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Parenting Style, Peer Relationships, and Social Media Use as Predictors of University Students' Mental Health in Makassar City

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of parenting styles, peer relationships, and social media use on the mental health of university students in Makassar City, Indonesia. A quantitative approach was applied using a saturated sample of 30 active undergraduate students aged 18 to 22 from various public and private universities. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring four variables, namely Parenting Style, Peer Relationships, Social Media Use, and Mental Health, and were analyzed using validity and reliability testing, classical assumption testing, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression in SPSS. Descriptive results showed that parenting style was perceived at a very good level, while peer relationships, social media use, and mental health were perceived at a good level. Pearson correlation analysis indicated that peer relationships had a strong and significant relationship with mental health ($r = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$), social media use had a moderate and significant relationship ($r = 0.544$, $p = 0.002$), while parenting style showed only a weak and non-significant bivariate relationship ($r = 0.349$, $p = 0.059$). However, multiple regression analysis revealed that, taken together, the three variables significantly predicted mental health ($R = 0.803$; R square = 0.644; $F = 15.680$; $p < 0.001$), accounting for 64.4 percent of the variance, with each predictor contributing significantly in the combined model (parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use all $p < 0.05$). Peer relationships emerged as the strongest individual contributor (39.7 percent), followed by social media use (15.0 percent) and parenting style (9.5 percent). These findings suggest that although parenting style alone shows a limited direct association with mental health, it becomes a meaningful predictor when considered jointly with peer relationships and social media use, supporting the view that student mental health is shaped by an interconnected system of family, peer, and digital influences rather than any single factor in isolation.

Keywords: parenting style, peer relationships, social media, mental health, university students

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a fundamental dimension of human well-being. The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, rather than merely the absence of disease or infirmity, positioning mental health

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as an inseparable component of overall health. Individuals who are mentally healthy are able to function normally in daily life, particularly in adapting to the diverse challenges encountered throughout the lifespan through effective coping with stress. Beyond physical symptoms, poor mental health can disturb an individual's mood, cognitive functioning, and emotional control, which in turn may lead to maladaptive behavior. Adolescence and early adulthood, marked by rapid biological, cognitive, and psychological development, represent a particularly critical period for mental health, since difficulties in adapting to these changes can heighten vulnerability to stress.

In the contemporary era, mental health has become an issue of growing concern to families, peer groups, and the wider social environment. It is shaped not only by internal individual factors but also by external factors that continue to evolve alongside social, cultural, and technological change. Among these external factors, parenting style is widely regarded as particularly influential because of its long-term impact on children's emotional development. A number of studies report that negative or authoritarian parenting is associated with elevated anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation among university students, whereas supportive and positive parenting tends to enhance psychological well-being and overall quality of life (Jin et al., 2024; Y. Li & Huang, 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Wei et al., 2025; Xu & Yan, 2023). Parenting also appears to shape students' social adjustment, emotion regulation, and resilience, with these relationships often operating indirectly through mechanisms such as attachment and self-evaluation (Liu et al., 2024; Xu & Yan, 2023; Yao, Chen, & Gu, 2022). Importantly, the effect of parenting is rarely isolated; it tends to interact with other proximal influences such as peer relationships and social media behavior (Latifah et al., 2026; Monika & Manju, 2026; Purwati et al., 2024).

Peer relationships constitute a second major influence on students' psychological adjustment. Peers often serve as a primary outlet for sharing emotional experiences, exchanging perspectives, and providing social support. Positive peer relationships have been linked to greater resilience and social maturity, whereas conflictual or pressured peer interactions can heighten psychological distress (Latifah et al., 2026; Purwati et al., 2024). The quality of friendships and peer support has also been shown to partially explain how parenting styles translate into mental health outcomes, suggesting that peers may act as an intermediary layer between the family environment and individual well-being (Xu & Yan, 2023).

Social media, now an inseparable part of daily life, represents a third and increasingly prominent influence on mental health. Its effects appear to be dual in nature: on one hand, social media can facilitate social connection and provide a sense of psychological support; on the other hand, excessive or problematic use is consistently associated with heightened stress, anxiety, depression, and academic procrastination (Abueva et al., 2025; Alwuqaysi, 2025; Anand et al., 2024; La-Rosa-Longobardi & Gallegos-Espinoza, 2024; Mahmood et al., 2024; Monika & Manju, 2026; Tin et al., 2024; Xu & Yan, 2023).Notably, the way students use social media does not occur in a vacuum; it is itself shaped by parenting style and peer influence, which further complicates the pathway through which digital behavior affects mental health (Monika & Manju, 2026; Olalere & Olatokun, 2020; Siva et al., 2025).

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Taken together, the existing literature suggests that parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use are closely interwoven influences on student mental health, each capable of both protective and harmful effects depending on how they interact with one another. However, most of the cited evidence originates from adolescent or general student populations in different cultural settings, and comparatively little empirical work has examined how these three factors jointly predict mental health among Indonesian university students specifically. This gap motivates the present study, which investigates the influence of parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use on the mental health of active university students in Makassar City.

METHODS

This study was conducted among active undergraduate students in Makassar City, Indonesia, enrolled at both public and private universities. This population was selected to examine how parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use jointly relate to student mental health within an urban Indonesian higher-education context.

A quantitative research design was employed to examine the relationships between Parenting Style (X1), Peer Relationships (X2), Social Media Use (X3), and Mental Health (Y). The study was conducted among active undergraduate students enrolled at public and private universities in Makassar City, Indonesia.

Following data screening and instrument testing, the analysis consisted of classical assumption testing (linearity, normality, and multicollinearity), Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis using SPSS.

Before the main statistical analysis, the questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability testing. The validity criterion used a critical r value of 0.361 ($df = 28$, $\alpha = 0.05$); items with a calculated r value below the critical value were considered invalid. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient above 0.700 considered reliable. One Mental Health item was excluded based on the validity test.

The data-screening procedure included checking the returned questionnaires for completeness, identifying missing or unusable responses, and ensuring that the responses corresponded to the required respondent criteria. Responses that did not meet the study requirements were excluded from the analysis dataset. The screened data were then coded and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Data collection was conducted using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire covering four variables: Parenting Style, Peer Relationships, Social Media Use, and Mental Health. The questionnaire was distributed directly to eligible respondents. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and were asked to complete all questionnaire items independently. After the completed questionnaires were returned, the researchers collected and checked the responses for completeness before entering the data into SPSS.

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A saturated sampling technique was used, in which the entire accessible population was invited to participate. The final dataset consisted of 30 active university students aged 18–22 years who completed the structured questionnaire.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability Pre-Test

Before full data collection, each variable's questionnaire items were pre-tested for validity and reliability. A summary of the results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Validity and Reliability Pre-Test Results

Variable	Items	Validity Result	Cronbach's Alpha	Remark
Parenting Style (X1)	9	All items valid	0.758	Reliable
Peer Relationships (X2)	14	All items valid	0.769	Reliable
Social Media Use (X3)	8	All items valid	0.763	Reliable
Mental Health (Y)	11	1 item (no. 1) invalid	0.772	Reliable

Source: Authors' primary data (2024).

As shown in Table 1, nearly all items across the four variables were statistically valid, with the exception of one item in the Mental Health instrument that was subsequently excluded. At the overall scale level, all four instruments exceeded the 0.700 reliability threshold. However, an item-level inspection of the corrected item-total statistics indicated that two individual items within the Mental Health scale showed a Cronbach's Alpha-if-item-deleted value below 0.700, suggesting that while the scale as a whole was reliable, a small number of items contributed comparatively weaker internal consistency and should be interpreted with some caution.

Classical Assumption Test

The linearity test indicated a linear relationship between each independent variable and mental health, as the Deviation from Linearity significance values exceeded 0.05 for all three predictors (Parenting Style = 0.622; Peer Relationships = 0.677; Social Media Use = 0.297), with each F-calculated value smaller than its corresponding F-table value.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test on the predicted values produced an Asymp. Sig. of 0.200, exceeding 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed.

The multicollinearity test produced Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of 1.129 for Parenting Style, 1.122 for Peer Relationships, and 1.246 for Social Media Use. As all VIF values were well below the conventional threshold of 10, no multicollinearity was present among the independent variables.

With the assumptions of linearity, normality, and the absence of multicollinearity satisfied, the data were deemed appropriate for correlation and multiple regression analysis.

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Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Between Independent Variables and Mental Health

Variable	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Parenting Style - Mental Health	0.349	0.059	Weak, not significant
Peer Relationships - Mental Health	0.672	< 0.001	Strong, significant
Social Media Use - Mental Health	0.544	0.002	Moderate, significant

Source: Authors' primary data (2024).

As shown in Table 3, peer relationships displayed the strongest bivariate association with mental health, followed by a moderate association for social media use; both relationships were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Parenting style, by contrast, showed only a weak association that narrowly missed statistical significance (r = 0.349, just below the r-table value of 0.361), suggesting that on its own, perceived parenting style is not a strong direct predictor of mental health in this sample.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis produced a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.803 and a coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0.644 (Adjusted R Square = 0.603). This indicates that parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use jointly account for 64.4% of the variance in students' mental health, a considerably stronger explanatory power than any single predictor achieved in isolation.

The F-test produced an F-calculated value of 15.680 with a significance level below 0.001. Because the significance level was below 0.05, the overall regression model was statistically significant. This indicates that parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use were jointly associated with mental health in the study sample.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Beta	Sig.	Contribution (%)
Constant	-0.899	-	0.907	-
Parenting Style (X1)	0.345	0.273	0.037	9.5
Peer Relationships (X2)	0.366	0.592	< 0.001	39.7
Social Media Use (X3)	0.377	0.276	0.044	15.0

Source: Authors' primary data (2024).

Unlike the bivariate correlation results, Table 4 shows that all three predictors made statistically significant partial contributions once entered together in the regression model (all $p < 0.05$). Peer relationships remained the dominant predictor, with a reported contribution of 39.7%, followed by social media use (15.0%) and parenting

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style (9.5%). These rounded contributions sum to 64.4%, which is close to, but should be distinguished from, the model's R Square of 0.644, or 64.4%.

Based on the unstandardized coefficients, the multiple linear regression equation for this study is:

$$Y = -0.899 + 0.345X1 + 0.366X2 + 0.377X3 + e$$

This equation indicates that, holding the three predictors constant, the baseline mental health score is estimated at approximately -0.899, while each one-unit increase in parenting style, peer relationships, or social media use is associated with a corresponding increase in mental health scores of 0.345, 0.366, and 0.377 units, respectively. Because all three coefficients are statistically significant in the combined model, they can reasonably be interpreted as meaningful joint predictors of mental health within this sample, in contrast to the earlier bivariate correlation for parenting style alone.

This apparent discrepancy, whereby parenting style is a non-significant bivariate correlate but a significant partial predictor in the multiple regression model, is noteworthy and merits closer examination. One plausible explanation lies in how parenting was measured in this study: the instrument captured an undifferentiated, composite index of parenting behavior rather than distinguishing between specific parenting typologies. A substantial body of evidence indicates that parenting styles do not exert uniform effects on adolescent and young-adult mental health; rather, their effects are style-specific. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth combined with reasonable structure, has been consistently linked to better psychological adjustment, higher self-esteem, and fewer depressive and anxiety symptoms, whereas authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful patterns tend to predict poorer outcomes, including heightened emotional distress and, in more severe cases, misbehavior (Dey et al., 2025; Dwairy, 2004; Khadka et al., 2025; Szkody et al., 2021). If the present sample of students experienced a mixture of these differing parenting patterns, their combined, undifferentiated effect on a single composite parenting-style score could plausibly average out into a weak bivariate correlation, even though a more fine-grained instrument distinguishing authoritative from authoritarian or neglectful patterns might have revealed clearer, style-specific associations with mental health. Once peer relationships and social media use were added into the regression model, however, the variance in mental health that is uniquely attributable to parenting could be isolated more precisely, allowing its true, smaller but statistically detectable, contribution to emerge.

The prominence of peer relationships as the strongest predictor in this study also resonates with a substantial body of research on peer influence and student emotional well-being. Students who are more susceptible to peer pressure tend to show reduced emotional autonomy, which can compromise their capacity to regulate emotions independently (Chan & Chan, 2008). At the same time, a large and consistent literature indicates that supportive peer relationships, peer mentoring, and peer-support programs are associated with reduced stress, greater resilience, and a stronger sense of

belonging among students, particularly during demanding transitional periods (Li, et al., 2023; Shaheen et al., 2014; Srivastava & Aamir, 2026). Rather than being a uniformly positive or negative force, then, peer influence appears to function as a double-edged mechanism: when peer interactions are experienced as supportive and validating, they protect mental health, but when they involve pressure, competition, or exclusion, they can undermine it. The strong positive correlation between peer relationships and mental health observed in the present study is therefore consistent with the interpretation that, for this sample, peer interactions were, on balance, experienced as a supportive rather than a pressuring influence.

Overall, these results suggest that student mental health in this context is best understood not as the product of any single influence acting in isolation, but as the outcome of an interconnected system in which family-level parenting patterns, peer-level social dynamics, and digital-media exposure jointly shape psychological well-being. Practically, this implies that interventions aiming to support university students' mental health may be more effective when they address peer support structures and healthy social media habits alongside, rather than instead of, family-based approaches to parenting.

CONCLUSION

This study examined whether parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use influence the mental health of active university students in Makassar City. Descriptively, students reported very good perceptions of parenting style and social media use, alongside good perceptions of peer relationships and overall mental health. Bivariate correlation analysis showed that peer relationships and social media use were significantly related to mental health, while parenting style alone was not. Nevertheless, multiple regression analysis demonstrated that when considered jointly, the three variables together explained 64.4% of the variance in mental health and each made a statistically significant partial contribution, with peer relationships emerging as the strongest predictor. These findings support the rejection of the null hypothesis and indicate that parenting style, peer relationships, and social media use collectively, rather than individually, play a meaningful role in shaping university students' mental health, underscoring the value of interventions that address family, peer, and digital environments in an integrated manner.

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