consisting of six aspects: tolerance, flexibility, being enthusiastic and energetic, fair behavior, and positive encouragement. It consisted of thirty-nine items with seven alternative responses, ranging from 1 (very low)

to 7 (very high). The scale was deemed valid (factor loading of 0.685-0.744 and AVE 0.533) and reliable (composite reliability of 0.872).

Mother-adolescent attachment was measured using a scale containing three attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and anxious attachments. It consisted of thirty-one items with seven alternative responses, ranging from 1 (very low) to 7 (very high). The scale was also deemed valid (factor loading of 0.777 - 0.852 and AVE 0.552) and reliable (composite reliability of 0.884).

Data Collection

The data were collected by distributing questionnaires. We also explained the purpose of the study to participants. They were gathered in a classroom at their respective school to fill the questionnaires, which took about 15-20 minutes. We were also helped by research assistants during the data collection process. Participants in this study received IDR 30.000 of phone credit for their participation.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed descriptively and using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with Smart-PLS 4. The PLS-SEM model analysis was performed in two stages. In the first stage, the inner model was evaluated by seeing the *R-square* (R^2), *predictive relevance* (Q^2), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values, and *Goodness of Fit* (GoF) *Index*. Predictive relevance value was calculated using the following formula:

$$Q^2 = 1 - [(1 - R^2_1) \times (1 - R^2_2)]$$

Meanwhile, the goodness of fit index was obtained using the following formula:

$$GoF = \sqrt{(\text{mean communality} \times \text{mean } R^2)}$$

In the second stage, hypotheses were tested using Bootstrapping method. The proposed hypothesis was accepted if the p-value was < 0.05. The mediation effect was evaluated based on the Variance Accounted For (VAF) values, calculated using the following formula:

$$VAF = \text{indirect effect} / (\text{direct effect} + \text{indirect effect})$$

A VAF value higher than 80% represent full mediation, the score between 20% and 80% represent partial mediation, and a score less than 20% indicates no mediation (Hair et al., 2021).

FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis showed that most adolescents in this study reported low social interaction, personal adjustment, and

secure attachment. They also reported moderate avoidant and anxious attachment levels. A slight difference in the number of adolescents with low and moderate levels in each variable was noticed. The descriptive analysis result is presented in Table 1, while the frequency distribution of each variable is displayed in Figure 1.

Hypothesis Test

The research model was evaluated based on R^2 (*R-Square*), Q^2 (*Predictive Relative*), SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), and GoF (*Goodness of Fit*) Index. The R^2 value of social interaction and personal adjustment was 0.220 and 0.991, respectively. R^2 values for endogenous latent variables are assessed as follows: 0.75 (substantial), 0.50 (moderate), 0.25 (weak). The score indicated that mother-attachment has a weak relationship with personal adjustment while the mother-attachment and social interaction have a substantial relationship with personal adjustment.

The value of Q^2 describes the relative influence of the structural model on observational measurements for latent dependent variables (endogenous latent variables). The value of $Q^2 > 0$ shows evidence that the observed values are well constructed, thus the model has predictive relevance. While the value of $Q^2 < 0$ indicates no predictive relevance. The structural model developed in this study was proven relevant, as supported by Q^2 of 0.993 ($Q^2 > 0$).

The fit model criteria for SRMR or Standardized Root Mean Square values < 0.10 or < 0.08 . The SRMR value was 0.096 (< 0.10), indicating a good fit. GoF values criteria are 0.75 (substantial), 0.50 (moderate), 0.25 (weak). The analysis result showed a GoF score of 0.661 (> 0.360). This result showed that the theoretical model could depict the effect of all exogenous variables on the mediating and endogenous variables in this study. The inner model analysis result showed that the proposed model had met the good fit criteria. Figure 2 below displays the final version of the proposed model.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Name	PA	SI	ATC	SC	AV	AX
Mean	160.76	133.96	131.83	76.17	34.26	21.40
Minimal score	84	75	74	24	11	10
Maximal score	266	225	199	120	56	35
Standard Deviation	41.34	35.26	30.31	19.76	8.76	5.40
Excess kurtosis	-0.928	-1.112	-1.019	-0.648	-0.426	-0.323
Skewness	0.146	0.161	0.021	-0.029	0.127	0.188
Cramér-von Mises p value	0	0	0	0	0.001	0

Description: PA (Personal adjustment); SI (Social Interaction); ATC (Attachment); SC (Secure Attachment); AV (Avoidant Attachment); AX (Anxious Attachment).

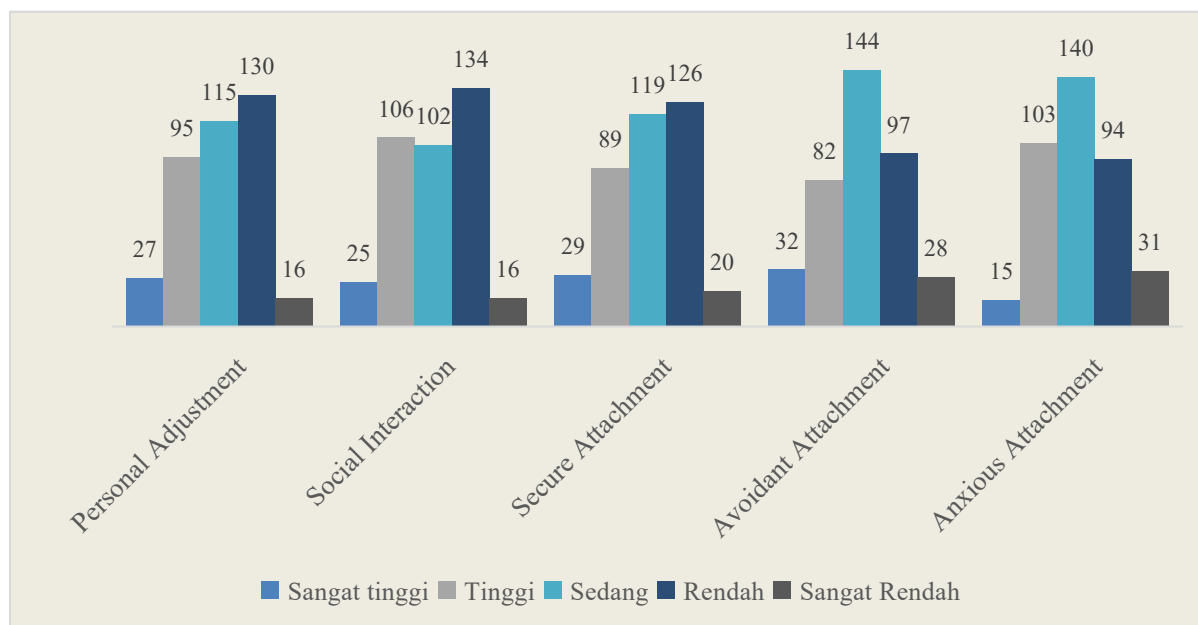


Fig. 1: Frequency Distribution

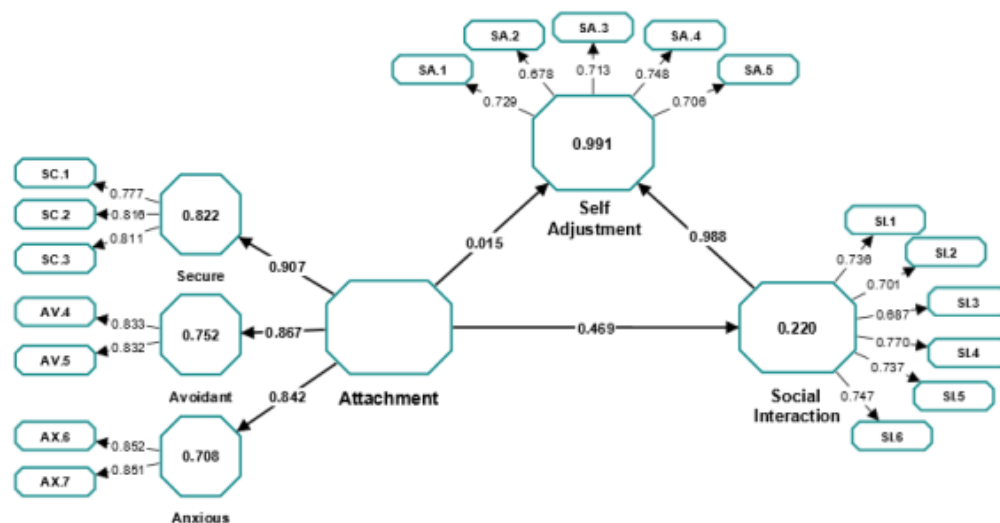


Fig. 2: Attachment – Personal adjustment - Social Interaction Model

Tabel 2: Hypothesis Test

	Coefficient	t	P
Direct effect			
Attachment -> Personal adjustment	0,015	2,568	0,000
Attachment -> Social Interaction	0,469	12,328	0,010
Social Interaction -> Personal adjustment	0,988	364,795	0,000
Indirect effect			
Attachment -> Social Interaction -> Personal adjustment	0,464	12,312	0,000
Total effect			
Attachment -> Personal adjustment	0,479	12,949	0,000

Analysis of the path coefficients between endogenous and exogenous constructs was performed with 5,000 bootstrap subsamples and applying 5% significance. The hypothesis test result shows that the mother-attachment was found to affect social interaction significantly and positively, as the p-value was 0.010 ($p < 0.05$), meaning that Hypothesis 1 was supported. Mother-attachment was found to affect self-adjustment significantly and positively with p value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). social interaction was found to affect with personal adjustment a p-value significantly and positively of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

The mediation evaluation showed a VAF score of 49.3%, meaning that social interaction partially mediated the effect of attachment on personal adjustment. A VAF score between 20% and 80% represent partial mediation (Hair et al., 2021). The total effect result showed that attachment significantly and positively affects personal adjustment. Table 2 presents the hypothesis test result.

DISCUSSION

The analysis result showed that the proposed model can describe the effect of mother-adolescent attachment on

personal adjustment through the mediating role of social interaction. The study result shows that social interaction partially mediates the effect of mother-adolescent attachment on personal adjustment. In other words, the effect of mother-adolescent attachment would be more significant when adolescents possess better social interaction. Adolescents with good mother-adolescent attachment tend to have low risk of facing personal adjustment difficulty (Allen, 2008). Mother-adolescent attachment quality also affects one's social interaction, as they will likely imitate their parent relationship and apply it to their peer interaction (Markiewicz et al., 2001). A healthy social interaction is known improve one's resilience and adaptive functions in addressing frustration (Argyle, 2017). Personal adjustment helps adolescents to overcome issues and new situations they meet in daily life through concrete and abstract thinking in solving problems (Weiten et al., 2012).

The study found that mother-adolescent attachment positively affects personal adjustment, implying that adolescents' perceived attachment quality may affect their personal adjustment quality. Recurrent interaction with

the attachment figure, whether supporting, refusing, or not responding, may affect adolescents' perception of their skills in effectively solving problems (Bishop, Hansen, Keil, & Phoenix, 2019). This finding supports Nuraini (2018) and Muzdalifah et al. (2019), who found that, in certain conditions, mother-adolescent attachment is positively associated with adolescents. It implies that adolescents need to have a good attachment to their mothers, regardless of their condition.

This study also found that most adolescents have a low level of secure attachment and a moderate level of avoidant and anxious attachment, and a low level of personal adjustment. This condition may be accounted for by a cultural factor. Javanese culture obliges children to adhere to their parents, leaving children with only limited space to voice their opinion to their parents. Adolescents with a secure attachment will likely view their parents as reliable person who provides a space for developing autonomy, behavioral control, and responsibility (Allen, 2008; Moretti & Peled, 2004). In contrast, anxious attachment is reported to correlate with children's avoidant attachment (Granqvist & Duschinsky, 2021) "abstract": "Attachment theory was founded by John Bowlby (1907–1990). Adolescents with avoidant attachment tend to stay away from their parents when facing a problem due to fear of refusal or punishment. Such individuals tend to view themselves as a person whose love is refused and fail to draw their parents' attention (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Parents inconsistency is associated with adolescents' anxious attachment — adolescents' feelings of failure to maintain others' interest and attention (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

Peer social interaction in this study was found to positively affect personal adjustment, meaning that adolescents with proper social interaction tend to have better personal adjustment. Peer emotional support affect individuals' self-disclosure in friendship, which eventually affect their wellness (Parker, Rubin, Erath, Wojslawowicz, & Buskirk, 2015). Social interaction may create happiness when it occurs properly. It may also act as the source of difficulty and sadness when it is done poorly (Campbell, Hansen, & Nangle, 2010). This finding supports the current consensus that peer social interaction is important for adolescents and the previous finding by Lingga (2017) and Hanum (2021) on the positive relationship between social interaction and personal adjustment. The present study also revealed that most adolescents have poor social interaction, secure attachment, and personal adjustment. Mother-adolescent attachment quality also affects social interaction, as adolescents tend to imitate their relationships with parents and apply it to their peer interaction (Markiewicz et al., 2001). A strong parent-adolescent secure attachment is found to affect adolescents' social competence and satisfaction, and negatively relate to deviant peer interaction (Kim & Hoppe-Graff, 2001). Adolescents may see their parents as a role model

in interacting with their peers and environment ((Saleh et al., 2020; Markiewicz et al., 2001).

In line with that, mother-adolescent attachment in this study was found to correlate positively with social interaction, meaning that individuals with higher perceived mother attachment will likely exhibit better social interaction. In contrast, those perceiving lower attachment tend to exhibit lower social interaction. Adolescents view the relationship with parents as a model for their peer relationship. Adolescents with poor attachment to their mothers will likely see themselves lacking knowledge, experience, and emotion in interacting with others. This finding supports Kim and Hoppe-Graff, (2001) reporting that a strong parent-adolescent secure attachment is found to affect adolescents' social competence and satisfaction, and negatively relate to deviant peer interaction. This finding is also consistent with previous study showing that adolescents with anxious attachment tend to overestimate the importance of their peer relationship, show overdependence to close friends and fear of separation, whereas those with avoidant attachment tend to understate the importance of a relationship and shows fear of engagement and commitment with others (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This research produced a new theoretical model that describes social interaction partially mediates the effect of mother-adolescent attachment on personal adjustment. In other words, the effect of mother-adolescent attachment would be more significant when adolescents possess better social interaction.

SUGGESTION

This study was conducted only in Sleman regency, which was less representative of Indonesia's 37 provinces and cultural diversity. Thus, future studies are recommended to involve students with more diverse backgrounds and broader locations. Family, personal, and other external factors need further scrutiny to extend the result of this study.

LIMITATION

Our study extends the existing literature on personal adjustment and provides a reference to address adolescents' low personal adjustment, social interaction, and mother attachment. However, this study is limited only to senior high school students and did not involve vocational and Islamic senior high school students, who probably exhibit different dynamics from senior high school students.

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