

Friendship and Wellbeing in Emergent Adults. A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT. The present study examines the relationship between friendship quality and well-being in emerging adults, focusing on the psychological and social dimensions of these interactions. As individuals transition into adulthood, peer relationships play a crucial role in shaping emotional and mental health outcomes. This research explores key factors such as emotional support, social connectedness, and conflict resolution within friendships, analyzing their impact on overall well-being. Drawing from theoretical frameworks in developmental psychology and social support theory, the study employs both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to assess how variations in friendship dynamics influence self-esteem, stress levels, and life satisfaction. Findings indicate that high-quality friendships characterized by trust, emotional closeness, and mutual support are strongly associated with positive well-being indicators. Conversely, friendships marked by high levels of conflict or lack of reciprocity contribute to increased stress and lower psychological health. The study also considers the moderating effects of external stressors, such as academic pressures and social media influences, on these relationships. These findings underscore the significance of fostering strong and supportive friendships during early adulthood to promote psychological resilience and overall life satisfaction. The study contributes to the broader discourse on social relationships and mental health, highlighting the critical role of friendships in shaping the well-being of emerging adults.

Keywords: friendship, well-being, emerging adulthood, social support, psychological health

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem Presentation

The emerging adulthood stage is characterized by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, the feeling of living between two periods, and optimism (Arnett, 2015). While the beginning of the emerging adulthood stage is well defined, around the age of 18, its end is not determined by biological age, but rather by the fulfillment of criteria to be considered an adult: taking responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and financial independence (Arnett, 2015). These criteria are generally met between the ages of 25 and 29.

Looking at the media, with the popularity of shows like “Friends,” “How I Met Your Mother,” and “The Big Bang Theory,” and reflecting on our own life experiences during college or early jobs, we observe that during our journey of identity exploration, one of the most important witnesses are our friends, who become an essential source of fun, emotional support, and well-being.

Well-being is a complex concept that involves both positive and negative emotional responses from individuals, global evaluations of life satisfaction, and the aspects of life considered when determining life satisfaction: work, family, health, leisure, finances, and relationships with oneself and with the social group (Diener, 1999). According to Ryff (1989), the dimensions of well-being include: autonomy, positive relationships with others, environmental control, life purpose, and personal development. In his book *Flourish*, Martin Seligman (2011) describes the PERMA model, which includes five dimensions: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

It is noticeable that one of the common dimensions across all three models is relationships with others. Individuals who have close relationships in their lives report more positive feelings and handle challenges such as grief, job loss, or illness better (Myers, 2000). Among the most important relationships for emerging adults are friendships. According to Hays (cited in Demis & Özdemir, 2010), friendship is “a voluntary interdependence between two people over time that aims to facilitate the achievement of the socio-emotional goals of the individuals and can involve varying degrees of company, intimacy, and mutual support.”

In this research, we have examined the relationship between friendship and well-being in emerging adults in the form of a systematic review.

1.2. Presentation of Relevant Literature

1.2.1. *The Role of Friendship in an Individual's Life*

Depending on gender, age, and the culture we belong to, we define friendship differently (Rybak & McAndrew, 2006). Among the terms most commonly used by study participants to define friendship are self-disclosure levels, sociability, the level of support provided in a relationship, and shared interests (Adams et al., 2000).

The deep structure of a friendship relationship is based on reciprocity, while surface structures change according to the developmental tasks specific to each stage we go through (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). According to these authors, the impact of friendship on human development and well-being depends on the traits of our friends and the quality of the relationship, whose dimensions include: content (what the individuals do together), constructiveness (how conflicts are managed, using negotiation techniques or asserting the power of one of the individuals), closeness (the time spent together and sharing important personal information), symmetry (friends exert similar or comparable influence on one another), and emotional character (the extent to which friends support each other).

Mendelson & Aboud (1999) identified six functional components of adult friendships that determine the quality of the friendship. The first is stimulating company. For friendships among women, the main activity is conversation, while for men, the central aspect of friendship is engaging in recreational activities such as sports or hobbies (Fehr, 1996).

The second function of friendship is the support provided. Support can take several forms: emotional help, services, companionship, financial help, or information for securing housing or a job (Wellman & Wortley, 1989). For emerging adults, emotional support provided by friends is a key strategy in managing the smaller or larger difficulties they face. When going through tough times, they consider emotionally focused goals, such as listening when the other wants to vent, more important than problem-focused goals, such as offering advice or actual support in solving issues (Samter et al., 1997). Another form of emotional support is emotional regulation, which is more effective in the presence of friends (Morawetz et al., 2021). In a study conducted by Morawetz (2021) with 70 emerging adults, it was shown that individuals' ability to emotionally regulate is influenced by the social support provided by a friend, even if the friend is not physically present, whereas emotional regulation in the presence of a stranger is less effective than when done alone.

The third function of friendship is intimacy. According to Monsour (1992), intimacy in a friendship relationship primarily involves self-disclosure, broadly understood as sharing personal information, thoughts, and feelings, and emotional expressiveness, understood as affection, compassion, and lack of judgment regarding information already disclosed. Generally, intimacy is an attribute of long-term friendships, with major life transitions being an important catalyst for intimacy. However, intimacy is not built only by these transitions but also by sharing routines, moments from everyday life, systems of thought, and memories (Policarpo, 2016).

The fourth function of friendship is the trust alliance, which refers to trust, loyalty, and continuous availability in a friendship. Trust between individuals is built based on certain personal inputs of each individual (the disposition to trust, the characteristics of the other, the nature of the relationship, specific concerns in the domain, context) from which they form beliefs about the trustworthiness of the other person. These beliefs influence the decision to trust. When the belief is positive, it leads to actions that test the trust, and feedback from these actions will influence inputs (Six & Latusek, 2023). Individual dispositions toward trust are stable across situations and vary from person to person depending on personality, culture, and developmental experiences (Mayer et al., 1995). The characteristics of the other person influence the level of trust one will grant. According to Mayer's model (1995), trust depends on skills, good intentions, and integrity. Depending on the other person's skills, trust can be granted or not. For example, a person may be very good at keeping secrets but pay little attention to details. Trust can be given that they will keep a secret, but not that they will correctly draft an important document on the first try. Similarly, in friendships, we trust different friends with different parts of our identity and life based on their skills. Good intentions involve the presence of a positive orientation of the one who grants trust toward the one who receives it, in the absence of any extrinsic benefit. Integrity involves the existence of similar principles proven through past actions between the one who grants trust and the one who receives it.

The fifth function of friendship is emotional safety. This refers to the trust and comfort that in a challenging situation, a friend will not highlight the individual's weaknesses or betray their trust (Mendelson & Aboud, 1999).

The sixth function of friendship is self-validation, referring to the role individuals assign to friends in maintaining a positive self-image. According to Wright (1978), individuals maintain friendships because they provide benefits such as: utility (e.g., financial resources in times of need), self-affirmation (friends create contexts where one can express their qualities), ego support (emphasizing success and ignoring failure), stimulation (suggesting new ideas to one another), and safety.

1.2.2. The Quality of Friendship Relationships in Adults

Friendships play an important role in an individual's life throughout their lifespan. Depending on the stage of development we are in, the quality of the friendships we have influences other aspects of our lives. In childhood, low-quality friendships are characteristic of children who are less accepted by their peers (Brendgen et al., 2005), and lack of friends during adolescence correlates with alcohol and drug use, anxiety, antisocial behavior, and depression (Samter, 2003). As adults, the quality of friendships with colleagues influences job satisfaction and performance (Sias et al., 2004).

The emerging adulthood period is marked by multiple transitions: from leaving the parental home to living with roommates or friends, with a romantic partner, or alone, from being a student to being an employee, from transient romantic relationships to stable romantic relationships. These transitions occur at different times, with varying impacts and durations for each individual (Ridfuss, 1991). During all these transitions, in the absence of the family of origin or the family created by each individual, friends become, especially for women, the chosen family (Bellotti, 2008). Major life changes in emerging adulthood reduce the time allocated to friendships, and most people maintain relationships within a small network of friends, with an average of three close friends (Pezirkianidis et al., 2023). In this context, the quality of the relationship with the best friend has a greater impact on an individual's life during the emerging adulthood stage than in other stages of life.

In the longitudinal study conducted by Langheit & Poulin (2022) on 363 participants aged 19 to 30, examining changes in the quality of the relationship with the best friend during the emerging adulthood period, a general decline in friendship quality during this period is observed. However, company and trust alliance increase at the beginning of the period and remain important throughout the entire decade. Study participants changed their best friend an average of three times due to life changes they went through. Since this is the period when long-term romantic relationships are established and relationships with the family of origin move beyond the turmoil of adolescence, intimacy with the best friend decreased from the age of 19 to 30, as participants had more close relationships in which they self-disclosed and were accepted without judgment. Additionally, a reduction in conflicts with the best friend is observed, which is also explained by fewer interactions and the increase in emotional regulation skills and the ability to handle potentially conflictual situations.

To ensure the survival of the relationship with the best friend and to gain the desired benefits, individuals resort to strategies to maintain the relationship. The main strategies include: positivity (engaging in behaviors that

make interactions pleasant between friends), support, openness (meaningful conversations, self-disclosure), interaction (common activities), avoiding topics that could generate conflict, antisocial strategies such as deception, using humor, engaging social network support to help a friend solve a problem, and constructive conflict management (Perlman et al., 2014).

1.2.3. Well-being

The main approaches to well-being are the hedonic perspective and the eudaimonic perspective, both of which have deep roots in ancient philosophical thought. The Greek philosopher Aristippus considered that the purpose of life is to experience the maximum amount of pleasure, while Aristotle believed this perspective makes a person the slave of their desires. For him, true happiness is found in the expression of virtue, in doing what is necessary to be done (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Keys (2002) proposed an exhaustive model of mental well-being that takes into account both major approaches to well-being. Subjective well-being, inspired by the hedonic perspective, involves the presence of positive affect, satisfaction, and the absence of negative affect (Diener et al., 1999). Psychological well-being, representing the private aspect of eudaimonic well-being, is captured by Ryff (1989) and consists of the following dimensions: autonomy, positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. The social aspect of eudaimonic well-being is described by Keys (1998) as having five dimensions: social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, and social acceptance.

Subjective well-being represents a general area of scientific interest rather than a clearly defined specific construct. It includes affective elements (positive and negative affect) and cognitive elements (life satisfaction and the domains to which this satisfaction refers). Positive affect involves emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, satisfaction, pride, affection, happiness, and ecstasy. Negative affect involves feelings of guilt and shame, sadness, anxiety and worry, anger, stress, depression, and envy. Life satisfaction refers to the desire to change life, satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with the past, satisfaction with the future, and the perspective of one's partner on their life. The domains that influence life satisfaction include work, family, leisure, health, finances, self, and the group of belonging. Diener (1984) analyzed the affective elements of subjective well-being through two studies. In Study 1, 72 participants read stories designed to produce variable levels of positive or negative affect, while in Study 2, 42 participants monitored their emotions at emotional moments throughout the day for six weeks. Data analysis revealed the following patterns: people do not simultaneously experience intense positive and negative affect; if one affect

is at a low intensity, the other can be of any intensity; emotions with similar hedonic value tend to appear together; participants defined both positive and negative affect as emotional, and subjects reported moments when they felt both positive and negative affect simultaneously at moderate intensity.

Among the most commonly used methods to measure subjective well-being are the Satisfaction with Life Scale, which measures global life satisfaction without analyzing constructs of positive affect, negative affect, or loneliness (Diener et al., 1985), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), which contains scales for states, each with 10 items (Watson et al., 1988), and the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), which contains 12 items but measures a wide range of positive and negative emotions and experiences, based on the duration of their experience over the last 4 weeks (Diener, 2010).

Research in the field of subjective well-being has focused on identifying predictors for subjective well-being, analyzing affective and cognitive dimensions, and the contribution of contextual factors (life events and socio-demographic variables). Galinha & Pais-Ribero (2011) identified life satisfaction in various domains, negative affect, and positive affect as predictors of subjective well-being. Regarding the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being, depression was the main predictor, followed by comparison standards, confirming earlier research that suggests life satisfaction involves both cognitive and affective processes, is a function of comparing life achievements with personal standards, and is primarily promoted by individuals to prevent depression (Galinha & Pais-Ribero, 2011).

While the hedonic perspective on well-being focuses on the pursuit of pleasure, the eudaimonic perspective centers on fulfilling human potential. The private and personal aspect of eudaimonic well-being is captured by Ryff (1989) in psychological well-being, for which she identified five dimensions.

The first is self-acceptance, which involves maintaining a positive attitude toward oneself and one's past experiences. Unconditional self-acceptance involves accepting oneself without worrying about the withdrawal of love, respect, or validation from others (Hill et al., 2008).

The second dimension is positive relationships with others, which centers on the ability to love. This dimension reflects an individual's ability to develop and maintain quality relationships based on trust, affection, empathy, and mutual support.

The third dimension of psychological well-being is autonomy. An autonomous person has an internal locus of self-evaluation, comparing themselves to their own standards and not constantly seeking approval from others. Autonomy also involves liberation from collective fears and beliefs, which provides freedom from the norms governing everyday life. Autonomy is essential for initiating and regulating behaviors through which all other needs are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2007, p. 250).

Environmental mastery is the fourth dimension proposed by Ryff and refers to the individual's ability to create or choose environments that fit their psychological condition. A person with a high score on this dimension is competent in managing their environment, controls a wide variety of external activities, makes effective use of opportunities, and either creates or chooses contexts compatible with their personal values. A person with a low score on this dimension struggles to manage daily life, feels incapable of changing or improving their context, does not see opportunities, and does not feel in control of the external world (Ryff, 1989).

The penultimate dimension proposed by Ryff is purpose in life, which means that an individual has goals, intentions, and a sense of direction, contributing to the feeling of living a meaningful life (Ryff, 1989). It is natural for life goals to change over time, but it is essential that they exist. One way individuals find meaning in life is through post-traumatic growth, in which they rewrite their life narrative (Triplett et al., 2012).

The last dimension of psychological well-being, as identified by Ryff (1989), is personal growth, which closely resembles the meaning Aristotle gave to the concept of eudaimonia. Personal growth involves not only achieving the previous dimensions but also continuing to develop personal potential. An individual with a high score on this dimension sees themselves growing, is open to new experiences, sees constant improvements in themselves and their behavior. An individual with a low score stagnates, feels bored and uninterested in life, does not feel capable of developing new attitudes or behaviors, and does not see improvements in themselves over time (Ryff, 1989).

While Ryff described the personal aspect of eudaimonic well-being, Keys (1998) described the social aspect of eudaimonic well-being through what he called social well-being, an evaluation of an individual's circumstances and functioning in society. The first dimension of social well-being is social integration, which measures the extent to which people feel they have something in common with those around them, who constitute their social reality, and the degree to which they feel they belong to their community and society. Social acceptance is the public counterpart of self-acceptance. Individuals who express social acceptance trust people, consider them capable of kindness, and contributing positively to society. Social contribution reflects the degree to which individuals feel that what they do is valuable for society and contributes to the common good. Social actualization is the evaluation of the potential and trajectory toward which society is heading and reflects the belief that the institutions and systems created by humans contribute to the fulfillment of society's potential. Social coherence is the public counterpart of purpose in life. Individuals who manifest social coherence are not only interested in what is happening around them but also understand the events in their environment and do not deceive themselves into thinking they live in a perfect world (Keys, 1998).

A model that integrates elements from all the types of well-being described earlier is PERMA, developed by Martin Seligman. Its components—Positive Emotion, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—are independent but interconnected. Each of them contributes to well-being, is pursued as a goal in itself by many people, and is defined and measured independently (Seligman, 2011). Positive emotions involve the ability to experience emotions such as happiness, gratitude, optimism, and hope. According to Fredrickson (2001), positive emotions facilitate more creative and diverse thoughts and actions, contributing to the development of sustainable personal resources, such as physical, social, and intellectual resources. Joy or interest plays a crucial role in mitigating the effects of negative emotions by reducing cardiovascular reactivity caused by them, thus promoting psychological and physical recovery (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998). Engagement refers to total involvement in activities that use personal strengths, a state called flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This state occurs when the challenges encountered match the individual's competencies. Engagement supports personal development and contributes to well-being by using internal resources to overcome obstacles (Butler & Kern, 2016). Positive relationships are the foundation for trust and cooperation, which are critical in both personal and professional life (Seligman, 2011), and they provide emotional support, reduce stress, and contribute to happiness (Reis & Gable, 2003).

Meaning in life involves belonging and contributing to something greater than oneself. The process of identifying one's purpose involves several stages: discovering values and passions, reflecting on current and desired competencies and habits, reflecting on current and future social life, reflecting on potential careers, writing about an ideal future, setting goals and the plans that support them, and publicly committing to the set goals (Schippers & Ziegler, 2019). People who find meaning in life exhibit increased resilience in the face of adversity (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009). Accomplishments refer to achieving goals and the personal satisfaction derived from success. These are not limited to professional achievements but include any significant personal achievement, from learning a new hobby to overcoming major challenges.

1.3. Research Objectives

In the literature, interpersonal relationships are an essential predictor of mental health and overall life satisfaction (Ryff, 1989; Diener, 1999). Additionally, Seligman's PERMA model (2011) emphasizes the role of positive relationships in achieving authentic well-being. Literature suggests that gender differences in friendship influence how these relationships contribute to well-being. Women

tend to place greater importance on self-disclosure and emotional support, while men focus on recreational activities and instrumental support (Fehr, 1996; Wellman & Wortley, 1989).

Through this study, we aim to conduct a systematic review of the literature regarding the relationship between friendship in emerging adults and well-being in emerging adults. The research questions we will explore are:

- Which aspects of friendship are most commonly associated with well-being?
- Are there differences between men and women in the relationship between friendship and well-being?

1.4. Contributions of Studying the Identified Research Problem

The relationship between friendship and well-being has been extensively studied in children, adolescents, and the elderly (Peziarkianidis, 2023); however, there are no dedicated studies for adults, as this stage includes many life periods where the role of romantic relationships and family as parents plays a central role. In this stage, there are variations in the number and quality of friendships.

The proposed study contributes to the field of developmental psychology by offering new perspectives for the emerging adulthood stage. Methodologically, the proposed systematic review provides an advantage by integrating conclusions from a broad spectrum of international studies, offering an intercultural view of the phenomenon. Practically, these conclusions can guide the development of interventions aimed at supporting young adults in building and maintaining quality relationships, contributing to their long-term well-being in both academic and professional contexts. Financially, a systematic review approach allows for exploration of existing literature without additional costs for primary data collection.

METHOD

This research is based on a systematic review design. To identify the relationship between friendship and wellbeing in emerging adults, we searched for scientific articles published in the last 10 years, from 2015 to 2024, using the following keywords: “friends” OR “friend” OR “friendship” OR “friendships” AND “wellbeing” OR “psychological well being” OR “happiness” OR “flourish” AND “emergent adults” OR “emergent adulthood”. The search was conducted in the following databases: PubMed, Scopus, and JSTOR.

To refine the initial 462 articles identified, a series of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the relevance and quality of the results analyzed. First, the selected articles were written exclusively in English to ensure accessibility and integration into the context of international literature. Second, we restricted the selection to studies published within the last 10 years, covering both the pandemic and pre-pandemic periods. Third, only studies involving participants aged between 18 and 29 years were included, as this is the specific age range for emerging adulthood. In the case of longitudinal studies, we selected articles where participants fell within this age range at least at one point of measurement. Finally, regarding the type of articles, the selection was limited to original research studies, whether quantitative, qualitative, or longitudinal, excluding systematic reviews, book chapters, or articles published in anthologies to avoid information duplication or indirect perspectives.

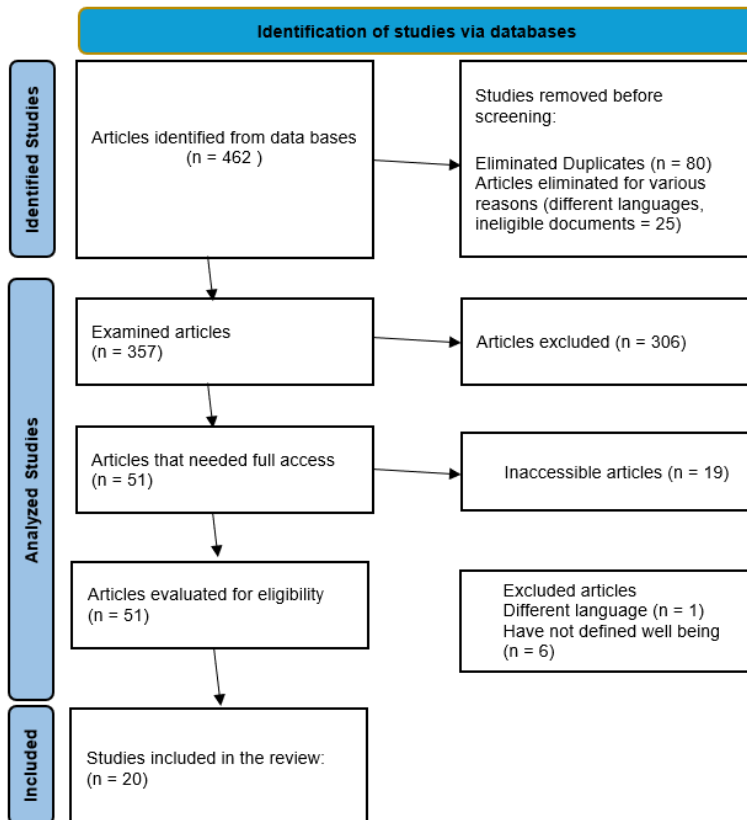


Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram

RESULTS

The 20 selected studies cover a variety of methodologies and international samples, providing a diversified perspective on the dynamics of friendship. These studies include quantitative, longitudinal, and experimental research, with participants from the United States (10 studies), Canada (2 studies), Australia (2 studies), Sweden (2 studies), Spain (1 study), Chile (1 study), Turkey (1 study), and Malaysia (1 study). The average age of participants ranges between 18 and 29 years, reflecting the specific age range of emerging adulthood.

The studies addressed different aspects of the friendship relationship: relationship quality, support provided, online/offline interactions, intimacy, trust, attachment, friendship maintenance, socialization frequency, and the perception of significance in interpersonal relationships. Among the scales used to measure these aspects are: Oswald et al. for friendship maintenance (Demir et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2018) with four elements: positivity, support, openness, interaction; the Friendship Quality Scale created by Thien et al. in 2012 (Akin & Akin, 2015), which measures four dimensions of friendship: closeness, help, acceptance, and security; McGill Friendship Questionnaire–Friend’s Functions (MFQ-FF) (Yap et al., 2022); Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Valarezo-Bravo et al., 2024); and Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) (Copley & Daniels, 2023).

The studies analyzed used the following dimensions of wellbeing: hedonic well being measured through the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) created by Diener in 1985 (Anderson & Fowers, 2020); PANAS created by Watson et al. in 1988 (Anderson & Fowers, 2020, Demir & Tyra, 2019); Subjective Happiness Scale created by Lyubomirsky & Lepper in 1999 (Akin & Akin, 2015; Yap et al., 2022); eudaimonic well being measured through the Psychological Wellbeing Scale created by Ryff in 1989 (Anderson & Fowers, 2020) or the Flourishing Scale created by Diener et al. in 2010 (De la Fuente et al., 2019). Wellbeing was also measured through scales for self-esteem, loneliness, or depression (Camirand & Poulin, 2022).

In Table 1, we have synthesized the main characteristics of the studies analyzed, including the sample, the aspects of friendship evaluated, and their relationships with various dimensions of wellbeing. This table serves as a starting point for further discussions, focusing on identifying the factors contributing to the relationship between friendship and wellbeing in emerging adults.

Table 1. *Conclusions of articles regarding the associations between friendship and well-being*

No	Authors, Year	Study Type	Sample (number of participants, gender, age, countries)	Friendship Details	Relationship with friendship details
1	Akin, A., & Akin U. (2015)	Quantitative	271 students from Turkey, 54% female, 46% male, aged 18-26	Quality of Friendship Relationship (closeness, support, acceptance, security)	The quality of friendship correlates positively with subjective vitality ($r = .38$) and subjective happiness ($r = .29$). Subjective vitality moderately correlates with subjective happiness ($r = .39$).
2	Anderson, A. R., & Fowers, B. J. (2020)	Quantitative	375 student participants in the USA: 265 women, 109 men, 1 non-specified gender	Virtuous Friendship	Virtuous friendship correlates with eudaimonic well-being ($r = .23$, $p = .02$, 95%).
3	Camirand, É., & Poulin, F. (2022)	Longitudinal	190 participants from Canada: T1 – mean age 12.38 (58% female), T2 – mean age 22 (64.4% female)	Intimacy and Conflict with Best Friend	Intimacy with the best friend is positively associated with self-esteem ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < .05$), while conflict is linked to depressive symptoms ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < .05$). Intimacy and conflict in romantic relationships moderate the impact of intimacy and conflict in friendships on well-being, suggesting cumulative and compensatory effects.
4	Copley & Daniels, 2023	Quantitative	202 students in the USA: 70.8% female, 22.5% male, 3.3% transgender, aged 19-23	Attachment to Friends (secure, anxious, avoidant)	Insecure attachment to friends negatively impacts new possibilities ($\beta = -.371$, $p < .001$). Romantic relationships and close friends explain 16.7% of the variance in new possibilities and 13.8% of the variance in personal growth. Secure attachment to friends correlates with a stronger sense of new possibilities and personal power.

No	Authors, Year	Study Type	Sample (number of participants, gender, age, countries)	Friendship Details	Relationship with friendship details
5	De la Fuente, R., Sánchez-Queija, I., Parra, A., y Lizaso, I. (2019).	Quantitative	1502 students in Spain: 65.2% female, 34.8% male, aged 18-29 (mean age 20.32)	Social Support from Friends	Positive and significant correlation with flourishing, stronger for men ($r = 0.38$, $p < .01$) compared to women ($r = 0.27$, $p < .01$).
6	Demir, M., Tyra, A., & Özen-Çiplak, A. (2019)	Quantitative	685 university students in the USA: 67% female, 33% male, mean age 18.73	Friendship Maintenance (positivity, support, openness, interaction)	Friendship maintenance mediates perceived response to capitalization attempts and happiness levels.
7	Juvonen, J., Lessard, L. M., Kline, N. G., & Graham, S. (2022)	Longitudinal	1557 students in the USA, aged 20-24: 62% female, 31% male, 7% other gender identities	Friendship Quality (support provided)	Frequency and satisfaction with electronic communication. Loneliness decreased in T2 compared to T1 ($t(1536) = 3.33$, $p = 0.001$). Higher satisfaction with electronic communication is associated with reduced social anxiety ($\beta = -0.07$, $p < .05$) and depression ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < .01$).
8	Langheit, S., & Poulin, F. (2024)	Longitudinal	346 participants from Canada: 60.5% female	Intimacy, Trust Alliance, and Conflict with Best Friend	Intimacy and trust alliance are associated with higher self-esteem ($\beta = .15$, $p = .001$) and lower loneliness ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$).
9	Li, N. P., & Kanazawa, S. (2016).	Longitudinal	15197 individuals aged 18-28 in the USA	Frequency of Socializing with Friends	Significant positive association with life satisfaction ($b = .031$, $p < .001$).
10	Lund, T. J., Liang, B., Lincoln, B., White, A. E., Mousseau, A. M. D., Mejia Gomez, L. A., & Akins, E. (2022)	Quantitative	195 students in the USA, aged 18-21: 75.4% female	Quality of Relationship with Best Friend (engagement, empathy, authenticity, empowerment)	Higher friendship quality positively associated with commitment to life goals ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .001$). The effect is stronger for first-generation students ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < .05$).

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No	Authors, Year	Study Type	Sample (number of participants, gender, age, countries)	Friendship Details	Relationship with friendship details
11	Miething, A., Almquist, Y. B., Östberg, V., Rostila, M., Edling, C., & Rydgren, J. (2016).	Longitudinal	772 participants from Sweden, aged 19 and 23 at two data collection points (T1 and T2)	Quality of Friendship within Close Friend Networks	Weak to moderate correlation between friendship quality and psychological well-being at T1 (for men $r = .29$, $p < .01$; for women $r = .28$, $p < .01$); weaker at T2 (for men $r = .15$, $p < .01$; for women $r = .17$, $p < .01$).
12	Miething, A., Almquist, Y. B., Edling, C., Rydgren, J., & Rostila, M. (2017).	Longitudinal	782 participants from Sweden, aged 19 and 23 at two data collection points (T1 and T2)	Trust	Modest bidirectional effect between trust and psychological well-being, with very good fit for men (RMSEA = 0.035, CFI = 0.974, TLI = 0.965) and good fit for women (RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.957, TLI = 0.942).
13	Morelli, S. A., Lee, I. A., Arnn, M. E., & Zaki, J. (2015)	Longitudinal	98 students in the USA (49 same-gender pairs), mean age 19.41	Emotional and Instrumental Support	Emotional support is associated with reduced loneliness ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < .01$) and perceived stress ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < .01$), as well as increased happiness ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < .01$). Instrumental support marginally associated with reduced loneliness ($\beta = -0.14$, $p < .01$).
14	Rubin, M., Evans, O., & Wilkinson, R. B. (2016)	Longitudinal	314 first-year students in Australia, mean age 23.4, 64.33% female	Social Contact (number of friends communicated with online/offline in the last week)	More frequent social contact is associated with reduced depression ($\beta = -0.12$, $p = .014$) and increased life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = .025$). Social contact mediates the relationship between subjective social status and well-being.
15	Sanchez, M., Haynes, A., Parada, J. C., & Demir, M. (2018).	Quantitative	368 students in the USA, aged 18-25, 250 female, 118 male	Friendship Maintenance (positivity, support, openness, interaction)	Friendship maintenance behaviors mediated the relationship between compassion for others and happiness ($\beta = 0.37$ for men, $\beta = 0.30$ for women; $p < .001$).

No	Authors, Year	Study Type	Sample (number of participants, gender, age, countries)	Friendship Details	Relationship with friendship details
16	Scott, R. A., Stuart, J., Barber, B. L., O'Donnell, K. J., & O'Donnell, A. W. (2022)	Quantitative	329 participants in Australia, mean age 20.05, 68.1% female, 28.6% male	Interaction Environment with Friends (online/offline)	Mixed interactions correlate positively with friendship satisfaction ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .05$), while exclusively online interactions negatively impact friendship satisfaction ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < .001$). Reduced friendship satisfaction was associated with increased loneliness ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = .008$) and decreased social connectedness ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < .001$).
17	Secor, S. P., Limke-McLean, A., & Wright, R. W. (2017)	Experimental	64 students in the USA, aged 18-37, mean age 20.55, 42 female, 12 male	Social Support from Friends	Perceived support from friends was a significant predictor of positive affect ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < .01$).
18	Valarezo-Bravo, O., Guzmán-González, M., Włodarczyk, A., Ubillos-Landa, S., & Casu, G. (2024)	Quantitative	199 participants in Chile, aged 18-29, mean age 22.42, 67.8% female	Attachment to Friends (secure, communication, alienation)	Secure attachment to friends correlates with eudaimonic ($b = .08$, $p = .04$) and social well-being ($b = .09$, $p = .04$).
19	Yang, C.-C., & Christofferson, K. (2020)	Quantitative and qualitative	222 students in the USA, aged 18-24, mean age 19.87, 82% female	Perception of digital multitasking	Negative perception of friends' digital multitasking was associated with lower friendship quality ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < .001$) and increased loneliness ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$).
20	Yap, Prihadi, Hong & Baharuddin (2022)	Quantitative	119 participants in Malaysia, 36 male, 83 female, aged 18-24, mean age 20.89	Perception of significance in interpersonal relationships	Results were not statistically significant for friendship quality and subjective well-being ($p = .32$). An increase of one unit in perceived significance in interpersonal relationships was associated with a 0.792 unit increase in subjective well-being.

In the studies analyzed, the most frequently observed aspect of friendship is its quality. Although defined differently in each study, support is a common element. Akin & Akin (2015) evaluated it using the Friendship Quality Scale developed by Thien et al. in 2012, which includes four elements: closeness, support, acceptance, and safety. Juvonen et al. (2022) measured friendship quality through three items assessing emotional support. Lund et al. (2022) assessed friendship quality using the Relational Health Indices, which captures relationship characteristics that help individuals develop personally: mutual engagement, empathy, authenticity, and empowerment. Miething et al. (2016) measured overall friendship quality with a single question: “How good do you think your friendship is?” with response options on a 5-point scale ranging from “not good at all” to “very good.” Yang (2020) measured friendship quality using the Relationship Assessment Scale developed by Hendrick in 1988, adapted for friendship relationships. The 7 items evaluate relationship satisfaction, the fulfillment of needs, and existing issues within the relationship. Yap et al. (2022) measured friendship quality using the McGill Friendship Questionnaire – Friendship Functions, which contains 30 items assessing various aspects of friendship: emotional and instrumental support, intimacy, trust, stimulating company, appreciation, and conflict.

These studies have highlighted associations between friendship quality and various aspects of well-being. Some associations are stronger, such as in the studies by Akin & Akin (2015), who demonstrated that friendship quality correlates positively with subjective vitality ($r = 0.38$) and subjective happiness ($r = 0.29$), and Lund et al. (2022), who found a significant association between involvement and empathy in friendships and commitment to life goals ($\beta = 0.32$), an important aspect of eudaimonic well-being. On the other hand, Miething et al. (2016) observed that in appropriate social networks, friendship quality has a weaker, but positive impact on psychological well-being (r ranging from 0.15 to 0.29), while in the study by Yap et al., the results were not statistically significant for friendship quality and subjective well-being ($p = 0.32$), with well-being being associated with the perceived meaning in interpersonal relationships.

In addition to authors who considered the support received as part of friendship quality, there are three articles specifically examining the relationship between support and well-being. De la Fuente et al. (2019) aimed to investigate which characteristics of emerging adults are most associated with flourishing. One of these characteristics is social support, measured in this study using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support created by Zimet et al. in 1988 (De la Fuente et al., 2019). The scale includes three subscales assessing social support received from friends, family, and romantic partners. The support offered by friends has a different impact for women and men. For women, there

is a positive and weak relationship between friends' support and flourishing ($r = 0.27$, $p \leq .01$), explaining 16% of the variation in flourishing, making it the second most important factor, while for men, there is a positive and weak-moderate relationship between friends' support and flourishing ($r = 0.38$, $p \leq .01$), explaining 19% of the variation in flourishing, making it the fourth most important factor.

Secor et al. (2017) highlighted the significant relationship between perceived support from friends and psychological well-being during difficult times. In the experiment presented in the article, participants completed a false aptitude test consisting of 25 questions (e.g., synonyms, number sequences). After the test, participants filled out the PSS-Fa and PSS-Fr questionnaires to measure perceived support from family and friends. After completing the questionnaires, they were randomly assigned to three feedback groups: positive feedback (told they ranked in the top 10% nationally), negative feedback (told they ranked in the bottom 10%), and neutral feedback (told their performance was average). After feedback, participants completed the PANAS questionnaire. In the group that received negative feedback, perceived support from friends had a significant effect on positive affect ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$), explaining 35% of its variation. For the group that received positive feedback, friends' support was not statistically significant in predicting either positive or negative affect ($\beta = -0.11$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, for the group that received neutral feedback, friends' support had no significant predictive value ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.01$ for positive affect and $\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.01$ for negative affect).

Morelli et al. (2015) analyzed the impact of the type of support received from friends on well-being. Emotional support, which consists of empathy and emotional responsiveness, reduced loneliness ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < 0.01$) and perceived stress ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$). In general, it reduced loneliness ($\beta = -0.46$, $p < 0.05$) and stress ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.05$). Instrumental support was measured by the number of emotional disclosures heard by the person providing support and tangible help offered. Emotional disclosures were included in instrumental support because simply hearing disclosures does not necessarily imply emotional support. Behaviors for tangible help were extracted from the Self Report Altruism Scale and included items such as: buying a gift, a meal, caring for someone during illness, helping with problem-solving, giving advice, lending money or valuable items, helping with homework or household chores. On a daily level, instrumental support reduced loneliness ($\beta = -0.14$) and contributed marginally to happiness ($\beta = +0.08$). In the long term, it was associated with increased stress ($\beta = +0.23$). Analyzing the interaction between emotional and instrumental support, the authors found that instrumental support had a significantly larger impact on well-being when combined with

high emotional support, reducing loneliness ($\beta = -0.83$, $p = 0.001$), perceived stress ($\beta = -0.69$, $p = 0.011$), and anxiety ($\beta = -0.37$, $p = 0.017$), and increasing happiness ($\beta = +0.53$, $p = 0.003$), whereas in the absence of emotional support, the effects of instrumental support were not significant. Emotional support moderated the effects of instrumental support on happiness ($\beta = 0.38$, $p = 0.03$), loneliness ($\beta = -0.49$, $p = 0.06$), and stress ($\beta = -0.43$, $p = 0.01$).

The selected articles also include two studies that analyze electronic communication between friends and its relationship with well-being, which is especially relevant in the post-COVID-19 era, which has significantly changed the way we work, learn, and relate to each other. Scott et al. (2022) examined how well-being was affected by the transition from face-to-face communication to online communication with friends during the COVID-19 lockdown in Australia, with data collected from April 15 to May 24, 2020. The study measured friendship satisfaction through a single item created specifically for this study: "How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how satisfied you are with your friendships?" with responses on a scale from 1 (much less satisfied) to 5 (much more satisfied). Well-being in the study was measured using two indicators: loneliness, assessed with the UCLA Loneliness Scale developed by Hays & DiMatteo in 1987, and social connection, measured using the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised developed by R. M. Lee et al. in 2001 (Scott et al., 2022). Young people who interacted predominantly offline before the pandemic reported a significant decrease in friendship satisfaction after the transition to online interactions ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < .001$). The decrease in friendship satisfaction was associated with higher levels of loneliness ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < .001$). The change in the interaction context from offline to online, imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, indirectly influenced social well-being by reducing satisfaction in friendships; this indirect effect was significant for loneliness ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = .008$, $CI95\% = [0.02, 0.08]$) and social connection ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < .001$, $CI95\% = [-0.13, -0.04]$).

Juvonen et al. (2022) investigated the role of the quality and quantity of friendship relationships, along with satisfaction with electronic communication, in relation to the social and emotional well-being of young adults in the spring of 2021. Data were collected from 1,557 participants aged 20 to 24 years using a combination of longitudinal analyses and questionnaires regarding friendships and well-being. The friendship questionnaires included items on changes in the number of friends, changes in the quality of friendships measured by support received, changes in the quantity of interactions with friends, and the frequency of electronic communication. Results showed that, despite restrictions on face-to-face interactions, participants were able to maintain and even improve the quality of their friendships, with the average score increasing slightly ($t(1353) = 2.50$, $p = 0.013$). Additionally, there was a significant increase in the number of

friends listed during the pandemic ($t(1556) = 4.47, p < 0.001$). However, 57% of participants reported keeping in touch with fewer friends compared to the pre-pandemic period, highlighting selectivity in maintaining contact. Satisfaction with electronic communication was found to be the strongest predictor of emotional well-being, being associated with lower levels of social anxiety ($\beta = -0.07, p < 0.05$), depressive symptoms ($\beta = -0.09, p < 0.01$), and generalized anxiety ($\beta = -0.14, p < 0.001$). Moreover, more frequent use of electronic media such as text messaging and video calls was correlated with a reduction in feelings of loneliness ($\beta = -0.06, p < 0.05$).

Lee et al. (2023) explored the relationship between digital multitasking, friendship, and well-being, using data collected from January to March 2023 from a sample of 750 young people aged 18 to 29 years. Participants completed an online questionnaire that measured digital multitasking behaviors, friendship satisfaction, and well-being using indicators similar to those in the existing literature. Friendship satisfaction was assessed with a single item: "How satisfied are you with your friendships?" with responses on a Likert scale from 1 (not satisfied at all) to 5 (very satisfied). Well-being was measured using two scales: the Loneliness Scale developed by Hays & DiMatteo in 1987 and the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised developed by R. M. Lee et al. in 2001 (Lee et al., 2023). High levels of digital multitasking were negatively associated with friendship satisfaction ($\beta = -0.21, p < .001$). Regarding well-being, digital multitasking was associated with higher levels of loneliness ($\beta = 0.18, p = .002$) and lower levels of social connection ($\beta = -0.15, p = .005$). The effects of multitasking on social connection were partially explained by a decrease in friendship satisfaction ($\beta = -0.07, p = .011, CI95\% = [-0.12, -0.02]$). This research highlights the potential negative impact of digital multitasking on friendship relationships and, consequently, on well-being.

Since the second research question in this systematic review refers to gender differences in the relationship between friendship and well-being, 7 of the selected articles also address this aspect. Demir & Tyra (2019) explored how friendship maintenance (FM) and constructive responses to sharing positive events (PRCA) contribute to happiness for each gender. For both genders, positive responses received in friendships directly influence well-being. In both studies included, the correlation between PRCA and happiness was consistent for both men and women. In Study 1, PRCA had a correlation of $r = 0.31$ with happiness for men and $r = 0.35$ for women, while in Study 2, these values were $r = 0.31$ and $r = 0.34$. Regarding friendship maintenance, it was associated with an increase in happiness for both genders ($r = 0.37$ for women and $r = 0.35$ for men in Study 1). Women reported significantly higher levels of PRCA and FM compared to men.

Miething et al. (2016) examined gender-specific associations between self-reported friendship network quality and young adults' psychological well-being during the transition from late adolescence to emerging adulthood. At age 19, the correlation between friendship network quality and well-being was 0.29 for male participants and 0.28 for female participants ($p < 0.001$), and at age 23, these correlations decreased to 0.15 for males and 0.17 for females, but remained significant ($p < 0.05$). For female participants, there was a weak inverse association between well-being at age 19 and friendship network quality at age 23, with a coefficient of 0.10 ($p < 0.10$). These data support the conclusion that, although there is a positive correlation between friendship network quality and well-being for both genders, the relationship is more influenced by well-being in female participants.

Miething et al. (2017) examined gender-specific associations between trust in friends and psychological well-being during the transition from late adolescence to emerging adulthood. At age 19, the correlation between trust in friends and well-being was 0.20 for both male and female participants ($p < 0.001$). At age 23, these correlations decreased to 0.12 for male participants ($p < 0.05$) and 0.05 for female participants, suggesting a decrease in the interdependence between these variables over time. For female participants, the analysis revealed a significant inverse relationship between well-being at age 19 and trust in friends at age 23, with a coefficient of 0.14 ($p < 0.05$). This inverse association suggests that lower well-being in adolescence may negatively influence the quality of friendship networks in early adulthood, with women being more vulnerable to these effects compared to men.

Camirand & Poulin (2022) investigated the links between well-being, intimacy, and conflict in the relationship with a best friend and romantic partner. Intimacy in the relationship with a best friend was positively associated with self-esteem, regardless of gender. For participants with medium or low levels of intimacy in their romantic relationship, high intimacy in the friendship relationship was associated with higher self-esteem ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$ for women and $\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$ for men). Conflictual relationships were correlated with increased depressive symptoms, a trend present for both genders, especially when conflicts occurred in both types of relationships ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$ for women and $\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$ for men). The duration of relationships influenced psychological well-being more for women: long-term friendships were associated with higher self-esteem ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$).

Sanchez et al. (2018) examined friendship maintenance behaviors (FM) as a mediator for the relationship between compassion for others (CFO) and happiness through two studies. Study 1 had a sample of 273 participants with an average age of 19.13 years, consisting of 83 men and 190 women, and

measured happiness using the PANAS scale, while Study 2 had a sample of 358 participants with an average age of 18.90 years, consisting of 118 men and 250 women, and happiness was measured using the SHS scale. Women's scores for CFO were significantly higher ($M = 4.02$) than those of men ($M = 3.77$), and for FM, women had an average score of 9.79 compared to 9.23 for men. However, the relationship between CFO, FM, and happiness was consistent for both genders. FM positively mediated the relationship between CFO and happiness for both men and women, with standardized regression coefficients for men of $B=0.37$, $CI95\%=[0.17, 0.64]$ in Study 1 and $B=0.25$, $CI95\%=[0.07, 0.45]$ in Study 2. For women, the coefficients were $B=0.30$, $CI95\%=[0.12, 0.52]$ in Study 1 and $B=0.33$, $CI95\%=[0.21, 0.52]$ in Study 2.

DISCUSSIONS

According to the results obtained from the analysis of the specialized literature, the quality of friendships and the support received are essential predictors of well-being in emerging adults. The studies analyzed indicate a positive association between dimensions of friendship quality (e.g., intimacy, emotional support, trust) and indicators of well-being, whether they are measured in hedonic terms (e.g., subjective happiness) or eudaimonic terms (e.g., life purpose). For example, emotional support provided by friends has been shown to have a positive correlation with reduced loneliness and perceived stress (Morelli et al., 2015), while intimacy in friendships has been linked to higher self-esteem and lower feelings of loneliness (Langheit & Poulin, 2024).

The quality of friendship, including dimensions such as safety, support, and perceived satisfaction, is the most commonly identified predictor of well-being in the analyzed studies. This quality is influenced by factors such as value congruence, frequency of interactions, and conflict management, emphasizing the active role individuals play in maintaining satisfying friendships. Friendship quality thus acts as a catalyst for an individual's internal and external resources, promoting well-being both personally and socially.

The second most frequent predictor of well-being is support. The selected studies analyzed both emotional and instrumental support received from friends. Morelli et al. (2015) demonstrated that emotional support, defined by empathy and responsiveness, significantly reduces loneliness ($\beta = -0.29$) and perceived stress ($\beta = -0.17$). These benefits are amplified when emotional support is combined with other forms of support, such as instrumental support, indicating a positive interaction between the types of support provided in

friendships. The strong relationship between emotional support and well-being is justified by its role in emotional regulation, an essential process for mental health, particularly during the emerging adulthood period. For women, emotional support from friends is correlated with important aspects of well-being, such as subjective vitality and happiness. De la Fuente et al. (2019) found that support provided by friends explains about 16% of the variation in eudaimonic well-being (flourishing) in women, while this percentage is higher for men, suggesting that the impact of support from friends may differ by gender. Men, on the other hand, appear to benefit more from shared activities with friends and instrumental support. This action-oriented and practical focus aligns with literature suggesting that men tend to perceive friendship as a space for camaraderie and practical cooperation rather than emotional self-disclosure (Fehr, 1996). However, this perspective does not diminish the importance of emotional support for men; it highlights that this type of support is more effective when combined with instrumental activities (Morelli et al., 2015).

Theoretically, the results confirm the relevance of existing models, such as Diener's subjective well-being theory (1984) and Seligman's PERMA model (2011), which center around positive relationships. Friendship, alongside family and romantic relationships, is one of these relationships. Additionally, the results extend the perspective on the role of friendship during emerging adulthood, a stage marked by self-exploration and uncertainty. Practically, the findings can guide the development of interventions aimed at improving the well-being of young adults, especially in university settings or within organizations where emerging adults begin their careers.

The proposed research has limitations that must be considered. As a systematic review, it depends on the quality and diversity of the studies included. Although the studies selected include participants from 8 countries, they predominantly represent the perspectives of Western cultures where the quality of friendship correlates with well-being. Only the study conducted on a sample from Malaysia (Yap et al., 2022) did not find statistically significant results for friendship quality and subjective well-being ($p = .32$). Another limitation of the research is that only the study by Secor et al. (2017) is based on an experiment, while the others rely on subjective reports from participants, which suggests a higher level of subjectivity in the results.

Building on this systematic review, several future research directions emerge: investigating the influence of the digital environment on friendship and well-being, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions. Additionally, the influence of culture on the relationship between friendship and well-being can be explored, or specific interventions aimed at improving friendship quality, such as mentoring programs, counseling, or support groups.

CONCLUSIONS

This systematic review has demonstrated the essential role that friendship plays in the well-being of emerging adults. The main aspects of friendship associated with well-being are the quality of the friendship and the emotional and instrumental support provided within these relationships. In addition to these, other aspects correlating with well-being include friendship maintenance behaviors, intimacy, frequency of social contact, and the perceived significance of interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the results suggest that high-quality friendships can act as an emotional buffer against stress, especially during transitional moments such as the start of university. Friendships among emerging adults also incorporate aspects of online communication, as they have adapted to the demands imposed by the pandemic and the shift toward predominantly online interactions. Satisfaction with friendship and well-being depend on perceptions of digital multitasking and the online communication methods used.

For both male and female participants, aspects of friendship positively correlate with well-being, whether hedonic, eudaimonic, or social. However, women tend to value emotional and intimacy dimensions more, while men prioritize shared activities and instrumental support.

The research has limitations regarding the transferability of the results. Most of the studies included come from Western countries, which may influence the generalization of the conclusions to other socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, the majority of participants are students, which reflects only one of the transitions emerging adults experience. The analysis method, based on a systematic review, while integrative, may not capture all the nuances of the relationship between friendship and well-being.

Regarding future research directions, we suggest longitudinal and cross-cultural studies investigating the dynamics of friendship and well-being throughout the entire emerging adulthood period, rather than focusing solely on the university years. From a practical perspective, the results of this research can guide programs for integration, mentorship, or social support in educational or professional environments for emerging adults. Additionally, practical guides for these individuals regarding the creation and maintenance of friendships during the transitional and uncertain periods characteristic of emerging adulthood could be developed, alongside digital applications that support the quality of friendships or interventions for romantic partners and parents of emerging adults regarding the importance of friendships and balance in social relationships during this life stage.

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