Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being Among Emerging

Adults in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Online Friendship Quality

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APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled "Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being Among Emerging Adults in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Online Friendship Quality" prepared and submitted by Avethra Muthu Pandian, Cheong Wan Ning, and Lee Sue Qin in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) Psychology is hereby accepted.

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**Abstract**

The evolution of the Internet increases social media usage and broadens the opportunity to develop new friendships online. The online world provides individuals with a platform to manifest their identity and self-presentation. Individuals are more willing to show their true selves to strangers online compared to face-to-face offline communication. This study examined the association between online self-presentation (adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of self online) and emotional well-being (positive and negative affect) among emerging adults in Malaysia, online friendship quality as mediator. A correlational cross-sectional research design was used to collect quantitative data. A sample of 340 participants (74.9% females and 25.1% males) were collected using the purposive sampling method through the distribution of Qualtrics survey form online. Findings showed adaptable self and freedom of self online positively associated with online friendship quality. Adaptable self found positively linked to negative affect while authentic self negatively associated with negative affect. Online friendship quality was also found to be positively associated with positive affect. Besides, only online friendship quality mediates the linkage between freedom of self online and positive affect. Hence, this research is beneficial to the individual, society, and healthcare practitioner on increasing the awareness of self-presentation and online friendship quality with emotional well-being.

*Keywords:* adaptable self, authentic self, freedom of self online, positive and negative affect, online friendship quality

DECLARATION

We declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of our own work and that do acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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**Chapter I**

**Background of the Study**

Individuals aged 18 to 25 reported experiencing more anxiety, depression, and stress symptoms, particularly during the pandemic with the sudden changes in life, difficulties adapting to online learning, and worry about the future (Wong et al., 2021). Malaysian university students were found to experience an average level of stress but severe to extremely severe anxiety and depressive symptoms (Wan Mohd Yunus et al., 2021). Adolescents with depressive moods were reported to use the Internet for friendship and express their feelings (McCrae et al., 2017). Southeast Asians were reported spending more than an hour on the Internet per day during lockdowns. Before the outbreak of covid-19, Malaysians spent 3.7 hours daily online for personal use. However, it then rises to 4.8 hours for online usage during the peak of lockdown (Sunbiz, 2020). It now rests at 4.2 hours of internet usage for one day.

The rapid development of the Internet has opened more chances and spaces for users to communicate, socialize, and share with the public online. The number of Internet users in Malaysia has increased by 738,000, which is about 2.80% in the year 2021 from 2020. The number of social media users has 2 million increments, equivalent to 86% of Malaysia's population (Kemp, 2021). Nowadays, most Internet users use the Web to widen their social network (Jones & Fox, 2009). Due to the rising interactivity and user engagement on the Internet, it is necessary to investigate individuals likely to utilize participatory technologies like social media and their psychological features.

Arnett (2014) defines emerging adulthood as a transition period from adolescence to adulthood and emerging adults aged between 18 to 29 years old experiencing instability and in the progress of exploring their identity. It is a stage where their brain maturates and starts to develop a new relationship, seek intimacy and social support (Hochberg & Konner, 2020).

Emerging adults enlarge their social network and build mature relationships with peers, friends, and romantic partners (Guarnieri et al., 2014). In the past, studies found that the quality of friendship is associated with emerging adults' happiness (Demir et al., 2015; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Positive friendship quality was found significantly linked to self-disclosure among emerging adults (Kochendorfer, 2021). Also, the result showed that friendship quality contributed considerably to the overall well-being (Gleckel, 2015). Psychological well-being, life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and positive mood were reported to be associated with friendship in emerging adulthood (Almquist et al., 2014; Babinčák & Bačová, 2008; Brannan et al., 2013; Li & Cheng, 2015).

The self is multi-faceted, where an individual owns multiple senses of self, including the ideal self, ought self, actual self (Bargh et al., 2002; Higgins, 1987). The true self is divided into two facets which include the positive true-self and negative true-self. The thorough expression of the true self in the social interaction will become part of one's actual self (Hu et al., 2017). In physical interaction, only the positive true-self of the actual self was presented, whereas the negative true-self is hidden. The growth of the Internet provided people with a channel to interact and communicate (Cheung & Lee 2010) with others freely without any constraints (Hayles, 1993) or being afraid to be the judge (Choi & Sung, 2018). Individuals are more willing to show their true self to strangers encountered online than face-to-face communication in the offline world (Bargh et al., 2002; Mckenna et al., 2002).

The use of the Internet created a world that connects people through the evolution and advancement of social media and digital technologies (Mahmud & Wong, 2021) aids in broadening and strengthening the connection between young people and their friends (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011). Young people also build new online relationships and friendships with people they are unfamiliar with offline (Mesch & Talmud, 2007; Valkenburg

& Peter, 2007a). The Internet and social media are built as a virtual world where individuals manifest and construct their identities. Also, one negotiates their online and offline identity management (Mahmud & Wong, 2021). Sharing personal information became one's online identity equal to their face-to-face identity and is correlated with online self-presentation and impression management. Besides, individual well-being was influenced by true self-expression online (Grieve & Watkinson, 2016; Jang et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2018) where one's true self online resulted in a low depression level (Xie et al., 2017) and perceived greater social support (Lee & Cho, 2018). Therefore, this study has examined the presentation of self in the online world and its association with one's emotional well-being. Also, this study has measured the mediating role of online friendship quality between the association of self-presentation and emotional well-being in the virtual world.

**Problem Statement**

A survey done by Vase. Ai ("Malaysians Media Consumption," 2020) reported 73% of Malaysians were found to spend most of their time browsing social media during the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO). Malaysia's Prime Minister officially announced to initiate the MCO starting from 18th March 2020 to prohibit movement and mass gathering by increasing social distancing (Tang, 2020). The lockdown reboots our life where individuals spend more time at home, and the distance with others is shortened through digital devices (Saladino et al., 2020). It has increased the usage and dependency of an individual on social media to help them stay connected to work, studies, and social interactions (Wong et al., 2020). Friendship report highlighted that visual communication becomes essential during the Covid-19 pandemic as people must find a new way to stay connected when they are apart ("Friendship Changing," 2020). 81% of Malaysian stated that they have been using online channels to communicate with friends more than the pre-covid-19. Hence, this study has found the connection between self-presentation and friendship

quality in the virtual world, considering that the Internet plays a virtual world in human's life, connecting every individual.

Moreover, the pandemic changes the disclosure and presentation of self on social media. Self-disclosure refers to how much personal information you share or disclose to others (Cherry, 2020). Subramaniam (2014) mentioned that social media conceal the honest non-verbal communication that indicates the authenticity of an individual. Virtual communication allows individuals to have more time to form their 'best' impression of others, as virtual interaction does not occur in real-time (Gurbani, 2021). Besides that, to maintain an authentic and consistent image in social media, an individual is more likely to engage in active self-presentation as their impression will be created by a larger audience group. Thus, it aids in increasing the positive reaction and positive image formed by others. Hence, this research aimed to study the presentation of oneself in the online world and its association to online friendship quality and emotional well-being of emerging adults in Malaysia.

However, people find that the onset of the pandemic had changes in friendship whereby the feeling of loneliness increased 8% higher than pre-Covid 19 ("Has Covid-19," 2020). Hence, developing and maintaining a relationship is essential in ensuring one's social and mental well-being (Sundarasen et al., 2020). Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus from the World Health Organization stated that the pandemic causes severe concern and impacts an individual's mental health ("COVID-19 Disrupting," 2020). The identification of clinical depression was found to increase among young people in which depressive symptoms arise, and overall well-being is found to decrease during the lockdown ("Maintaining Your Mental," 2021). The pandemic disturbed the mental and emotional state as the overall index for mental well-being, and emotional stability was found to rise from 57% to 95% (Mahmud et al., 2020). Therefore, this study has examined the emotional well-being of an individual in the use of online social network sides and the presentation of self in the virtual world. Also,

the relationship between online friendship quality and its association with one's emotional well-being was measured.

A study found that authentic self-presentation and self-expression benefit individual subjective well-being (Bailey et al., 2020). Emerging adults who reported presenting false self on Facebook by engaging in a desirable online self-perception were found to experience a greater level of social anxiety (Michikyan, 2020). Past studies mentioned earlier showed that true self positively influence one's well-being as they perceived greater self-esteem and social support that contribute to their happiness and reduced anxiety level. Studies mentioned above were primarily conducted in the western context and among adolescents or adults, whereas this present study focused on emerging adults aged 18 to 29 years old in Malaysia. This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic period, where every individual depends on the Internet and social media to maintain and develop relationships. Also, it was suggested to explore other well-being measures as it was less well investigated (Faelens et al., 2021). Hence, this study has examined the association of online self-presentation and the emotional well-being of Malaysian emerging adults in the pandemic context.

Today, social media is used to maintain and develop a friendship. Along with the increased use of social media, it has been shown to affect one's mental health through the presentation of self (Yuarta & Nurmala, 2021; Zhao & Zhou, 2020). A study stated that sharing physical activities on social network sites creates a positive, healthy, energetic personal image and helps to establish a new interpersonal relationship (Zuo et al., 2021). Earlier studies also found a positive relationship between self-presentation and friendship development (Lee & Borah, 2020). Researchers also suggested exploring further how friendships differ across the online and offline context (Huang et al., 2014). Thus, this study measured the online friendship quality and its association to online self-presentation among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Studies found that greater friendship quality was associated with greater happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being as it boosts cognitive, social, and emotional growth (Amati et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2018; Demir et al., 2006; Demir et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2021; Raboteg-Saric & Sakic, 2013). The past has found the association of friendship and well-being in a different context, such as friendship quality in various social settings, cultures, and countries. Earlier studies measure friendship quality among close friends and best friends. Thus, this study focused on investigating the online friendship quality where an emerging adult in Malaysia forms a new friendship with people they did not know or meet before in the offline physical world. This study explored the connection between friendship quality in the online world and their emotional well-being.

Moreover, emerging adults enter a stage to search, maintain a new and stable relationship, either friendship or close romantic relationship (Brown & Larson, 2009). Friendships were an essential source contributing to one's well-being (Argyle, 2001; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gleckel, 2015). Young people communicate with friends, peers, and strangers using the Internet and social media (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Besides that, high-quality friendship helps to reassure emerging adults' needs for social integration, belongingness, companionship, self-exploration, and personal expansion (Allen & Tan, 2016; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Friendship relations were also found to be a potential mediating variable between the use of social media and one's well-being (Wood et al., 2015). The inclusion of mediating effect to the study of social network site usage and its role in youth development. The model proposed by Valkenburg and Peter (2007c) proved the mediating role of closeness to friends between internet communication and well-being. Besides that, friendship quality was found to be positively predict well-being and serve as a mediating part between the time spent with friends and well-being (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007b). Also, Wood et al. (2015) suggested further research

on the potential mediator between social media and well-being, such as the mediating effect of friendship. Also, Lu et al. (2021) suggested the possibility of broadening the study on friendship by measuring specific measures of friendship quality. Hence, this study had examined the mediating role of online friendship quality between self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia.

### *Research Questions*

1. Is self-presentation associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia?

    a. Is adaptable self-presentation associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia?

    b. Is authentic self-presentation associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia?

    c. Is freedom of online self-associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia?

2. Is self-presentation associated with emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia?

    a. Is adaptable self-presentation associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

    b. Is authentic self-presentation associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

    c. Is freedom of online self-presentation associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

    d. Is adaptable self-presentation associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

e. Is authentic self-presentation associated with negative emotions emerging adults in Malaysia?

f. Is freedom of online self-presentation associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

3. Is online friendship quality associated with emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia?

a. Is online friendship quality associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

b. Is online friendship quality associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

4. Does online friendship quality mediate the link between self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia?

a. Does online friendship quality mediate the link between adaptable self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

b. Does online friendship quality mediate the link between authentic self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

c. Does online friendship quality mediate the link between freedom of online self and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

d. Does online friendship quality mediate the link between adaptable self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

e. Does online friendship quality mediate the link between authentic self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

f. Does online friendship quality mediate the link between freedom of online self and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia?

**Objectives**

This study aims to determine the mediating role of online friendship quality in the association between online self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia.

*Specific objectives*

Objective 1a: To examine the association between adaptable self-presentation and online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 1b: To examine the association between authentic self-presentation and online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 1c: To examine the association between freedom of online self and online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 2a: To examine the association between adaptable self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 2b: To examine the association between authentic self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 2c: To examine the association between freedom of online self and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 2d: To examine the association between adaptable self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 2e: To examine the association between authentic self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 2f: To examine the association between freedom of online self and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

 Objective 3a: To examine the association between online friendship quality and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 3b: To examine the association between online friendship quality and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 4a: To identify the mediating role of online friendship quality in the link between adaptable self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 4b: To identify the mediating role of online friendship quality in the link between authentic self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 4c: To identify the mediating role of online friendship quality in the link between freedom of online self and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 4d: To identify the mediating role of online friendship quality in the link between adaptable self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 4e: To identify the mediating role of online friendship quality in the link between authentic self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Objective 4f: To identify the mediating role of online friendship quality in the link between freedom of online self and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

**Hypotheses**

$H_{1a}$: Adaptable self-presentation is positively associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{1b}$: Authentic self-presentation is positively associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{1c}$: Freedom of online self is positively associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{2a}$: Adaptable self-presentation is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{2b}$: Authentic self-presentation is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{2c}$: Freedom of online self is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{2d}$: Adaptable self-presentation is positively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{2e}$: Authentic self-presentation is negatively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{2f}$: Freedom of online self is negatively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{3a}$: Online friendship quality is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{3b}$: Online friendship quality is negatively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{4a}$: Online friendship quality mediates the link between adaptable self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{4b}$: Online friendship quality mediates the link between authentic self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{4c}$: Online friendship quality mediates the link between freedom of online self and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{4d}$: Online friendship quality mediates the link between adaptable self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{4e}$: Online friendship quality mediates the link between authentic self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

$H_{4f}$: Online friendship quality mediates the link between freedom of online self and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

**Significance of Study**

The finding from this current research allowed people to understand the association between self-presentation and online friendship quality, considering the time an individual spends on the Internet and social media increases over time. It allows an individual to realize the importance of self-presentation in the online world and how authentic self-presentation can be linked to a greater friendship quality. Also, it could help an individual to engage more in presenting their true self despite being in the online or offline world as the presentation of self is also related to ones' emotional well-being.

Moreover, the study results provide insight for the health care practitioner and educator on enhancing emotional well-being for emerging adults and other individuals. This study was conducted during the covid-19 period. Social distancing due to the pandemic has increased anxiety levels due to the lack of emotional support. This study examined the relationship between the presentation of self and online friendship quality with emotional well-being, acknowledging that one's well-being contributes to the development of the mental disorder (Felman, 2020). The study of emotional well-being during this covid-19 period helped promote emotional awareness and provided aids or intervention programs to improve emotional well-being and decrease negative emotions.

In addition, this study examined the association between self-presentation, particularly the authentic self, adaptable self, and freedom of self online with emotional well-being. The past has linked authentic self-presentation with happiness and subjective well-being (Bailey et al., 2020; Kim & Lee, 2011). Thus, this study enriched the past literature gap by studying the negative effect of true online self-presentation by examining the self-presentation with the positive and negative emotions that measure emotional well-being. The result helped contribute additional findings on how the authentic self, adaptable self, and freedom of self online are associated with emotional well-being.

Besides that, the results of the study helped in enriching the studies of self-presentation and friendship quality in the online world; primarily, this study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic where the Internet and social media network play an essential role to maintain human connection and networks. The findings helped to strengthen the association found in the past studies and add new results and variables to how online friendship quality can be associated with online self-presentation. The findings also helped understand the relationship between self-presentation and online friendship quality, allowing future researchers to explore the causal relationship between both variables in further directions and serve as a reference for a prospective study.

Furthermore, this study helped complement the literature by exploring how online friendship quality was linked with emotional well-being, considering that youths spent more time online looking for social support that they could not gain offline (Smahel et al., 2012). The findings have provided an insight on how the quality of online friendship could associate with positive and negative emotions, allowing future researchers to apply the results to explore the development of mental health in further research.

As mentioned above, self-presentation was found associated with friendship and happiness, along with the connection between friendship and happiness. This study has further explored the mediating role of online friendship quality between online self-presentation and emotional well-being. The mediating role of online friendship quality could bridge the gap in the literature for self-presentation and emotional well-being. The findings helped strengthen online friendship quality as a mediator and its role in mediating self-presentation and emotional well-being, as this study was done during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, where the dependency on the Internet and social media increased. This allowed future researchers  further to explore the mediating role of online friendship quality and increase more studies in the future.

**Conceptual Definition**

*Online Self-Presentation: Adaptable Self, Authentic Self & Freedom of Online Self*

Self-presentation is defined as a behaviour that intends to convey information about oneself or an ideal self to others (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987).

*Online Friendship Quality*

Online friendship is initiated through computer-mediated communication (CMC), and the quality of online friendship builds upon companionship, support, sharing, voluntariness, cautiousness, and closeness (Mardiawan & Helmi, 2020).

*Emotional Well-Being*

Emotional well-being reflects the presence and absence of positive feelings towards life that regulate happiness, satisfaction, and build a good spirit (Langeland, 2014). The characteristic of mood is categorized into two components:  positive affect and negative affect (Schutte et al., 2002).

*Emerging Adults*

Emerging adulthood is a phase of life between adolescence and adulthood where individuals between 18 and 29 years old (Arnett, 2014; Wider et al., 2021) explore identity, experience the age of instability, age of focus on self, age of feeling in between, and ages of different possibilities (Munsey, 2006).

**Operational Definition**

*Online Self-Presentation: Adaptable Self, Authentic Self & Freedom of Online Self*

The Presentation of Online Self-Scale for Adults (POSSA; Strimbu et al., 2021) was used to evaluate online self-presentation, including three factors:  adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of online self.

*Adaptable Self.* The first factor of POSSA is adaptable self, where users present multiple versions of online self and adapt their identity to a more desirable one. The higher the score indicates that individuals portray different personas online and adapts their identity to the one they favour the most.

*Authentic Self.* The second factor of the POSSA scale measures the authenticity of a user's identity compared to the identity expressed in the offline world. The higher the score suggested higher authenticity in the online virtual world compared to the offline world.

*Freedom of Online Self.* The last factor of POSSA, freedom of online self, reflects users' freedom in expressing themselves online. A high score in freedom of online self implies that individuals express themselves freely during online self-presentation.

### Online Friendship Quality

The McGill Friendship Questionnaire – RA (MFQ-RA; Mendelson & Abound, 2012), was used to measure the online friendship quality, that touches on the affection felt for a friend and the feeling of satisfaction with a friendship. The mean score will be obtained from the responses on MFQ-RA, and the higher score refers to a higher quality of friendship.

### Emotional Well-Being

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) was used to measure emotional well-being, which is made up of two mood scales that measure positive and negative affect, with each affect consisting of ten items (Watson et al., 1988). The ten items in positive affect will be summed up, and the higher score indicates a higher level of positive affect. The same goes for summing up ten items in the adverse effect, and the lower score refers to a lower level of negative affect.

*Emerging Adults*

In this study, respondents were asked to indicate their chronological age. Only Malaysians aged between 18 to 29 years old will be included in this study.

## Chapter Summary

The current study examined the mediating role of online friendship quality between self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia. The increase in social media use and anxiety level during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia contributed to conducting this study to measure the association between the online presentation of self and emotional well-being. The use of the Internet and social media aids in establishing and maintaining a new relationship in which this research studied the online friendship quality and its association to self-presentation, also the association with emotional well-being. The findings obtained from this study contributed to the complement of the current literature with new insight and direction for future research on a similar topic. Other than that, the result brought practical implications in promoting awareness towards one's emotional well-being in the virtual world while expressing oneself.

**Chapter II**

**Introduction**

The rapid development of the technology has opened more chances and spaces for users to communicate, socialize, grow their business, create, and share with the public online. Nowadays, most Internet users use the Internet to widen their social network (Jones & Fox, 2009). Due to the rising interactivity and user engagement on the Internet, it is necessary to investigate the self-presentation of individuals who are likely to utilize participatory technologies like social media and their emotional well-being. Consequently, factors like the quality of online friendship mediate and contribute to the development of online self-presentation. This literature review examined how an individual's online self-presentation affects their emotional well-being. Thus, it had illustrated how online friendship mediates the link between online self-presentation and emotional well-being.

**Review on Emotional Well-Being**

Good mental health includes positive emotional, psychological, and social well-being in an individual (MentalHealth.gov, 2020). Mental health influences the way we feel, think, behave, coping strategy, decision-making process, and affect interpersonal functions. Keyes (2010) suggested the tripartite positive mental health included emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. The existence of a high level of emotional well-being and positive functioning characterized "flourishing", which is consistent with how WHO defined *mental health* as the mental state of well-being where an individual recognizes own abilities, can manage with everyday stresses in life, work energetically and effectively, and able to contribute to the community (World Health Organization, 2018).

The distinctive types of well-being were measured in the past, including psychological well-being, subjective well-being, emotional well-being, social well-being, and

life satisfaction. Nevertheless, this well-being is different in terms of the components and purposes being measured. Psychological well-being refers to the positive mental state of an individual to which the positive experience emotions and the feeling of happiness (Robertson, n.d.). It can be categorized into eudemonic well-being where it is the experience of positive emotions derived from self-actualization and the purpose in life (APA Dictionary of Psychology. n.d.), also categorized as hedonic well-being, which focuses on the subjective well-being and positive effect of an individual (Carruthers & Hood, 2004).

Emotional well-being is the umbrella term for the psychological concept, including positive emotions, absence of negative emotions, the purpose of life, life satisfaction, quality of life (Feller et al., 2018). As mentioned above, emotional well-being is associated with mental health, in which poor emotional well-being is associated with an increase in loneliness (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; VanderWeele, 2012). Besides that, greater emotional well-being was found to have a better impact on overall individual health. The experience of powerful positive emotions helps build physical health and reduce mortality (Diener & Chan, 2011; Kok et al., 2013; Ong, 2010).

Moreover, emotional well-being is related to social relationships as it also refers to the satisfaction of a relationship and the perception of social support (Feller et al., 2018). Different factors determine the emotional well-being of an individual, such as age, gender, employment, social relationship, neighbourhood, family, and living environment (Chanfreau et al., 2013). It was also found that friendship is essential to health and well-being, where positive relationships bring greater well-being and healthier.

Furthermore, Charles and Carstensen (2010) defined *emotional well-being* as the subjective experience of positive and negative emotions. Paul Eckman distinguished that all humans experience six basic emotions, including happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anger, and surprise (Cherry, 2021). These basic emotions are the combination of positive and negative

emotions that influence our perception, decision-making, and behaviour in life. Emotional well-being is divided into positive and negative affect that need to be studied independently (Watson et al., 1988).

According to Watson et al. (1988), enthusiasm is included in high positive affect, and sadness is listed under the low positive affect. The high negative affect had anger, and low negative affect refers to calmness. Emotional well-being measures affection aspects of well-being and belong to the hedonic tradition where it focuses on positive feelings and revokes negative emotions (Langeland, 2014). Positive emotions were found to bring an upward spiral to emotional well-being where individuals can broaden their thinking and experience extra positive emotions (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

**Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being**

In Malaysia, Facebook is considered one of the most popular social networking sites. While the popularity of Social Networking Sites (SNS) is increasing rapidly, the impacts of social media on the new generation have been taken seriously. Inappropriate site use might have severe consequences for young people, society, and all Malaysian folks. People typically present themselves by using physical presence and interaction when they encounter face-to-face communication. However, on the Internet, especially social media, users rely heavily on textual messages.

Habsah et al. (2016) has explored how tertiary level students portray themselves on the internet by focusing on language as a medium for self-presentation and impression management. People may hide their true feelings and project false impressions to a large audience. Textual messages also do not reflect a person's true self. A total of 441 Facebook statuses were retrieved from 19 undergraduates' Facebook walls, and 98 of the status were randomly selected. Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count 2007 (LIWC) was used to analyse using linguistic dimensions and the expression of one's emotions verbally. The outcome of

this study shows that tertiary level students in Malaysia update status with positive words more especially related to work, achievement, and physical (Habsah et al., 2016). Bazarova et al. (2012) revealed that using more positive emotion phrases in Facebook status updates is a strategic method to reach a large audience corresponding to the past findings stating that the expression of positive and negative emotion words is affected by the desire to present a positive, desired, and attractive self (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Lin & Qiu, 2013). The frequent use of positive emotional phrases and words in Facebook status messages indicates that the participants created a particular audience image by using ingratiation and competence tactics. Researchers of this study also emphasized the applicability of Goffman's theory in the study as SNS users make decisions to present different selves online. The variations in the frequency and functionality of linguistic characteristics in the findings indicate that students may be involved in behaviours that could contribute to their self-presentation and influence the evaluation of others. Hence, Habshah et al. (2016) research has shown that tertiary level students in Malaysia update positive emotion phrases on their social media as a systematic approach to reach a big audience and at the same time enhance their self-presentation.

Popularity in an SNS network seems to be more complicated than the Face-to-Face (FtF) environment, as popularity plays an essential part in mediated communication, contributing to or impacting people's happiness. One of the goals of projecting one's identity is to receive attention from Facebook acquaintances who have followed them. When other Facebook users react to identity disclosure, a sense or feeling of the person who wants to be famous will start to nurture. Popularity is a kind of complacency that forms part of life's happiness. The most memorable and vital experience with Facebook is pleasant feelings, pleasure, motivation, and encouragement for readers, which is linked to relationship attachment, entertainment, and happiness in life (Sas et al., 2009). People who regularly use Facebook to interact with other users are more inclined to offer emotional support due to the

tighter bond between them.

Kim and Lee (2011) conducted a study intended to determine how Facebook improves the subjective well-being (SWB) of college-age users by emphasizing the number of friends on Facebook and techniques of self-presentation such as positive versus honest presentation of self. Three hundred ninety-one students took part in this study, and their number of Facebook friends, positive self-presentation, and honest self-presentation were measured using scales like Support Evaluation List (ISEL) and Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS). The results indicated that SWB was positively associated with the number of friends on Facebook and self-presentation. Furthermore, happiness obtained from the amount of Facebook friends could be related to the visualization of Facebook friends, which reminds users of their social ties and the continuous affirmation or increase of self-worth. Another interesting finding is that the happiness of Facebook users would be improved by more excellent preservation of self-presentation with their positive self-images. In addition, honest self-presentation had a significant indirect effect on SWB through perceived social support. This outcome highlights the significance of self-disclosure playing a vital role in establishing social connections in online settings. In short, Kim and Lee (2011) concluded that happiness is positively linked with several friends on Facebook, greater preservation of positive self-presentation, and indirect positive effect on honest self-presentation, which is seeds from Facebook friends' social support.

From these past studies, the emotional well-being of an individual was not fully measured where the presentation of self and impression management mostly focused on and was found to be associated with positive affection and subjective well-being. Besides that, the positive and negative emotion words used in social media do not fully represent a person's emotional state. Measuring positive and negative textual messages could reflect a person's psychological condition and evaluate their self-presentation; however, it does not reflect their

true emotion. For example, some people might show a greater level of happiness while presenting an ideal self. Furthermore, emotional well-being measures positive and negative affect, yet past studies mentioned above did not address the negative affection associated with online self-presentation. Hence, this current study was conducted to examine the association between the factors under online self-presentation, including authentic self, adaptable self, and freedom of online self with one's positive and negative affect. Also, this study focussed in a broader group characteristic to study the self-presentation of Malaysian emerging adults and its association with emotional well-being instead of limiting the characteristic of the groups such as only tertiary students or Facebook users. In that case, only emerging Malaysian adults aged between 18 to 29 years old were qualified to participate in this study. In short, this study examined an association between online self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia and hypothesized there is a positive association between these two variables.

**Online Self-Presentation and Online Friendship Quality**

Social Networking Sites (SNS) tend to be a place where people reveal their identity. Many studies were conducted to investigate identity expression on various social media platforms, but self-presentation on image sharing application, Instagram, has recently grabbed the attention of scholars (Andalibi et al., 2017; Smith & Sanderson, 2015). A study conducted by Ades et al. (2017) has mentioned that an image we presented online helps other users form a first impression. Participants were required to complete a questionnaire that measures perceived media richness, the functionality of Instagram, and the personality trait of openness. A positive outcome may provide an excellent first impression which will lead to long-term advantages. Hence, it is conceivable that people will portray themselves selectively to gain the outcome that they want. From the perspective of a user, images are very intriguing and generate a high level of engagement with Facebook friends (Osterrieder, 2013). Display

picture or profile picture is usually the first thing a receiver sees before clicking to view a profile (Chalfen, 2002). Thus, according to this study by Ades et al. (2017), images have played a crucial role in engaging social interaction and, at the same time, gaining attention and attracting followers. It has somehow become a marketing tool to be socially accepted in social media.

In most cases, users will drift toward a character who seems loving and acceptable, which leads them to choose their finest pictures and modify them to seem more appealing. Furthermore, the urge to stay in touch with fellow friends increases interest in keeping up with what they are up to, and pictures are very effective visual aids since they help tell a story, capture emotions, and not to forget to mention that explicit images help people to recall (Kumpel et al., 2015). Consequently, the study mentioned above shows a positive link between ideas presented on Facebook and the formation of online friendships.

Besides, Lee and Borah (2020) have conducted a study of self-presentation on social networks and their influence as past studies focus more on users' intrinsic factors. Previous research showed that media characteristics would provide users with perceptual clues about a platform's functionalities (Hogan, 2009). By that, self-expression features would increase users' perceptions of expressive opportunities and perhaps lead to self-presentational behaviours. A total number of 671 undergraduate students from Washington State University have participated in this study. Questionnaires were distributed online to measure perceived media richness, functionality, personality traits like openness, self-presentation, and friendship development. According to the findings, perceived functionality moderated the link between perceived media richness and self-presentation on Instagram, positively impacting friendship development. This means that the perceived media richness of Instagram was significantly related to the self-presentation of young adults on the platform. Besides that, the results also showed that the personality trait of openness had moderated the

mediation process. Individuals with a low level of openness tend to have a more substantial perceived functionality to self-presentation. This study explained that self-presentation on social media shows a significant positive relationship with friendship development.

To sum up, the study done by Ades et al. (2017) has focused on the presentation of personal visual images posted on the Internet, specifically on social media, and the online friendship studied was on the formation of a friendship online. Not only that, the study by Lee and Borah (2020) also found the willingness of an individual in developing a friendship with others online by relying on how they perceived the images seen on social media. However, in this study, the instruments selected examined the presentation of self in terms of emotions, feelings, and thoughts other than only focusing on the presentation of the image. Other than that, this present study was conducted to investigate how online self-presentation is associated with the quality of online friendship instead of forming a friendship online through the online presentation of self. This study hypothesized that there is a positive association between these two variables.

**Online Friendship Quality and Emotional Well-Being**

Friendship is an example of voluntary and conscious action (Demir & Weitekamp, 2007); examining friendship quality could be beneficial as an individual could control and choose which relationship to maintain. Improving personal connections, especially friendships are essential in enhancing an individual's overall well-being, especially emotional well-being.

Valkenburg and Peter (2007b) conducted a study to evaluate the validity of two different explicative theories on the impact on the well-being of online communication particularly based on the hypothesis of displacement and the hypothesis of stimulation. Both hypotheses assume that Internet communication affects the well-being of teenagers through influencing their time with existing friends and the quality of those friendships. A total of

1210 participants between the age of 10 to 17 years took part in this research. With formal mediation analyses, it is discovered that "*instant messaging*" was linked to the time spent with existing friends. Furthermore, friendship quality was also a favourable prediction of well-being and a first mediator between "*instant messaging*" and well-being. Followed by time spent with friends moderated the quality of friendship of time spent using "*instant messaging*". As an overall outcome, this study indicates that Internet communication is linked favourably to the time spent with friends and the quality of existing friendship, two key structural features of online communication; reduced social cues and adaptability.

Online communication features can help teens self-regulate and increase intimate self-disclosure, associated with higher social cues (Joinson, 2001; McKenna et al.,2002; Tidewell & Walther, 2002). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is less suitable for emotional interactions and has higher chances of conflicts with lower social cues. Since intimate self-disclosure is a vital predictor of closeness, care, and trust, more intimate self-disclosure on the Internet may improve friendships among young people. When there is no development of trust, a person may use personal information to publicize or humiliate another (McKenna et al., 2002). On the other hand, numerous studies have claimed that people frequently provide personal information about themselves over the Internet to create connections. According to a study, Individuals who share personal, sensitive information with their online pals reported feeling somewhat closer to them, built supportive and emotionally meaningful social relationships (Joinson, 2001; McKenna et al., 2002).

Another study by Valkenburg and Peter (2007c) investigated the underlying mechanisms to enhance the understanding of Internet communication and relation to well-being. A total of 816 pre-adolescents and adolescents between the age of 10 to 17 years have contributed towards the findings of this study; measuring the frequency of Internet communication and to strangers, closeness to friends, well-being; Satisfaction of Life Scale

(SWLS), and loneliness; (UCLA Loneliness Scale). This research focused on measuring life satisfaction rather than on long-term depression to look at the positive well-being of young people, as life satisfaction or happiness in a non-clinical population is a superior predictor of well-being. The results indicated Internet communication has a positive relationship with well-being with a mediating role of closeness to friends, which encourages that any form of CMC has a beneficial impact on the well-being of adolescents through moderating the effect of their friendship. Even previous studies implied that when social support factors are added as mediators, the direct connection between Internet use and well-being alters. Subsequently, a supporting study by Weiser (2001) initially showed that the relationship between Internet usage and well-being was equal. Nonetheless, the direct relationship was no longer critical when social connectedness was added as a mediator. Similarly, another research explored that online communication was indirectly helpful for well-being and negatively affected depression after the inclusion of social support as a mediator (LaRose et al., 2001).

There has been an increasing trend of teenagers using the Internet to establish friendships in the past few years. However, in the early 2000s, maintaining the current social network on the Internet was difficult, even impossible, simply because a large proportion of that network was yet to be established as online-based. Nevertheless, since the Internet is now gradually being used to preserve existing close connections, it is reasonable to anticipate that Internet communication would be suitable for teenagers' proximity (Gross et al., 2002; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007b). After all, if Internet contact nurtures existing connections, these friendships should be anticipated to suit this purpose. Thus, future studies should investigate online communication with well-being by considering measurements like friendship quality or social support to be included as the mediators (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007c).

Previous studies have failed to or did not wholly evaluate an individual's emotional health, or the quality of their relationship with friends was not entirely concentrated. Instead,

the aim was to link internet use or online communication with higher/lower levels of psychological well-being, happiness, belongingness, or life satisfaction. Only countable research has been done to measure the negative emotions associated with friendship quality as a mediator despite online or offline communication. When individuals use online platforms to communicate or learn, it bridges two parties to be closer. Individuals can be constantly connected to their peers, preventing social isolation, giving positive feedback, helping one another with better self-disclosure. Yet, it can also turn out negatively; some peers may go against and not support one another, avoidance, not being understanding, which may cause an individual to experience loneliness, stress, anxiety disorders, or depression. High and low levels of friendship quality define one's emotions; it could represent one's emotional well-being, facilitate one's subjective/psychological well-being.

Therefore, the present research further investigated the association between friendship quality and emotional well-being in the online setting among emerging adults in Malaysia, where an individual's positive and negative emotions will be measured. The transitioning phase and perception changes in emerging adults towards friendship quality can be tricky, resulting in various good and bad outcomes. Thus, this study provided a guide to gradually increase emotional awareness among society while developing online friendships and maintaining the quality. It aids in providing necessary support or therapeutic programs in the future for emerging adults and other individuals to enjoy better emotional well-being. Thus, this research investigated an association between online friendship quality and emotional well-being and hypothesized that there is a positive association between these two variables.

**The Mediating Role of Online Friendship Quality**

Several past studies have very much well determined the relation between self-presentation and friendship quality. According to Lee and Borah (2020), considering friendship growth as one of the most significant kinds of social capital generated through

online engagement, the theory of self-beneficial presentation's effect was utilized on friendship formation test on Instagram. Despite the use of Instagram can be unilateral and individuals often surround themselves with weaker social ties, the findings of these studies were very consistent with previous studies, sharing personal information *(self-disclosure)* can help people build friendships better in online environments and a much more positive manner (Joinson, 2001; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009).

Likewise, the link between friendship quality towards positive outcomes was gradually great as well. Based on a study, the results have proven that all aspects of friendship quality such as companionship, conflict, assistance, security, intimacy, and psychological well-being were found to have positive and substantial relationships (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2016). Similarly, other studies also determined consistent results, with higher empathy or emotional support competencies was found to be positively connected to intimacy and conflict management skills, individuals of such had more friendship closeness and satisfaction (Chow & Buhrmester, 2011; Chow et al., 2013; Morry, 2005). Subsequently, positive psychological effects have been related to high levels of friendship quality. Friendship quality predicts happiness, especially throughout transitional years like childhood through adolescence and emerging adulthood (Bagwell et al., 2005).

Studies on the relationship between self-presentation and emotional well-being are very much countable. According to Bij de Vaate et al. (2019), an online self-presentation can affect well-being positively or negatively. Although the findings vary, active self-presentation online seems to enhance (rather than harm) all kinds of well-being or has no effect. The findings discovered that negative self-presentation reduces subjective well-being, while authentic self-presentation appeared to enhance subjective well-being. The findings also showed that a specific self-presentation style might positively impact one well-being area while harming another. Thus, the results for active self-presentation are more in accordance

with the hyperpersonal model of online communication's positive expectations (Walther, 1996). Similarly, confirming another study by Kim and Lee (2011), when Facebook friends are aware that a user requires assistance, they are more likely to offer it. However, only when this need is properly communicated through self-disclosure facilitated by honest self-presentation then users more likely to receive assistance from Facebook friends, positively affecting their subjective well-being.

Even though studies are limited on the link between online self-presentation and emotional well-being, the results were compatible. Given that the bi-relationship between these three variables has been investigated, this study speculated the mediating role of online friendship quality in the association between online self-presentation and emotional well-being. This hypothetical mediation model is also supported by self-presentation theory. Yang and Brown (2015) explained that true self-presentation anticipates the social support that Facebook users receive consequently, contributing to their self-esteem and sense of belongingness. In the study done by Kim and Lee (2011), self-presentation theory supports disclosing true self while interacting with others, leading to decreased loneliness and depression.

**Theoretical Framework**

Self-presentation theory (Goffman, 1959) is also known as impression management theory, where an individual tends to act in a way where others see them as to how they want to be seen. Individuals attempt to manipulate their appearance or image when they are in front of the public. Goffman (1959), who proposed self-presentation theory, discussed humans' desire to control how others form their impressions. In that case, acting or management of self-image is developed. Individuals alter their appearance, behaviour, attitude, and image to create a positive impression that is more likeable by others. The concern with how our impression is formed tends to engage in self-disclosure (Junilla, 2014).

Self-disclosure reveals your personal information or emotions to others, such as your thoughts and feelings. When the lack of personal data is disclosed, individuals would have trouble developing and maintaining friendships or romantic relationships (Cherry, 2020).

Goffman's concept of social life indicated that there are the 'front' and 'backstage' scenarios where an individual participated (Artino, 2019). The 'front' refers to the public or formal setting where people act according to how they wish others to see them. In comparison, the 'backstage' is where individuals do not act or role by being themselves as they are not on the 'stage'. People are often found to switch alternatively in both parts and scenarios. Besides that, self-presentation is associated with emotional and behavioural issues, including anxiety, shyness, depression, and underachievement (Leary, 1996). Emerging adults are found to present themselves pleasingly and cheerfully (Mazur & Kozarian, 2009).

Self-presentation reflects how successful we could convince others to think that we own specific characteristics or images which could affect one life (Jimenez, 2014). The stress to maintain and create a positive impression or image on others could lead to negative actions that will harm one's well-being and be unhappy in life. 85% of social media teen users acknowledge that people can show a different side of self on social media, and 77% agree that people are less likely to be authentic online (Lenhart et al., 2005). Individuals tend to express and present themselves positively and control the disclosure of personal information on social media (Stanculescu, 2011). The presentation of self is similar to the disclosure of self, where an individual reveals personal information to the other, enabling them to control the impression that they want others to form about them (Lai et al., 2016). It was explored that self-disclosure has become a way for Facebook users to maintain relationships and keep their Facebook friends updated (Lai et al., 2016). Greene et al. (2006) also stated that disclosing more personal information influences the development and maintenance of a relationship.

Furthermore, self-presentation theory was used to explain the use of social media. The reveal of the true self in interaction with others aid in stimulating gratification and reducing the feeling of loneliness, stress, and depression mood (Kim & Lee, 2011). The greater the individual engages in revealing the true self, the more significant support they will receive (Yang & Brown, 2015). Social support manifests social relationships where an individual acquires interpersonal connections with others (Leavy, 1983). Yang and Brown (2015) draw upon the self-presentation theory that authentic online self-presentation predicts Facebook users' social support received from others and contributed to a greater level of self-esteem and belongingness. Pang (2020) research has extended the self-presentation theory with the finding that self-presentation mediates the relationship between relationships and the mobile mediated environment.

Individuals tend to manage their images when they enter to a new environment and want to be known by others with the intention and goals to establish new connections with peers (Yang & Brown, 2015). The motivation to engage in self-presentation was driven by the urge to build a relationship in the virtual community (Ma & Agarwal, 2007) and assist in building the relationship. Moreover, in a study done by Habsah et al. (2016), Goffman's impression management theory explains that individuals manage their identity and impressions online according to accepted social attributes. The self-presentation behaviour is a way an individual uses to manipulate their belief in others. The use of positive words and the expression of positive emotions were used in managing one's self-presentation (Habsah et al., 2016).

Wang et al. (2020) stated that impression management increases fear and loneliness. Supported by Mun and Kim (2021) research, lying self-presentation is positively associated with depression. When an individual engages in lying self-presentation behaviour, the depression level increases accordingly. The performing of liking or likeable behaviour

increases anxiety levels associated with high stress and depression while performing false self-presentation (Wright et al., 2018). Being and living authentically contributed to greater well-being as one knows who they are, able to understand and express their own emotions (Tafler, 2019). Bij de Vaate et al. (2020) found that negative presentation of self will reduce subjective well-being, while authentic self-presentation could improve emotional well-being.

In that case, this study used the self-presentation theory to explain the association between the presentation of self and emotional well-being among emerging adults. The factors adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of online self were related to the positive and negative emotions through the theory. Past research found the association between self-presentation and friendship, self-presentation, and emotional well-being with the explanation of self-presentation theory. Hence, this study examined the mediating role of friendship quality between self-presentation and emotional well-being using the self-presentation theory.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Figure 1**

*The Conceptual Framework of "The Association Between Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being among Emerging Adults in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Online Friendship Quality*
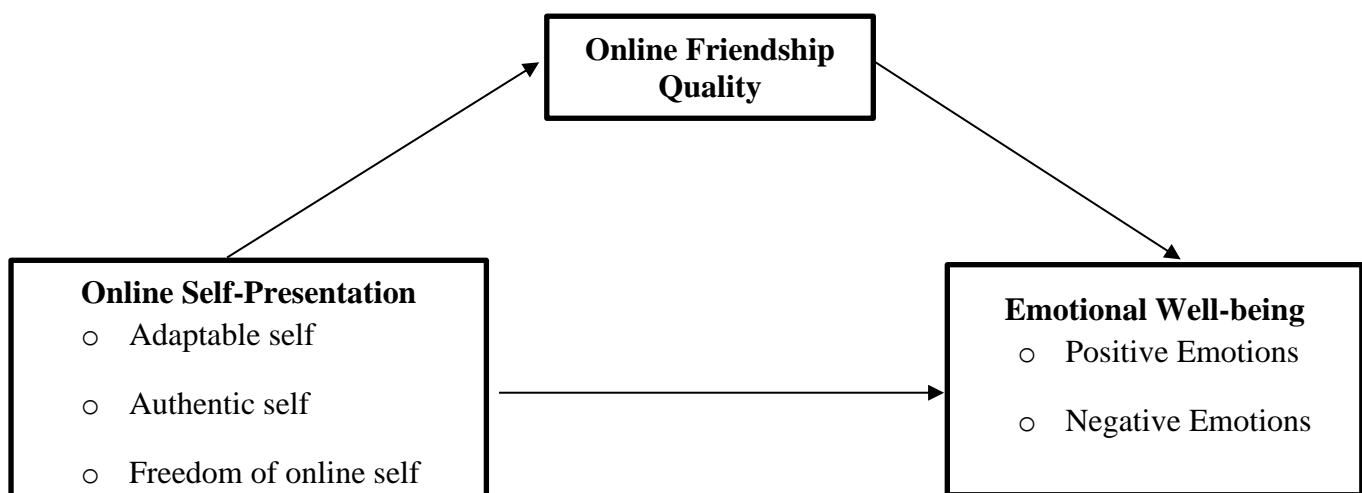
This present research examined the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as shown in Figure 1, where one single head arrow starts from self-presentation to emotional well-being. Three factors were included to measure the independent variable, online self-presentation: the adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of self online. Emotional well-being is the dependent variable and was measured through the positive and negative emotions that one experiences. Figure 1 indicated an association between self-presentation and emotional well-being whereby the self-presentation was measured with three factors: the adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of self online with the positive emotion and negative emotion independently.

Moreover, a mediating variable was added to link the independent and dependent variables, making the connection between both variables to be better explained. At the same time, the online friendship quality was added as the mediator for online self-presentation and emotional well-being. The connection between online self-presentation and online friendship quality, along with the association between online friendship quality with emotional well-being, was measured in this study. The relationship found between both directions helped to investigate the mediating role of online friendship quality. Hence, this study examined the association between self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia with online friendship quality as the mediator. Thus, the higher the adaptable self, the greater the online friendship quality, which in return contributes to experiencing more significant positive emotions.

**Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, websites for social networking play an essential part in our lives. These websites provide various services that enable users to make the most of their time in cyberspace by giving them a place to express themselves in the virtual world. This literature review has presented a scoping review on online self-presentation, online friendship, emotional well-being, and how these three variables can be linked. What is explained in the literature review has proven that there is a significant positive relationship between these three variables. Although there is  much research on self-presentation and its association to mental health and well-being, most of it focuses on a different group of participants, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction. This paper has focused on how an individual's online self-presentation, specifically emerging adults, affects their emotional well-being and online friendship as a mediator using Goffman's idea of self-presentation.

## Chapter III

**Introduction**

This chapter describes various methodologies that were used for this dissertation. The methods will include areas such as the research design, sampling technique, types of data, data collection process, sample size and its procedure.

**Research Design**

This study utilised a correlational cross-sectional research design whereby data was collected at one point in time. The quantitative data were collected using an online survey method. In many cases, this technique was used to draw inferences about possible connections and linkage or to collect preliminary data that may be used to support further research and experimentation.

**Sampling Technique**

A purposive sampling method was used in this study to recruit the participant of the study. This technique helps handpick the cases to be included in the sample by targeting a pool of models with particular characteristics. For example, in this research, Malaysian emerging adults who are social media users involved in online social interaction were selected. While the various purposive sampling methods have distinct objectives, they may offer researchers justification to generalise the sample under study, whether theoretical, analytic, or logical (Rai & Thapa, 2015).

**Eligibility Criteria**

A set of qualifying criteria was used in the participant selection. The requirements included (a) Malaysian; (b) age ranged between 18 to 29 years old; (c) social media user; (d) involved in any online social interaction such as making new friends online, chatting, updating status, or posting pictures on social media in 2 weeks once or more.

**Sample Size Calculation**

The sample size for the study was determined using the Monte Carlo Power Analysis for Indirect Effects for mediation model (Schoemann et al., n.d.). The correlation value for each variable was inserted into the calculator with its default setting. The calculated power revealed the number of sample sizes and the upper limit, lower limit, and power. The sample size with the highest power was selected as the number of participants. Since the dependent variables were separated into positive and negative emotions, the number of participants was obtained twice, and the average number of participants was divided. After calculation, the sample size that the Monte Carlo Power Analysis suggested was a sample size of 129 at 96 % statistical power (see Appendix B). Hence, as the proposed sample size was 129 participants, this study will collect responses from 258 participants. In comparison with an earlier study on self-presentation and subjective well-being, the sample size collected was 253 (Fan et al., 2019), which could be used to support the targeted sample size for this research is sufficient. On top of that, the 100% oversize is also to avoid the lack of responses as participants' responses might be incomplete and unable to be used for analysis.

**Procedure**

The survey was distributed online, and the study data was collected using Qualtrics, an online survey platform (see Appendix A). The information sheet was the first page of the online survey where it consisted of information that the participants needed to know regarding their participation in the study. For example, the purpose of the research, what will take part involved, the purpose of invitation, risks/disadvantages, confidentiality, result outcome, and researchers' contact details if further information is required from participants. After that, informed consent was given and obtained on the second page of the online survey from the participants. Only participants that have clicked agreed may proceed to the next page. The third page collected the participants' demographic information like age, gender,

race, and religion. Next, to avoid confusion or misconceptions for the participants towards

each term, the definition for online self-presentation, online friendship, and emotional well-

being was defined in the questionnaire right before the beginning of the respective section.

Finally, participants were required to answer all questions for the Presentation of Online Self-

Scale for Adults (POSSA), McGill Friendship Questionnaire-Respondent's Affection (MFQ-

RA), and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF) starting from the fourth page

of the online survey. The whole questionnaire took approximately 10 to 20 minutes to

complete. Participants were required to complete the entire questionnaire, as any incomplete

questionnaire were excluded. This research was conducted in accordance with the UTAR's

Research Ethics and Code of Conduct. Before distributing the survey, researchers had sought

ethical approval to conduct the study from the UTAR Scientific and Research Committee

(U/SERC/196/2021) (see Appendix F).

**Measures**

*Online Self-Presentation*

To measure online self-presentation, we used the Presentation of Online Self-Scale for

Adults (POSSA) to capture self-presentation in adults (Strimbu et al., 2021). This scale was

modified from its original scale, the Presentation of Online Self Scale (POSS) developed by

Fullwood et al. (2016). POSSA consists of 17 items with six items in adaptable self, four

items in authentic self, and seven items in freedom of online self. Items from these three

factors were plucked from 'Ideal Self' in POSS. Item 8 from 'Ideal Self' and the original item

from 'Multiple Selves' were listed under adaptable self in POSSA. Three items from the

'Consistent Self' and four items from the 'Ideal Self' make up the authentic self.

In contrast, one item of 'Online Presentation Preference' and four items of 'Ideal Self' are

placed under the freedom of the online self. The 5-point Likert scale ranged from

"1=Strongly Disagree" to "5=Strongly Agree", and some items have reversed scoring

(Strimbu et al., 2021). The items under each component are summed together to give each

factor a total score, with a higher number indicating a better depiction of that factor. The

greater the total score, the more different versions of oneself are presented online. For

example, a higher score in an adaptable self indicates that an individual presented multiple

versions of the online self and adjusted one's identity based on what is more desirable. Next,

a higher score in authentic self indicates that the identity presented by an individual does not

vary from the online world and offline world. Lastly, a higher score in freedom of self

indicates that an individual has the power to express oneself yet is consistent with what

happens in life and experiences. This three-factors scale has an explained variance of 55%.

The reliability of the adaptable self was reported as .87, authentic self as .71, and freedom of

online self as .77 showing an acceptable internal consistency (Strimbu et al., 2021).

### *Online Friendship Quality*

The measure of online friendship quality was based on McGill Friendship

Questionnaire-Respondent's Affection (MFQ-RA), composed of highly correlated two-

subscales. This scale was a revised version of its original scale developed by Mendelson and

Aboud (2012). The 9-point Likert scale, labelled from "-4=Very Much Disagree" to "4=Very

Much Agree" (Mendelson & Abound, 2012). It includes six relevant parts: stimulating

companionship, help, intimacy, reliable alliance, self-validation, and emotional security. The

outcome of the mean result will show if an individual has a higher or lower friendship

quality. The 16-item questionnaire has a variance of 82.1%. The reliability for the positive

feelings' subscale was .96 and .92 for the satisfaction subscale proving an excellent internal

consistency level (Mendelson & Abound, 2012).

### Emotional Well-Being

Emotional well-being was measured using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF) developed by Watson et al. (1988). The 20-items self-report measure consisted of two mood measures, one for positive affect and the other for negative affect. Each mood consisted of 10 items, and total scores ranged from 10 to 50. The sum of the score represents the higher levels of affect. To calculate the positive affect, add the scores from lines 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19. While calculating the negative affect, add the scores from lines 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 20. The 5-point Likert scale ranged from "1=Very Slightly or Not At All" to "5=Extremely". PANAS exhibits relatively high internal consistency where positive affect was reported as .85 and .91 for negative affect. The variance of the PANAS scale ranged from 62.8% to 68.7% (Watson et al., 1988).

## Reliability

### Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted from 28th September 2021 to 29th September 2021 by distributing the Qualtrics survey link on the Internet. 30 Malaysian emerging adults who were social media users and aged between 18 to 29 years old were recruited to complete the pilot study. The pilot study result found that the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the sub-scales in POSSA was .85 for adaptable self, authentic self-reported as .59, and freedom of self online as .70 (see Table 1). The Online Friendship Quality scale reported with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .95, indicating an excellent internal consistency. The reliability of the sub-scales in the PANAS-SF scale was.88 for the positive affect and .86 for the negative affect.

### Actual study

The data for the actual study was conducted from 1st October 2021 to 24th October 2021 distributed to the public through the Internet and social media. In the actual study, the

analysis for the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the POSSA for adaptable self was reported

as .83, authentic self as .69, and freedom of self online as .75 (see Table 1). Whereas the

Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the Online Friendship Quality scale was discovered to be .97,

indicating an excellent internal consistency. As for the PANAS-SF scale, the reliability for

the positive affect reported .88, and the negative affect was found .90 of reliability value.

**Table 1**

*Cronbach's Alpha for All Scales*

| Subscales | No. items | Pilot study | | | Actual study | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Cronbach's Alpha | *M* | *S.D.* | Cronbach's Alpha | *M* | *S.D.* |
| Adaptable Self | 6 | .85 | 17.03 | 5.56 | .85 | 17.80 | 4.89 |
| Authentic Self | 4 | .59 | 13.80 | 2.81 | .59 | 13.33 | 2.91 |
| Freedom of Self Online | 7 | .70 | 22.00 | 4.09 | .70 | 21.36 | 4.43 |
| (MFQ-RA) | 16 | .95 | 1.10 | 1.01 | .97 | .72 | 1.40 |
| Positive Affect | 10 | .88 | 31.60 | 7.31 | .88 | 30.48 | 7.38 |
| Negative Affect | 10 | .86 | 24.97 | 7.55 | .90 | 24.61 | 8.66 |

*Note*. (MFQ-RA)= McGill Friendship Questionnaire – Respondent's Affection

**Data Processing and Analysis Plan**

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) version 26. All scales were evaluated for reliability using the Cronbach Alpha Index.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was measured for the association between the variables.

Moreover, the Hayes SPSS Process Macro was used to test mediation by calculating the

independent variables' direct, indirect, and total effect on dependent variables (Abu-Bader &

Jones, 2021). As followed, the data was also be processed and converted into graphs and

chart forms for easier understanding. Scatterplots, histograms, P-P plots, Kolmogorov-

Smirnov's normality test, skewness, and kurtosis were used to test the normality. The tests for

independence errors, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were also

used to analyse the relationship between variables.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has investigated the research methodology which was used in this dissertation. The objective of this chapter was to outline the research method used to answer the research questions. A discussion of the research design, sampling technique, types of data, data collection method, sample size, procedure, and scales used has outlined the specifics of how the study was conducted and how participants were selected for this study. A correlational cross-sectional research design and purposive sampling method were used to collect quantitative data to consider correlations between the mediating influences of online friendship quality concerning online self-presentation and emotional well-being among young adults in Malaysia.

**Chapter IV**

**Introduction**

This chapter illustrates the outcomes of this research, which were gathered via various analyses. The chapter begins with sociodemographic descriptive statistics. Then, for the preliminary analysis part, normality assumption checks for each variable were carried out to ensure sample normality, followed by normality test, histograms, P-P plots, assumptions of mediation analysis, and test on multicollinearity. Moreover, Pearson's correlation analysis and mediation analysis were also done to examine the connection between the IVs and the DVs  and test the underlying mechanism that could impact possible causal relationships.

**Sociodemographic Descriptive Statistics**

From 1st October 2021 to 24th October 2021, the survey was distributed to the public through the Internet and social media. A total of 448 responses  were recorded in the Qualtrics. All responses were exported to Microsoft Excel for data screening. 92 responses were removed after filtering empty and incomplete responses (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Then, 356 responses were imported to the SPSS and ID was assigned to all responses to screening through again. Lastly, 16 neutral responses, those who selected the neutral answer for all questions, were pulled out from the 356 responses.

In that case, the total number of Malaysian emerging adults who participated in this study was N=340 (see Table 2), where female participants were recorded as 74.90% (n=256), and male participants included were 25.10% (n=86). The participants were aged between 18 and 29 years old ($M = 22.08, SD =2.48$). However, the majority age recorded was 21 years old (n=75). The respondents enrolled in the study included different ethnic groups, and the majority were Chinese (59.10%), followed by Malays (21.90%), Indians (15.50%), and others (3.50%). All participants who participated were social media users and engaged in any

online social interaction such as making new friends online, chatting, updating status, or

posting pictures on social media in 2 weeks once or more.

**Table 2**

*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Sample*

|  |  | n | % | *M* | *S.D.* | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age |  |  |  | 22.08 | 2.48 | 18 | 29 |
|  | 18 | 13.00 | 3.80 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 19 | 32.00 | 9.40 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 20 | 50.00 | 14.60 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 21 | 75.00 | 21.90 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 22 | 46.00 | 13.50 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 23 | 38.00 | 11.10 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 24 | 26.00 | 7.60 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 25 | 22.00 | 6.40 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 26 | 19.00 | 5.60 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 27 | 10.00 | 2.90 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 28 | 8.00 | 2.30 |  |  |  |  |
|  | 29 | 3.00 | .90 |  |  |  |  |
| Sex |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Male | 86.00 | 25.10 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Female | 256.00 | 74.90 |  |  |  |  |
| Ethnicity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Malay | 75.00 | 21.90 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Chinese | 202.00 | 59.10 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Indian | 53.00 | 15.50 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Others: | 12.00 | 3.50 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Eurasian | 2.00 | 0.58 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Bumiputera | 2.00 | 0.58 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Punjabi | 5.00 | 1.46 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Kadazan | 1.00 | 0.29 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Javanese | 1.00 | 0.29 |  |  |  |  |
|  | Not Stated | 1.00 | 0.29 |  |  |  |  |

*Note*. *M*=Mean; *S.D.*=Standard Deviation; Min=Minimum; Max=Maximum

Furthermore, the descriptive statistic of each variable was presented in Table 3. The

mean value for adaptable self is 17.80 (*SD*=4.89), authentic self is 13.33 (*SD*=2.91), freedom

of online self is 21.36 (*SD*=4.43), online friendship quality is 0.72 (*SD*=1.40), positive affect

is 30.48 (*SD*=7.38), and negative affect is 24.61 (*SD*=8.66).

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistic for Each Variables*

| Variables | *M* | *S.D.* | Max | Min |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adaptable Self | 17.80 | 4.89 | 30.00 | 6.00 |
| Authentic Self | 13.33 | 2.91 | 20.00 | 4.00 |
| Freedom of Self Online | 21.36 | 4.43 | 32.00 | 7.00 |
| Online Friendship Quality | .72 | 1.40 | 4.00 | -4.00 |
| Positive Affect | 30.48 | 7.38 | 50.00 | 12.00 |
| Negative Affect | 24.61 | 8.66 | 48.00 | 10.00 |

*Note*. *M*=Mean; *S.D.*=Standard Deviation; Min=Minimum; Max=Maximum

## Normality Assumption Check for Each Variable

### Skewness and Kurtosis

The skewness values demonstrated in Table 4 adaptable self, authentic self, freedom of online self, online friendship quality, positive affect, and negative affect are .01, -.11, -.00, -.47, .03 and .34, respectively. Thus, authentic self, freedom of online self, online friendship quality, and positive affect are negatively skewed, while adaptable self and negative affect are positively skewed. Furthermore, the kurtosis values for adaptable self are -.49, authentic self is .09, freedom of online self is .45, online friendship quality is .90, positive affect is -.38, and negative affect is -.66. Hence, all the variables were reported within the acceptable range of the skewness and kurtosis value which is ±2. Therefore, it can be said that all variables were normally distributed (Field, 2009).

**Table 4**

*Skewness and Kurtosis of Variables*

| Variables | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|
| Adaptable Self | .01 | -.49 |
| Authentic Self | -.11 | .09 |
| Freedom of Self Online | -.00 | .45 |
| Online Friendship Quality | -.47 | .90 |
| Positive Affect | .03 | -.38 |
| Negative Affect | .34 | -.66 |

**Test of Normality**

In the Kolmogorov-Smirnov's normality test (see Table 5), the adaptable self, $D(338)$ =.08, $p<.001$; authentic self, $D(338)$ =.09, $p<.001$; freedom of online self, $D(338)$=.08, $p<.001$, online friendship quality, $D(338)$ =.06, $p=.004$; positive affect, $D(338)$ =.06, $p=.007$, and negative affect, $D(338)$=.09, $p<.001$, significance value were less than .05 in which all variables are not normally distributed.

**Table 5**

*Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Normality Test*

|  | Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| Adaptable Self | .08 | 338 | .000 | .99 | 338 | .007 |
| Authentic Self | .09 | 338 | .000 | .98 | 338 | .001 |
| Freedom of Self Online | .08 | 338 | .000 | .98 | 338 | .000 |
| Online Friendship Quality | .06 | 338 | .004 | .98 | 338 | .000 |
| Positive Affect | .06 | 338 | .007 | .99 | 338 | .057 |
| Negative Affect | .09 | 338 | .000 | .97 | 338 | .000 |

*Note*. df=degrees of freedom; Sig.=Statistical Significance Value

**Histograms and P-P plots**

Moreover, the histograms of all variables (see Appendix C1) were found to be normally distributed, except for negative affect found to be slightly right-skewed. According to the P-P plots (see Appendix C2), all variables did not derive much from the diagonal lines signifying good normality in which most of the observed scores fall close to and on the diagonal line.

According to the five indicators for normality which are mentioned above, kurtosis, skewness, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, histogram, and P-P plots, all variables including the adaptable self, authentic self, freedom of online self, online friendship quality, positive affect,

and negative affect were able to achieve four out of five of the indicators. Hence, considering more than half of the indicators showed no violation of the normality test, it can be declared that the normality assumptions for all variables were met. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables are normally distributed.

**Assumptions of Mediation Analysis**

*Test on Independence of Errors*

The assumption of independence of errors was examined using the Durbin Watson, and the value obtained was 1.68 (see Appendix D). At the same time, the Durbin Watson value obtained between the four predictors and negative affect was 1.94. Both values are close to 2, indicating the independence errors correspond to the assumptions and all variables are independent from each other (Field, 2009).

*Test on Normality of Residual, Linearity of Residual, Homoscedasticity*

The scatterplot shown in Figure 2a represented the standardised predicted value of positive affect against the standardised residual of the test while Figure 2b represented the standardised predicted value of negative affect. According to the scatterplots, all the assumptions including the linearity of residual, normality of residual, and homoscedasticity were met as the dots were randomly distributed.

**Figure 2a**

*Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual against Regression Standardized Predicted Value of Positive Affect*
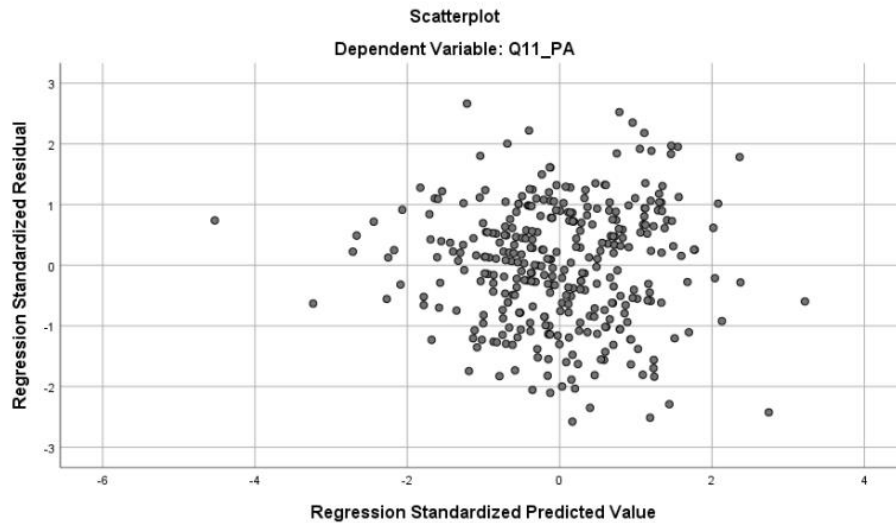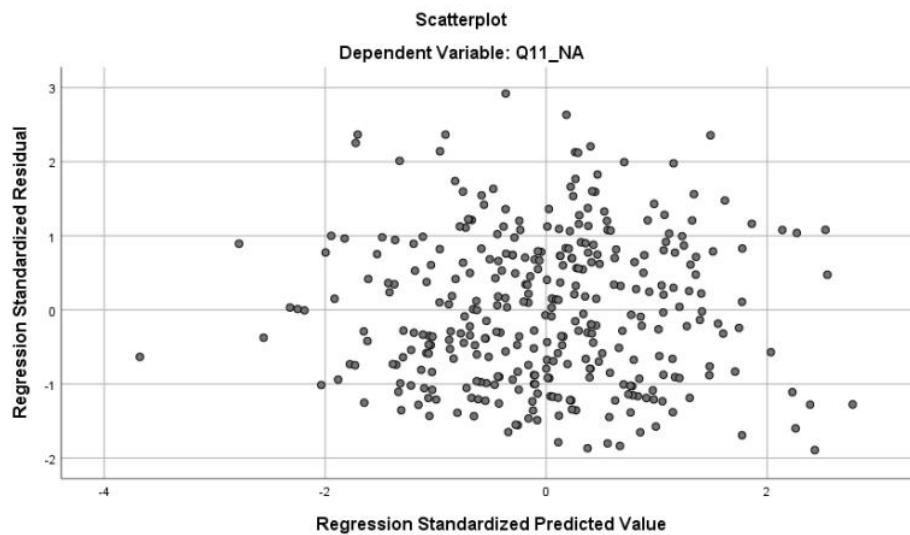


Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Q11_PA

**Figure 2b**

*Scatterplot of Regression Standardized Residual against Regression Standardized Predicted Value of Negative Affect*



Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Q11_NA

### *Test on Multicollinearity*

The collinearity statistic, tolerance value, and variance inflation factor (VIF) were utilised to test for multicollinearity (refer Table 6). The  multicollinearity assumption was not violated as the tolerance value of adaptable self, authentic self, freedom of online self, online

friendship quality with positive affect is .64, .69, .78, and .93, respectively, which is ≥ .10.

Besides that, the tolerance value of adaptable self, authentic self, freedom of online self,

online friendship quality with negative affect is .63, .68, .78, and .93, respectively. Menard

(1995) mentioned that the tolerance values less than .1 and .2 will cause a collinearity issue.

Thus, as the values obtained exceed .1 and .2, it can be concluded that there is no collinearity

issue.

Moreover, the VIF value for the four variables with positive affect are 1.57, 1.48,

1.29, and 1.07, respectively, reported ≤ 10. Same as the VIF value of the four variables with

negative affect are 1.59, 1.48, 1.29, and 1.07. According to Chatterjee and Ali (2012), the

VIF value that exceeds 10 can be regarded to have collinearity issues. Hence, the variables do

not report any collinearity issue.

**Table 6**

*Coefficient Among Variables*

| Model | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|---|
| | Tolerance | VIF |
| **Positive Affect** | | |
| Adaptable Self | .64 | 1.57 |
| Authentic Self | .69 | 1.46 |
| Freedom of self online | .78 | 1.29 |
| Online Friendship Quality | .93 | 1.07 |
| **Negative Affect** | | |
| Adaptable Self | .63 | 1.59 |
| Authentic Self | .68 | 1.48 |
| Freedom of online self | .78 | 1.29 |
| Online Friendship Quality | .93 | 1.07 |

*Note.* VIF=Variance Inflation Factor

**Pearson's Correlation Analysis**

Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between self-

presentation and online friendship quality, self-presentation, and emotional well-being, also

the association between online friendship quality and emotional well-being (see Table 7). The

results of this section will be presented according to research questions and hypotheses.

*RQ1*: Is self-presentation associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia?

> *H₁ₐ:* Adaptable self-presentation is positively associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.
>
> *H₁ᵦ:* Authentic self-presentation is positively associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia.
>
> *H₁ᵪ:* Freedom of online self is positively associated with online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia

It was found that the adaptable self, $r(338)=.09$, $p=.05$ and freedom of self online $r(338)=.22$, $p<.001$ have a positive significant linear relationship with online friendship quality. However, authentic self and online friendship quality reported to has a non-statistically significant linear relationship, $r(338)=.05$, $p=.185$. A small correlation was found between adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of self online with online friendship quality. Therefore, the results support $H_{1a}$ and $H_{1c}$ but failed to support $H_{1b}$.

*RQ2:* Is self-presentation associated with emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia?

> *H₂ₐ:* Adaptable self-presentation is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.
>
> *H₂ᵦ:* Authentic self-presentation is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.
>
> *H₂ᵪ:* Freedom of online self is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.
>
> *H₂𝒹:* Adaptable self-presentation is positively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

*H₂ₑ:* Authentic self-presentation is negatively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

*H₂f:* Freedom of online self is negatively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Moreover, adaptable self, $r(338)=.08$, $p=.075$, authentic self, $r(338)=.07$, $p=.096$, and freedom of online self, $r(338)=.00$, $p=.499$ reported a non-statistically significant linear relationship with positive affect. The adaptable self and authentic self were found to have a small correlation with positive affect while freedom of self online  was not correlate with positive affect. Hence, the results obtained do not support *H₂ₐ, H₂ᵦ,* and *H₂c.*

In addition, adaptable self $r(338)=.21$, $p<.001$ and freedom of online self $r(338)=.23$, $p<.001$ have a significant positive correlation with negative affect. While authentic self and negative affect has a significant negative linear relationship $r(338)=-.24$, $p<.001$. Small correlation was found between adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of online self with negative affect. Thus, *H₂f* were significant but not supported in terms of its direction, while *H₂d* and *H₂ₑ* was supported by the results obtained.

*RQ3:* Is online friendship quality associated with emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia?

*H₃ₐ:* Online friendship quality is positively associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

*H₃ᵦ:* Online friendship quality is negatively associated with negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

Online friendship quality reported to has a significant positive correlation with positive affect $r(338)=.15$, $p=.004$. Whereas online friendship quality does not have a statistically significant linear relationship with negative affect $r(338)=-.00$, $p=.482$. There is a

small correlation between online friendship quality and positive affect while no correlation

was found between online friendship quality and negative affect. Therefore, it can conclude

that $H_{3a}$ was supported by the findings while $H_{3b}$ was not supported by the result obtained.

**Table 7**

*Correlations Between Variables*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Adaptable Self | - | | | | | |
| 2. Authentic Self | -.54*** | - | | | | |
| 3. Freedom of Self Online | .42*** | -.31*** | - | | | |
| 4. Online Friendship Quality | .09* | .05 | .22*** | - | | |
| 5. Positive Affect | .08 | .07 | .00 | .15* | - | |
| 6. Negative Affect | .21*** | -.24*** | .23*** | -.00 | .04 | - |

*Note.* *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

**Mediation Analysis**

The Hayes SPSS Process Macro was used to test mediation (Model 4) by calculating

the direct, indirect, and total effect of the independent variables to dependent variables (Abu-

Bader & Jones, 2021) (see Table 8). To confirm the mediation role of online friendship

quality, the value zero should not fall between the lower level of confidence interval (LLCI)

and the upper level of the confidence interval (ULCI). If the zero does not fall within the

upper and lower confidence interval, the null hypothesis will be rejected, and the role of a
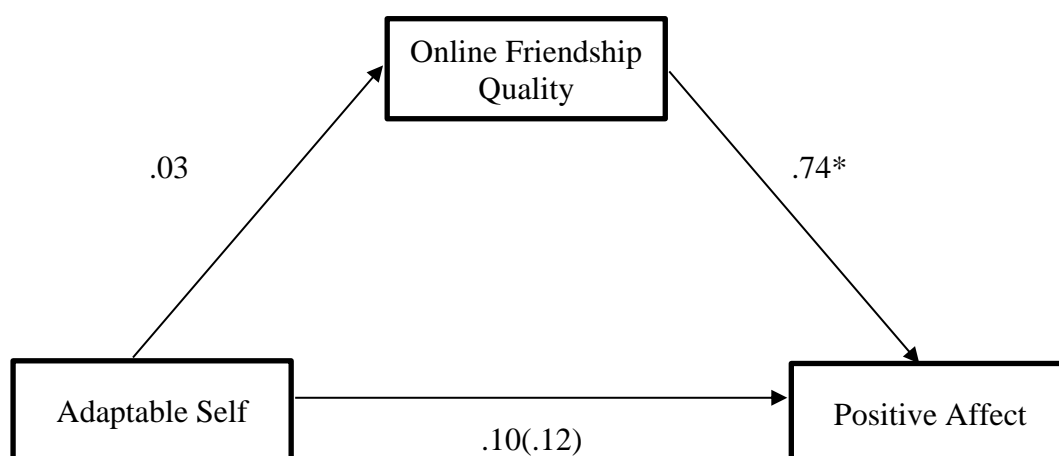
mediator is significant.

*RQ4*: Does online friendship quality mediate the link between self-presentation and emotional

well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia?

>   *H₄ₐ:* Online friendship quality mediates the link between adaptable self-presentation
>
>   and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

The result (refer Table 8) of the study found that adaptable self was not a significant predictor to online friendship quality, $B = .03$, $SE = .02$, 95% $CI$ [-.00, .06], $\beta = .09$, $p = .09$ and online friendship quality was a significant predictor to positive affect, $B = .74$, $SE = .29$, 95% $CI$ [.17, 1.30], $\beta = .14$, $p = .01$. After controlling the mediator, online friendship quality, the adaptable self is no longer a significant predictor for positive affect, $B = .10$, $SE = .08$, 95% $CI$ [-.06, .26], $\beta = .07$, $p = .22$. Approximately, 2.53% of variability in online friendship quality is explained by adaptable self ($R_2 = .03$). The results indicated that the indirect coefficient was not significant, $B = .02$, $SE = .02$, 95% $CI$ [-.01, .05], completely standardised $\beta = .01$. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported by the result as the effect of adaptable self and positive affect was not mediated through online friendship quality. Refer to Figure 3 for the associations between the variables.

**Figure 3**

A Mediation Model Showing the Effect of Adaptable Self and Online Friendship Quality on Positive Affect. The Values shown are Unstandardised Coefficients. The Total Effect was Shown in Parenthesis. *$p< .05$
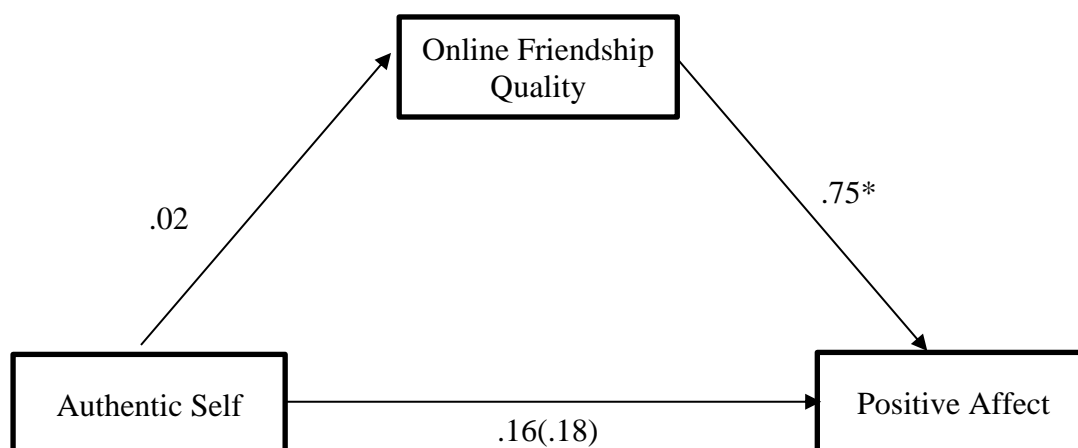
*H4b:* Online friendship quality mediates the link between authentic self-presentation and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

The result (refer Table 8) found that authentic self was not a significant predictor to online friendship quality, *B* = .02, *SE* = .03, 95% *CI* [-.03, .07], *β* = .05, *p* = .39 and online friendship quality was a significant predictor to positive affect, *B* = .75, *SE* = .28, 95% *CI* [.19, 1.31], *β* = .14, *p* = .01. After controlling the mediator, online friendship quality, the authentic self is no longer a significant predictor for positive affect, *B* = .16, *SE* = .14, 95% *CI* [-.11, .43], *β* = .06, *p* = .23. Approximately, 2.52% of variability in online friendship quality is explained by authentic self ($R_2$ = .03). The results indicated that the indirect coefficient was not significant, *B* = .02, *SE* = .02, 95% *CI* [-.03, .07], completely standardised *β* = .01. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported by the result as the effect of authentic self and positive affect was not mediated through online friendship quality. Refer to Figure 4 for the associations between the variables.

**Figure 4**

A Mediation Model Showing the Effect of Authentic Self and Online Friendship Quality on Positive Affect. The Values shown are Unstandardised Coefficients. The Total Effect was Shown in Parenthesis. *\*p< .05*
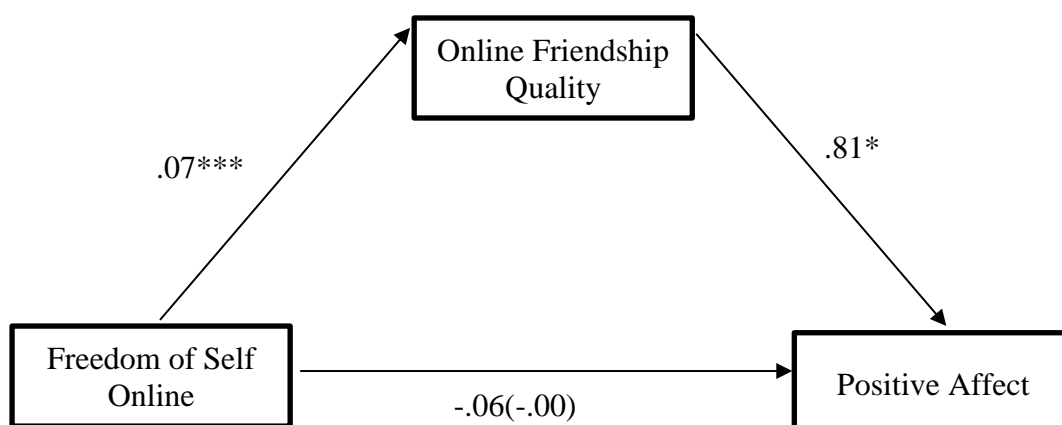
*H₄c:* Online friendship quality mediates the link between freedom of online self and positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

The result (refer Table 8) found that freedom of online self was a significant predictor to online friendship quality, $B = .07$, $SE = .02$, 95% $CI$ [.04, .10], $\beta = .22$, $p < .001$ and online friendship quality was a significant predictor to positive affect, $B = .81$, $SE = .29$, 95% $CI$ [.23, 1.38], $\beta = .15$, $p = .01$. After controlling the mediator, online friendship quality, the freedom of online self is no longer a significant predictor for positive affect, $B = -.06$, $SE = .09$, 95% $CI$ [-.24, .12], $\beta = -.03$, $p = .54$. Approximately, 2.22% of variability in online friendship quality is explained by freedom of self online ($R^2 = .02$). The results indicated that the indirect coefficient was significant, $B = .06$, $SE = .02$, 95% $CI$ [.01, .11], completely standardised $\beta = .03$. Hence, the hypothesis was supported by the result as the effect of freedom of self online and positive affect was mediated through online friendship quality. Refer to Figure 5 for the associations between the variables.

**Figure 5**

A Mediation Model Showing the Effect of Freedom of Self Online and Online Friendship Quality on Positive Affect. The Values shown are Unstandardised Coefficients. The Total Effect was Shown in Parenthesis. *$p < .05$; ***$p < .001$
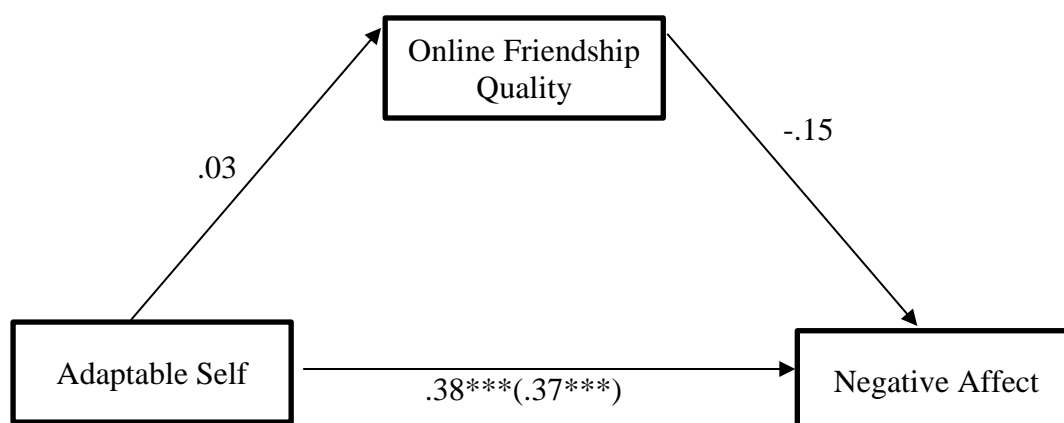
*H4d:* Online friendship quality mediates the link between adaptable self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

The result (refer Table 8) of the study found that adaptable self was not a significant predictor to online friendship quality, *B* = .03, *SE* = .02, 95% *CI* [-.00, .06], *β* = .09, *p* = .07 and online friendship quality was not a significant predictor to negative affect, *B* = -.15, *SE* = .33, 95% *CI* [-.80, .51], *β* = -.02, *p* = .66. After controlling the mediator, online friendship quality, the adaptable self is still a significant predictor for negative affect, *B* = .38, *SE* = .10, 95% *CI* [.19, .57], *β* = .21, *p* < .001. Approximately, 4.46% of variability in online friendship quality is explained by adaptable self ($R_2$ = .04). The results indicated that the indirect coefficient was not significant, *B* = -.00, *SE* = .01, 95% *CI* [-.03, .02], completely standardised *β* = -.00. Consequently, the hypothesis was not supported by the result as the effect of adaptable self and negative affect was not mediated through online friendship quality. Refer to Figure 6 for the associations between the variables.

**Figure 6**

A Mediation Model Showing the Effect of Adaptable Self and Online Friendship Quality on Negative Affect. The Values shown are Unstandardised Coefficients. The Total Effect was Shown in Parenthesis. ****p* < .001
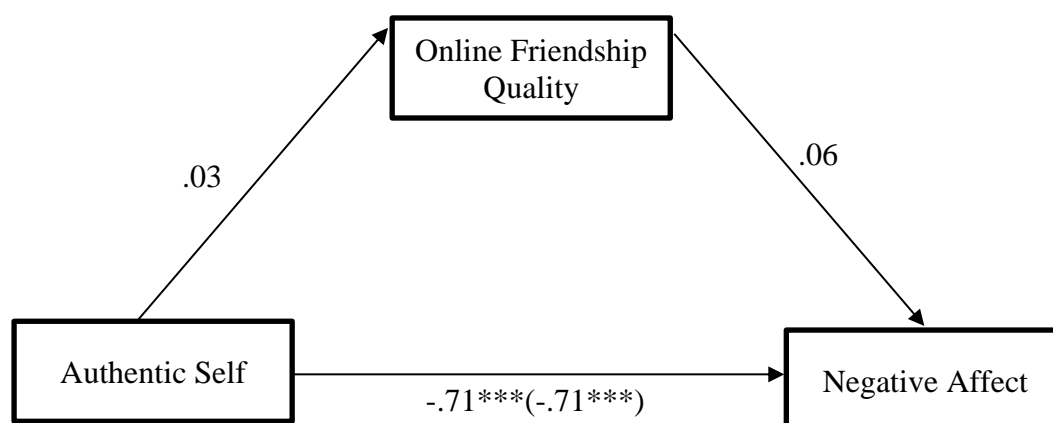
*H4e:* Online friendship quality mediates the link between authentic self-presentation and negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

The result (refer Table 8) found that authentic self was not a significant predictor to online friendship quality, *B* = .03, *SE* = .03, 95% *CI* [-.03, .08], *β* = .05, *p* =.35 and online friendship quality was not a significant predictor to negative affect, *B* = .06, *SE* = .33, 95% *CI* [-.58, .70], *β* = .01, *p* = .85. After controlling the mediator, online friendship quality, the authentic self is a significant predictor for negative affect, *B* = -.71, *SE* = .16, 95% *CI* [-1.02, -.40], *β* = -.24, *p* < .001. Approximately, 5.66% of variability in online friendship quality is explained by authentic self ($R_2$ = .06). The results indicated that the indirect coefficient was not significant, *B* = .00, *SE* = .01, 95% *CI* [-.02, .04], completely standardised *β* = .00. So, the hypothesis was not supported by the result as the effect of authentic self and negative affect was not mediated through online friendship quality. Refer to Figure 7 for the associations between the variables.

**Figure 7**

A Mediation Model Showing the Effect of Authentic Self and Online Friendship Quality on Negative Affect. The Values shown are Unstandardised Coefficients. The Total Effect was Shown in Parenthesis. ***p< .001

*H₄f:* Online friendship quality mediates the link between freedom of online self and

negative emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia.

The result (refer Table 8) found that freedom of online self was a significant predictor

to online friendship quality, *B* = .07, *SE* = .02, 95% *CI* [.04, .10], *β* = .22, *p* <.001 and online

friendship quality was not a significant predictor to negative affect, *B* = -.34, *SE* = .34, 95%

*CI* [-1.00, .33], *β* = -.05, *p* = .32. After controlling the mediator, online friendship quality, the

freedom of online self is still a significant predictor for negative affect, *B* = .46, *SE* = .11,

95% *CI* [.26, .67], *β* = .24, *p* < .001. Approximately, 5.39% of variability in online friendship

quality is explained by freedom of online self ($R_2$ = .05). The results indicated that the indirect

coefficient was significant, *B* = -.02, *SE* = .03, 95% *CI* [-.09, .02], completely standardised *β*

= -.01. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported by the result as the effect of freedom of online

self and negative affect was not mediated through online friendship quality. Refer to Figure 8

for the associations between the variables.

**Figure 8**

A Mediation Model Showing the Effect of Freedom of Self Online and Online Friendship

Quality on Negative Affect. The Values shown are Unstandardised Coefficients. The Total
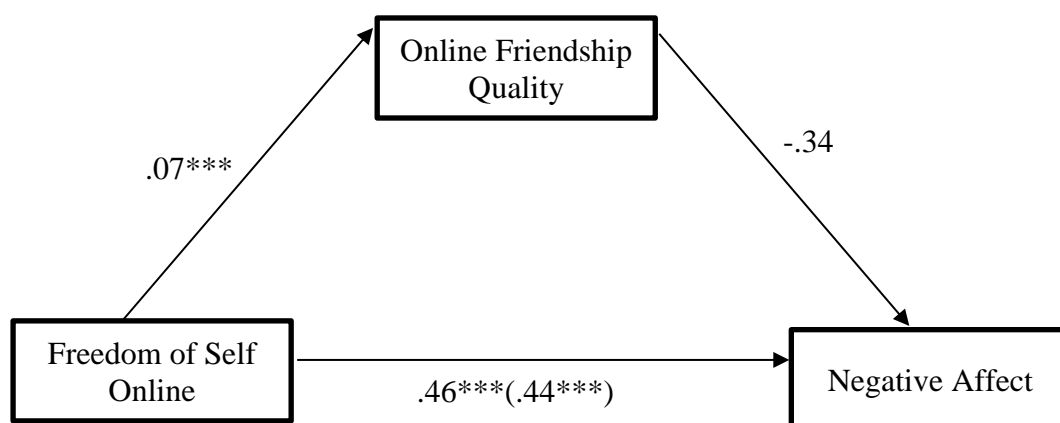
Effect was Shown in Parenthesis. ****p*< .001

**Table 8**

*Summary of The Mediation Model Results*

| | Positive Affect as Outcome | | | | Negative Affect as Outcome | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE* | *t* | 95% *CI* | *B* | *SE* | *t* | 95% *CI* |
| **Adaptable Self** | | | | | | | | |
| Adapt → Outcome (total) | .12 | .08 | 1.44 | [-.04, .28] | .37*** | .10 | 3.95 | [.19, .56] |
| Adapt → Outcome (direct) | .10 | .08 | 1.21 | [-.06, .29] | .38 | .10 | 3.97 | [.19, .57] |
| Adapt → OFQ | .03 | .02 | 1.71 | [-.00, .06] | .03 | .02 | 1.83 | [-.00, .06] |
| OFQ → Outcome | .74* | .28 | 2.58 | [.17, 1.30] | -.15 | .33 | -.44 | [-.80, .51] |
| Indirect effect (Total) | .02 | .02 | | [-.01, .05] | -.00 | .01 | | [-.02, .01] |
| Indirect effect (OFQ) | .01 | .01 | | [-.01, .03] | -.00 | .01 | | [-.02, .01] |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Authentic Self** | | | | | | | | |
| Au → Outcome (total) | .18 | .14 | 1.31 | [-.09, .45] | -.71*** | .16 | -4.51 | [-1.02, -.40] |
| Au → Outcome (direct) | .16 | .14 | 1.19 | [-.11, .43] | -.71*** | .16 | -4.50 | [-1.02, -.40] |
| Au → OFQ | .03 | .03 | .86 | [-.03, .07] | .03 | .03 | .95 | [-.03, .08] |
| OFQ → Outcome | .75* | .28 | 2.64 | [.19, 1.31] | .06 | .33 | .18 | [-.58, .70] |
| Indirect effect (Total) | .02 | .02 | | [-.03, .07] | .00 | .01 | | [-.02, .04] |
| Indirect effect (OFQ) | .01 | .01 | | [-.01, .03] | .00 | .01 | | [-.01, .01] |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Freedom of Online Self** | | | | | | | | |
| Fr→ Outcome (total) | -.00 | .09 | -.00 | [-.18, .18] | .44*** | .10 | 4.28 | [.24, .64] |
| Fr → Outcome (direct) | -.06 | .09 | -.61 | [-.24, .12] | .46*** | .11 | 4.39 | [.27, .67] |
| Fr → OFQ | .07 | .02 | 4.15 | [.04, .10] | .07*** | .02 | 4.10 | [.04, .10] |
| OFQ → Outcome | .81* | .29 | 2.77 | [.23, 1.38] | -.34 | .34 | -1.00 | [-1.00, .33] |
| Indirect effect (Total) | .06 | .03 | | [.01, .11] | -.02 | .03 | | [-.10, .04] |
| Indirect effect (OFQ) | .03 | .01 | | [.01, .06] | -.01 | .02 | | [-.05, .01] |

Note: Adapt= Adaptable self, Au= Authentic self, Fr= Freedom of online self, OFQ= Online friendship quality, PA= Positive affect, NA= Negative affect, total= total effect, direct = direct effect, CI = 95% bias-corrected confidence interval
***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, all analyses which were interprested extensively. This chapter has also summarised the findings to the research questions and hypotheses of this study.  It was found that adaptable self and freedom of self online positively connected to online friendship quality, online friendship quality is positively associated with positive affect, adaptable self positively linked to negative affect while authentic self negatively associated with negative affect. Moreover, online friendship quality found to mediated the link between freedom of self online and positive affect. This chapter serves as the transition to Chapter 5, where these findings will be addressed in depth.

**Chapter V**

**Introduction**

This chapter discusses three parts of the statistical analysis based on the result obtained from the previous chapter. The first part will examine and highlight the findings that may or may not support the study's objective. The next part discusses the implication, following by limitations and recommendations for future research. Lastly, the final part will concludes the research.

**Online Self-Presentation and Online Friendship Quality**

Based on the results, adaptable online self and freedom of online self-presentation were positively correlated with online friendship quality. The finding is consistent with the study done by Lee and Borah (2020), reported that self-presentation (ideal and ought self) on social media shows a significant positive relationship with friendship development. Self-presentation involves several intrinsic and extrinsic core factors, "self-expression," using social media and its functionalities. Openness tends to increase among people who utilise social media to express themselves through captions, comments, images, etc. For example, posting photos, online pictures may assist in conveying a story and captivating the audience's imagination (Ades et al., 2017). They also aid in recollecting recent events and maintaining social connections (Kumpel et al., 2015).

Moreover, as an individual grow up their self- concept and identity changes especially emerging adults where they enter another stage of life where they explore different identity and different role (Kroger et al., 2010). They also display themselves as socially attractive online (Yang & Brown, 2015). With a positive self-concept, "self-esteem", individuals would improvise on their ability to have better relationships with others (Metzler & Scheithauer, 2017). Individuals' self-concept is influenced by how others see and appreciate them; feeling

accepted by others with positive feedback boosts one's self-esteem; therefore, such positive communication would greatly facilitate better quality and forming a closer friendship with their online peers. Additionally, an individual's interpersonal self benefits from the social support they get from online friends, which results from their happiness being socially connected to having many online friends, as does their ability to maintain an excellent online persona. So, it gradually leads the Malaysian individuals to a higher level of engagement on online platforms, hence, a positive link to forming online relationships.

However, results obtained showed no relationship between authentic self-presentation and online friendship quality. Authenticity refers to the expression of the true self. Authentic self-expression could be threatened when there is pressure to disclose oneself to a close relationship or believe the negative relationship not to express their true self (Impett et al., 2008). Similarly, followed study identified that individuals were not presenting authentic versions of themselves but solely testing out new identities with their online acquaintances (Marriott & Buchanan, 2014). The Internet allows people to express their genuine selves through anonymous and non-identifiable online interactions (Bargh et al., 2002; McKenna et al., 2002). Also, indicating that the Internet's facilitation of displaying one's actual self was limited to new acquaintances and not to online interactions with those known offline (McKenna et al., 2002). And so, the inconsistent result between the findings obtained and past studies can be due to an individual's personality in which they are open in expressing themselves. For instance, people from the individualistic culture value their benefits, and they prefer to be more autonomous, whereas collectivist cultured people are individuals who value long-term relationships (Triandis, 2001). During stressful circumstances, they may be more prone to seek help from family and friends. Consequently, each individual has risen to specific values and beliefs to represent themselves in new identities and form a unique bond or relationship with the people they meet. Yet, with present findings, with or without

presenting authentic self, seems not relevant to friendship quality formation among the sample of the study. A possibility for the Malaysians, where each individual differs in saying their true self in front of another individual as strangers, such as people they know online, might hinder their authentic self-expression or wish to share. Even though a large percentage of individuals have favourable experiences on social media, some fear not wanting to self-disclose or may express themselves in ways others may find unappealing or not, as some online friends can be very judgmental, some are carefree (Anderson & Jiang, 2018); hence this causes the quality of building the friendship to have zero effect.

**Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being**

*Online Self-Presentation and Positive Affect*

All the subscales of online self-presentation, adaptable self, authentic self, and freedom of online self have reported no significant relationships with positive affect. According to past studies, from the direct beneficial impact of positive self-presentation on well-being, it was deduced that social media users' happiness is boosted when their positive self-images are better kept and reinforced with self-presentation (Kim & Lee, 2011). Similarly, the following study reported that an individual's well-being is facilitated and positively correlated by authentic self-presentation and self-expression (Bailey et al., 2020). People are more likely to desire having good views about themselves, from which self-improvement emerges, which is closely replicated by the act of positive self-presentation (Robins & Beer, 2001). Although many emerging adults in Malaysia have pleasant experiences on social media, some have conveyed the feeling of tension or forced them to show themselves in a specific manner, to feel accepted or acknowledged by their online peers. But, the likelihood of using positive self-presentation is very much high because emerging adults might feel compelled to exhibit socially acceptable aspects of themselves online. To use this opportunity only to share pieces of stuff that makes them appear suitable

in the eyes of their online peers that will generate a higher number of likes and comments, positive feedback (Michikiyan et al., 2020; Yang & Brown, 2015). Thus, one can easily seem more content, share values that may appeal to others. Still, some may force to do so, leading them to maintain a specific ideal public image they or others want to portray; hence, the chances of encountering positive affect are zero with such self-presentation.

### Adaptable Self-Presentation and Negative Affect

The study results revealed that those who have higher adaptable self-presentation tend to experience more negative emotions. Adaptable self refers to how individuals display multiple selves to exhibit the most desirable self while in a different setting or facing a diverse audience. According to Bazarova et al. (2012) study, the results indicated that people use emotive language widely that conveys pleasant feelings to reach out to many people on social media. Following the study, results signified that displaying oneself in an optimistic, desired, and appealing perspective influences how one expresses positive and negative emotions (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Lin & Qiu, 2013). Adaptable self can also be referred to as the discrepancy between one ideal self and true self. It was found that self-discrepancy is associated with a wide range of negative affect such as anger, shame, guilt, rumination (Mason et al., 2019). Thus, the result is consistent with the past findings. Emerging adults in Malaysia might experience the need to display their best self by shifting or exhibiting a different self on social media, which causes them to undergo negative emotions that might include anxiety, stress, and guilt as they have to act in a way that is opposed to their real feelings by suppressing their true emotions or expression. The suppression of self to express or present what they really want or who they really will lead to the development of stress and anxiety to always fear that the self they presented is not good enough as it was found that individuals who tend to suppress their emotions are more likely to be depressed (Cameron &

Overall, 2018). In correspond to the findings on emotional neglection increase the level of depression (Cohen et al., 2017).

### *Freedom of Self Online and Negative Affect*

Also, result revealed that the experience of more freedom of self online will leads to higher experience of negative emotions. Freedom of online self refers to how individuals could freely express themselves on social media or towards their online friends. Anderson and Jiang (2018) found that teens sometimes or often post their selfies on social media and can reach or interact with different groups of people. It was reported that teens prefer to share and discuss their issues with close friends. Even though social media helps to connect people together, it was reviewed that it could harm the emotional well-being of an individual due to pressure having to post contents or posts that make them look or the need to gain likes or comments (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The stress of having to regularly present a non-realistic and senseless self on social network to ensure own perfectionism lead to the experience of anxiety an depression (Amedie, 2015). Hence, this past finding is inconsistent with the result obtained where freedom of online self is positively related to negative affect. The ability for Malaysian emerging adults to freely express themselves on social media might contribute to distress or experience of negative emotion might be due to the feedback received from others or the likes or comments obtained from social media. As supported by past studies, an individual's happiness was associated with the likes received (Marengo et al., 2020), in which people were more likely to feel unhappy and frustrated due to the inconsistent likes and comments received, resulting in altering what they posted online (Stsiampkouskaya et al., 2021).

*Authentic Self-Presentation and Negative Affect*

The correlation results also denoted that higher authentic self-presentation leads to the experience of lesser negative affect. The finding was supported by the result found in the past that authentic self-presentation of social network site users experiences a reduced level of depression in adolescents (Wang et al., 2019) and college students (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). It was also proved that the engagement in authenticity brings beneficial changes in one's affection in which being authentic could reduce the social impairment related to social anxiety disorder (Plasencia et al., 2016). Emerging adults in Malaysia exhibited high authenticity on social media as they received positive feedback and felt less negativity, contributing to the continuity in engaging in being their authentic selves.

**Online Friendship Quality and Emotional Well-Being**

*Online Friendship Quality and Positive Affect*

The findings obtained where online friendship quality has a positive correlation with positive emotions are consistent with the past studies' conclusions. According to Valkenburg and Peter (2007c), online communication and its features determine the quality of one's friendship; therefore, a greater amount of closeness to friends positively links their well-being. Consequently, with the addition of good quality of friends, another study found that using online communication to connect with their peers was indirectly beneficial for their well-being and negatively influenced depression (LaRose et al., 2001). It allows people to have the time to compose a response to anything distressing before they send it (Irvine & Calif, 2017), which is a reasonable control of their emotional regulation. And so, to validate our results, emerging adults in Malaysia perceive with good friendship qualities, an individual can facilitate building stronger positive friendships over social media, communicating openly, honestly, accepting, and being able to adapt to each other's differences. Furthermore, individuals with positive online friendships/connections enable

them to keep in touch with their online friends throughout the day and night without worrying about interrupting their life, able to respect one's time and wishes to have more time to interact or respond to each other. Hence, having an amazing online friendship allows emerging adults to communicate freely with their online friends and promote a more significant experience of positive emotions.

### Online Friendship Quality and Negative Affect

Subsequently, online friendship quality has no significant correlation with negative affect. According to Reavis et al. (2015), individuals who lack supportive peers may be more susceptible to experiencing negative moods frequently. The most typical emotional reaction to messages and remarks of being mistreated is one of hurt, despair, and depression. The social relationship was found to decrease one's psychological distress (Nguyen et al., 2015). It was also revealed that the low friendship quality would evoke anxiety (Amati et al., 2018). An individual who tends to experience low friendship quality was found to experience higher loneliness (Lodder et al., 2015). Thus, the result obtained is inconsistent with the past findings as no relationship was found between online friendship quality and negative affect. To justify our findings, emerging adults in Malaysia might concern more about the quality of their offline friendship. As reflecting the current situation where the outbreak of Covid-19 restricted human interaction, the offline friendship of an individual has been interrupted, contributing to more significant worries (Ellis et al., 2020). In that case, Malaysian emerging adults might not see online friendship quality as a factor contributing to their experience of negative emotions. In addition to the interaction with their online friendships might contribute to a non-significant relationship with negative affect due to the lack of skills in communicating with online friends, which makes them feel impassive.

**Mediation and Emotional Well-Being**

Online self freedom was found could positively impact online friendship quality, subsequently linked to positive affect. Freedom of online self refers to how individuals could freely express themselves on social media. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Wood et al. (2015), Valkenburg and Peter (2007c), indicating the mediating role of friendship on social media use and well-being. The quality of online friendship will affect one's sharing and presentation, leading to a positive emotion. Friendship quality includes a few features such as sharing (Mardiawan & Helmi, 2020). Sharing refers to how individuals share what they have in mind or are willing to tell people more about themselves. The freedom of the online self can be related to sharing, where emerging adults could freely express themselves and share their thoughts with their online friends or on social media, which increases their experience of positive emotions.

However, the results presented that adaptable self and authentic self were not able to affect positive effect through its influence on online friendship quality. Also, adaptable, authentic, and freedom of self were not found to influence negative affect through online friendship quality. According to past research done by Wood et al. (2015), it has mentioned that friendship relation could be a potential mediator between social media use and well-being. Also, an earlier study done by Valkenburg and Peter (2007c) confirmed closeness to friends as a mediating role for internet communication and well-being. Both studies supported friendship and proximity to a friend as mediating roles in social media use and well-being. Hence, the result was inconsistent with the past findings in which friendship could mediate the linkage between self-presentation and emotional well-being. The inconsistency could be due to the past measured friendship development, friendship quantity, and closeness as a mediator. At the same time, this study used online friendship quality to measure its mediating effect between self-presentation and emotional well-being. Friendship

quality consists of different features such as intimacy, help, companionship, emotional security, and voluntariness (Mardiawan & Helmi, 2020). The online friendship quality of emerging adults in Malaysia does not mediate self-presentation with emotional well-being as they could not feel the closeness with their online friends or feel that their online friends could not provide companionship or help when needed. An individual might feel insecure to interact with online friends or uncomfortable to present their real self or real thoughts on social media causing them tend to potray a fake self or present themselves as how others would like them to present. As the closeness, companionship, intimacy, and emotional security components for friendship quality was not fulfilled, thus, resulting in no connection to one's friendship quality. Whereas, the fake self presentation result in increasing negative emotions (Mason et al., 2019). The association between self-presentation was found but not the linkage between self-presentation and online friendship quality. Therefore, the connection between self-presentation to online friendship quality and towards emotional well-being are not significant.

Despite that, only having one out of six analyses proved the mediating effect of online friendship quality. The mediation analysis results provide preliminary findings on the mediating role of friendship quality in the relationship between online self-presentation and emotional well-being. Future studies may further examine these associations to verify the results of the present study.

**Implications**

*Theoretical Implications*

Self-presentation theory introduced by Goffman (1959) explains how an individual would behave or act to present themselves as to how they want people to see them in front of a different audience group. This study measured how self-presentation is linked to emotional well-being with online friendship quality as the mediator among emerging adults in Malaysia.

In the past, there was a lack of application of self-presentation theory in the study on online friendship quality and emotional well-being, especially in Malaysia. The result of the study was able to contribute to future research to have a better understanding of self-presentation theory and its application in the online friendship context. The findings were able to strengthen the past findings and provide the opportunity to further expand the explanation or investigation of results in future studies such as examining the causal relationship between the variables. It also allows researchers to expand the application of self-presentation theory in future social media research.

Moreover, the findings have contributed to filling in the knowledge gap which serves as the literature for future studies. The reveal of a new variable, the freedom of online self, allows further investigation in the future on self-presentation studies and how it can be associated with one's friendship quality and well-being. Also, researchers could further examine freedom of self online as a mediator in future social media studies. It enables the future researcher to study more on the freedom of online self to expand the definition for self-presentation theory and research on self-presentation. Hence, the study provides future researchers insight on how freedom of online self can be used as a factor or component for online self-presentation.

### *Practical Implications*

The advancement of technology and the Internet increased one's possibilities for developing and maintaining new friendships online. The understanding of self-presentation is essential in ensuring one's well-being, and it would also affect friendship online. The findings allow an individual to acknowledge that the presentation of self could contribute to the quality of friendship online. It also reveals how their emotions will be affected by presenting themselves online with their friends. It increases their awareness in maintaining a proper and healthy self-presentation to avoid the experience of negative emotions.

In addition, the finding on online friendship quality and positive affect provides an insight to the healthcare practitioner educator in being aware of the development and the ongoing trend of online friendship development and the quality associated with one's emotional states. It also triggers their attention on the self-presentation perception among social media users and emerging adults to govern the increase in negative emotions by introducing an early awareness intervention program. As findings found, authentic self-presentation is negatively related to negative affect, meaning if an individual is not genuine, it will increase their experience of negative emotion. In that case, it allows healthcare or educational practitioners to focus on improving the importance of authenticity to reduce the possibility of experiencing negative emotions.

Other than that, findings revealed that online friendship quality could mediate the linkage between freedom of online self and positive emotion. This result could contribute to individuals knowing that their feelings can be influenced by their ability to freely express themselves on social media through their online friendship quality. In other words, the more individuals can express themselves freely on social media or to their online friends, the more positive emotions one will experience through the high online friendship quality perceived. Individuals can portray themselves in a way they want people to see them without restricting what they could say or how they could behave on social media.

**Limitations & Recommendations**

Although the study sheds new light on the online self-presentation, emotional well-being, and online friendship quality among emerging adults in Malaysia, our study has several limitations. Firstly, the fundamental disadvantage of cross-sectional studies is that the temporal relationship between the outcome and the exposure cannot be ascertained since both are investigated simultaneously. Thus, it is impossible to tell whether the exposure or

outcome occurred first. Therefore, future researchers may apply longitudinal to explore dynamic rather than static concepts.

Besides that, purposive sampling has difficulty generalising a study's results. In addition, it might be difficult for researchers to persuade others that the study has considerable representativeness of the broader population of interest. Therefore, future researchers may consider using the probability sampling approach, which utilises random selection.

Thirdly, the self-report survey that has enabled the participants to have room for personal influence and bias. The response given by participants could differ from who they really are and what they truly felt. Therefore, it is crucial for future researchers to clearly state the purpose and objectives of the study to the participants before participants attempt the survey questions. To prevent personal influences, bias, recency effects as a whole, future researchers should ask questions in a neutrally worded manner, provide more accessible but precise yet understandable questions, and avoid misleading questions or answers.

Next, there is also a recency effect on the responses received as participants tend to select the most recent answer they read. Typically, respondents who exhibit this pattern have already disengaged from the research survey. Researchers shall design or structure surveys appropriately to lower the possibility of this issue occurring. Any survey aspect can cause response bias, therefore building the survey based on respondents' reactions towards each component. For example, placing the most opinionated questions after the survey rather than at the start can reduce the number of people who avoids answering it. If a query that looks to be judgmental or personal appears early in the survey questionnaire, it may insult respondents and cause them to leave the survey entirely.

Apart from that, as mentioned previously, the total responses we received initially was 448. However, only 340 response is complete. Thus, 106 responses given by participants

were either incomplete or identical scales for each question. In this case, it is referred to as non-differentiation in ratings, also called Straight lining. It occurs when respondents lose interest in a survey due to boredom, lack of mental energy, or perceiving it as too complicated and demanding. To prevent fewer total respondents, disengaging participants from a survey is always crucial in increasing the sample size from the total targeted number. Therefore, it can lead to more generalised findings and decreases non-differentiation ratings among the data collected from the participants.

Moreover, after gathering some feedback from participants, the most common issue is that the questionnaire is time-consuming and lengthy, facing difficulties in answering the questions, which could have contributed to inconsistent and random responses from the survey. Therefore, to ensure participants do not lose research interest quickly, researchers should keep the questionnaire short and precise. For example, use shorter abbreviations that all understand and avoid complex or confusing questions. Thus, straightforward, relevant questions and answers make it convenient for participants to answer them in a much shorter time frame.

Also, this survey caters for English. It might cause a dilemma for participants who are not proficient enough in that language; they might misinterpret the meaning of questions asked in the survey. The survey could be made available in different languages, for instance, *"Bahasa Melayu"* or *"Mandarin"*, not only in English to cater to Malaysia's multicultural people so that it's easier for every individual to understand and answer the survey questions in a non-bias manner.

Lastly, the use of mediation analysis to test the mediation effect of online friendship quality restricted the finding as it only measured and answered the hypothetical mediation model due to the nature of the cross-sectional design that limits the identification of cause

and effect. Thus, future research can adopt the research framework of the study and verify using longitudinal research design.

**Conclusion**

This study is aimed to determine the mediating role of online friendship quality in the association between online self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia. The total number of participants who participated in this study is 342 emerging adults in Malaysia. Three scales were used in this research: Presentation of Online Self-Scale for Adults (POSSA) by Strimbu et al. (2021), McGill Friendship Questionnaire-Respondent's Affection (MFQ-RA) by Mendelson and Aboud (2012), and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF) by Watson et al. (1988). Based on the results of the inferential analysis, only six out of 17 hypotheses were met and supported. This study has found that adaptable self-presentation and freedom of online self are positively associated with online friendship quality. Adaptable self-presentation was found positively associated with negative affect while authentic self-presentation is negatively associated with negative emotions. Next, online friendship quality is significantly associated with positive emotions among emerging adults in Malaysia yet act as a mediator between freedom of online self and positive emotions**.**

Nonetheless, this study has contributed to the literature on online self-presentation, friendship quality, and emotional well-being. The study also suggests to emerging adults in Malaysia that friends we met online will impact and contribute to an individual's emotions. Presenting a different version of self and expressing it out freely at the same time will lead to a sense of satisfaction when it comes to online friendship. Not only that, but this study also has given insight into how online friendship is an intermediary between the two variables, positive emotions and freedom of online self, and how it connects to one another.

Meanwhile, research regarding online self-presentation and emotional well-being is relatively underexplored. Therefore, further studies would help explain how self-presentation affects a person's emotional state, specifically between freedom of self presentation and positive affect.

**Chapter Summary**

As mentioned in the chapter introduction, this chapter covers the conclusions obtained from the analysis and interpretation of the data covered in the prior chapter. In addition, limitations of this study were also discussed, followed by recommendations for future researchers.

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**Appendix A: Online Survey Questionnaire**

UAPZ 3013 Final Year Project
Department of Psychology and Counselling
Faculty of Arts and Social Science
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

We are final year undergraduate students of Bachelor of Social Science (HONS) Psychology from University Tunku Abdul Rahman (Kampar Campus) conducting our final year project.

**Participant Information Sheet**

**Title of the study:**
The Association between Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being among Emerging Adults in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Online Friendship Quality

We would like to invite you to participate in this research study. However, before you decide to do so, it is essential for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Kindly take your time to read and go through the following information carefully. You are welcome to ask questions if anything you read is unclear or hope to clarify more information. Do note that your decision to participate is voluntary and have the right to refuse.

**What is the purpose of this study?**
This research project aims to determine the mediating role of online friendship quality in the association between online self-presentation and emotional well-being among emerging adults in Malaysia. Other than that, this research is being undertaken as part of our course structure to complete our degree requirement.

**What will taking part involve?**
You will be required to complete an online survey which will take approximately 20 minutes. By completing three sections related to online self-presentation, online friendship quality, and emotional well-being.

**Why have you been invited to take part?**
You are invited to participate in this survey as you fulfill all the criteria: a). Malaysian b). 18-29 years old c). A social media user

**Do you have to take part?**
Kindly take note that participation in this research is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time without giving any explanation.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Participating in the research study will not put you at any risk, cause you any disadvantages, or develop any feeling of discomfort.

**How will information you provide be recorded, stored, and protected?**

All of the information we gather throughout the study will remain private and confidential. Any information you provide will be kept secure format secured by passwords and other relevant security procedures. Data gathered may be shared in an anonymize form with the research team and any third parties for re-use.

This research will be conducted in accordance with the UTAR's Research Ethics and Code of Conduct. Researchers will seek ethical approval to conduct the study from the UTAR Scientific and Research Committee before distributing the survey.

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

Research results will be published. You will not be able to be identified in any sort of report or publication and your personal data will be untraceable. Kindly inform us to include you in our circulation list if you would like to have a copy of any reports arising from the study.

**Who should you contact for further information?**

This research study is supervised by Mr. Tan Soon Aun. You may contact Mr. Tan via tansa@utar.my if you have any inquiries.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any inquiries.
*Avethra Muthu Pandian (avethrapillai@1utar.my)*
*Cheong Wan Ning (bunny.ning@1utar.my)*
*Lee Sue Qin (leesueqin@1utar.my)*

Understood

→

## Consent Form for Research Participation and Personal Data Protection

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the UTAR researchers for their records. I understand I have been asked to take part in the research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that I will be asked to complete a questionnaire about my choice of online self-presentation, online friendship quality, and emotional well-being.

My participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way. I may ask at any time for my data to be withdrawn from the project. No information I have provided that could lead to the identification of any other individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. I will remain anonymous at all times in any reports or publications from the project. It is my sole responsibility to look after my own safety for the above project. In the event of any misfortune or accidental injury involving me, whether or not due solely to personal negligence or otherwise, I hereby declare that UTAR shall not be held responsible.

I acknowledge that if I do not consent or subsequently withdraw my consent to the processing and disclosure of my personal data, UTAR will not be able to fulfill their obligations or to contact me or to assist me in respect of the purposes and/or for any other purposes related to the purpose.

By submitting this form, I hereby authorize and consent to UTAR processing (including disclosing) my personal data and any updates of my information, for the purposes and/or for any other purposes related to the purpose.

## Acknowledgment of Personal Data Protection Notice

I have been notified by you and that I hereby understood, consented and agreed per UTAR above notice.

I disagree, my personal data will not be processed.

Your age:

_____

Gender:

Male

Female

Race:

Malay

Chinese

Indian

Others (Specify):

_____

Religion:

Muslim

Buddhist

Hindu

Christian

Others (Specify):

Are you a Malaysian?

Yes

No

Are you a social media user?

Yes

No

→

## Part B:

**Self-Presentation: A behaviour that intended to convey information about oneself or an ideal self to others.**

Instructions: Below are 17 items that may or may not apply to you. Select a score from 1(Strongly disagree) to 5(Strongly agree) to indicate the extent to which you agree with the item.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I very often act out different personas in certain online spaces. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 2. I regularly use different personas online. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 3. I enjoy acting out different identities online. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 4. Being online allows me to create a new identity. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 5. I am a different person depending on which online space I'm in. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 6. I can escape from myself online. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. I feel I am the same person in the cyber world that I am in the real world. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 8. I am always my true self online. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 9. I can't really be myself online. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 10. The way I present myself online differs significantly from real life. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. I find it easier to communicate in face-to-face contexts. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 12. I find it difficult to be myself in the real world. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 13. I prefer being online than offline. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 14. I can show my best qualities online. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 15. Communicating online allows me to say the things I can't say offline. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 16. I feel I can be my ideal self online. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 17. I can talk to people who wouldn't usually talk to me in the real world. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

→

*Note.* From " Adaption and psychometric evaluation of the Presentation of Online Self Scale in adults," by N. Strimbu, M. O'Connell, F. Nearchou, and C. Ó'Sé, 2021, *Computers in Human Behavior Reports, 3,* p.100073 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2021.100073). Copyright 1969 by Elsevier.

**Part C:**

**Online Friend: Friends who you know, meet, and make through an online setting.**

The items on this form concerning your feelings for your friend. **Imagine that the blank space in each item is your online friend's name.** With him or her in mind, decide how much you agree or disagree with the item.

*Instructions:* Select one answer below to indicate how much you agree that the statement describes your feelings.

| | Very Much Disagree -4 | Very Much Disagree -3 | Somewhat Disagree -2 | Somewhat Disagree -1 | Neither Agree or Disagree 0 | Somewhat Agree 1 | Somewhat Agree 2 | Very Much Agree 3 | Very Much Agree 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am happy with my friendship with ___. | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| 2. I care about ___. | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| 3. I like ___ a lot. | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| 4. I feel my friendship with ___ is a great one. | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| 5. I am satisfied with my friendship with ___. | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| 6. I feel my friendship with ___ is good. | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |

| | Very Much Disagree -4 | Very Much Disagree -3 | Somewhat Disagree -2 | Somewhat Disagree -1 | Neither Agree or Disagree 0 | Somewhat Agree 1 | Somewhat Agree 2 | Very Much Agree 3 | Very Much Agree 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. I want to stay friends with ___ for a long time. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 8. I prefer ___ over most people I know. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 9. I feel close to ___. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 10. I think my friendship with ___ is strong. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 11. I am pleased with my friendship with ___. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 12. I am glad that ___ is my friend. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Very Much Disagree -4 | Very Much Disagree -3 | Somewhat Disagree -2 | Somewhat Disagree -1 | Neither Agree or Disagree 0 | Somewhat Agree 1 | Somewhat Agree 2 | Very Much Agree 3 | Very Much Agree 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. I hope ___ and I will stay friends. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 14. I would miss ___ if he/she left. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 15. I am content with my friendship with ___. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 16. I enjoy having ___ as a friend. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

→

*Note.* From " *McGill Friendship Questionnaire-Respondent's affection (MFQ-RA),*" by M. J. Mendelson and F. Aboud, 2012, Measurement Instrument Database for the Social Science. (https://www.midss.org/content/mcgill-friendship-questionnaire-%E2%80%93- respondents-affection-mfq-ra). CC BY-NC.

**Part D:**

**Emotional Well-being: The positive and negative emotions that one experiences.**

*Instructions:* This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. **Kindly indicate to what extent you feel this way over the past week** from **1(Very Slightly or Not at All)** to **5(Extremely)** scale below. Please be open and honest in your response.

| | Very Slightly or Not At All | A Little | Moderately | Quite A Bit | Extremely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Interested | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 2. Distressed | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 3. Excited | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 4. Upset | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 5. Strong | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 6. Guilty | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 7. Scared | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Very Slightly or Not At All | A Little | Moderately | Quite A Bit | Extremely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Hostile | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 9. Enthusiastic | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 10. Proud | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 11. Irritable | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 12. Alert | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 13. Ashamed | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 14. Inspired | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Very Slightly or Not At All | A Little | Moderately | Quite A Bit | Extremely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. Nervous | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 16. Determined | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 17. Attentive | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 18. Jittery | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 19. Active | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 20. Afraid | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

→

*Note.* From " *Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales,*" by D. Watson, L. Clark and A. Tellegen, 1988, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*, p.1063-1070 (https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.6.1063). Copyright 1988 by American Psychological Association.

**Appendix B**

**Monte Carlo Power Analysis**

**Online Self-Presentation, Online Friendship Quality and Negative Emotions**



| Parameter | N | LL | Power | UL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ab | 50.00 | 0.73 | 0.89 | 0.96 |
| ab | 51.00 | 0.77 | 0.91 | 0.97 |
| ab | 52.00 | 0.80 | 0.92 | 0.97 |
| ab | 53.00 | 0.83 | 0.93 | 0.97 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ab | 55.00 | 0.88 | 0.94 | 0.98 |
| ab | 56.00 | 0.89 | 0.95 | 0.98 |
| ab | 57.00 | 0.91 | 0.96 | 0.98 |
| ab | 58.00 | 0.92 | 0.96 | 0.98 |
| ab | 59.00 | 0.93 | 0.97 | 0.99 |

$N = 58$ at 0.96 power

**Online Self-Presentation, Online Friendship Quality and Positive Emotions**



| Parameter | N | LL | Power | UL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ab | 50.00 | 0.44 | 0.51 | 0.58 |
| ab | 51.00 | 0.45 | 0.52 | 0.58 |
| ab | 52.00 | 0.46 | 0.52 | 0.59 |
| ab | 53.00 | 0.46 | 0.53 | 0.59 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ab | 197.00 | 0.93 | 0.95 | 0.97 |
| ab | 198.00 | 0.93 | 0.96 | 0.97 |
| ab | 199.00 | 0.93 | 0.96 | 0.97 |
| ab | 200.00 | 0.94 | 0.96 | 0.97 |

$N = 200$ at 0.96 power

$$N=(200+58)/2$$
$$=129$$

**Appendix B1**

**Self-Presentation and Friendship Quality Correlation (Swenson & Rose, 2009)**

## Table 2

Correlations Among Self- and Friend-Reported Internalizing and Externalizing Adjustment, Positive Friendship Quality and Self-Disclosure

|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Self-reported internalizing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| (2) Self-reported externalizing | $0.34^{\#}$ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| (3) Friends' own internalizing | 0.11 | $-0.19^{**}$ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| (4) Friends' own externalizing | $-0.19^{**}$ | $0.14^{*}$ | $0.34^{\#}$ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| (5) Friend-reported internalizing | $0.18^{**}$ | $-0.05$ | $0.45^{\#}$ | $0.24^{***}$ |  |  |  |  |  |
| (6) Friend-reported externalizing | $-0.04$ | $0.25^{***}$ | $0.21^{**}$ | $0.45^{\#}$ | $0.56^{\#}$ |  |  |  |  |
| (7) Self-reported positive friendship quality | 0.08 | $-0.15^{*}$ | 0.13 | $-0.15^{*}$ | 0.03 | $-0.04$ |  |  |  |
| (8) Friend-reported positive friendship quality | 0.13 | $-0.15^{*}$ | 0.08 | $-0.15^{*}$ | $-0.10$ | $-0.22^{**}$ | $0.62^{\#}$ |  |  |
| (9) Self-reported self-disclosure | 0.12 | $-0.10$ | 0.14 | $-0.12$ | 0.08 | 0.02 | $0.77^{\#}$ | $0.61^{\#}$ |  |
| (10) Friend-reported self-disclosure | $0.14^{*}$ | $-0.12$ | 0.12 | $-0.10$ | 0.06 | $-0.03$ | $0.61^{\#}$ | $0.77^{\#}$ | $0.67^{\#}$ |

$^{*}p<0.05,$
$^{**}p<0.01,$
$^{***}p<0.001,$
$^{\#}p<0.0001$

## Table 1

Mean Scores for Self- and Friend-Reported Internalizing and Externalizing Adjustment and for Positive Friendship Quality and Self-Disclosure for the Entire Sample and by Gender

|  | Total sample M (SD) | Girls M (SD) | Boys M (SD) | t value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-reported internalizing | 13.36 (8.62) | 15.36 (9.10) | 10.42 (6.89) | $4.22^{***}$ |
| Self-reported externalizing | 12.12 (7.68) | 10.78 (6.76) | 14.08 (8.52) | $2.05^{*}$ |
| Friend-reported internalizing | 8.80 (8.21) | 9.91 (7.64) | 7.15 (8.78) | $3.19^{**}$ |
| Friend-reported externalizing | 10.74 (9.18) | 10.24 (7.81) | 11.48 (10.90) | 0.97 |
| Positive friendship quality | 3.60 (0.94) | 3.85 (0.84) | 3.20 (0.96) | $3.96^{***}$ |
| Self-disclosure (whole sample) | 3.65 (1.20) | 4.16 (0.90) | 2.90 (1.19) | $7.22^{***}$ |
| Grade 5 | 3.23 (1.28) | 3.68 (1.17) | 2.64 (1.20) | $2.60^{*}$ |
| Grade 8 | 3.71 (1.30) | 4.34 (0.74) | 2.35 (1.21) | $6.69^{***}$ |
| Grade 11 | 3.96 (0.88) | 4.36 (0.64) | 3.49 (0.91) | $4.47^{***}$ |

$^{*}p<0.05,$
$^{**}p<0.01,$
$^{***}p<0.0001$

## Appendix B2

## Self-Presentation, Positive and Negative Emotions Correlation  (Hill et al., 2019)

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Perfectionistic Self-Presentation and Emotional Experiences.

| Variable | Wave 1 | | | | | | | Wave 2 | | | | | | | Wave 3 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. Perfectionistic self-promotion | 3.69 | 0.92 | .80 | | | | | 3.71 | 0.98 | .86 | | | | | 3.52 | 1.10 | .90 | | | | |
| 2. Non-display of imperfection | 4.59 | 0.99 | .61** | .85 | | | | 4.49 | 0.88 | .66** | .82 | | | | 4.32 | 1.05 | .73** | .87 | | | |
| 3. Non-disclosure of imperfection | 3.10 | 0.91 | .59** | .54** | .73 | | | 3.24 | 0.96 | .57** | .51** | .78 | | | 3.16 | 0.99 | .65** | .63** | .79 | | |
| 4. Positive feelings | 3.89 | 0.68 | −.06 | −.10 | −.18 | .86 | | 3.84 | 0.56 | −.17 | −.15 | −.16 | .83 | | 3.91 | 0.59 | −.29** | −.27* | −.32** | .85 | |
| 5. Negative feelings | 2.25 | 0.77 | .07 | .29** | .20* | −.50** | .86 | 2.41 | 0.78 | .17 | .20* | .20 | −.60** | .85 | 2.40 | 0.70 | .21 | .41** | .25* | −.59** | .82 |

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, two-tailed. Cronbach's α is reported on the diagonals.

**Appendix B3**

**Friendship Quality, Positive Emotions and Negative Emotions (Abraham & Kerns,**

**2013)**

**Table 1.**  Means, standard deviations, and ranges

|  | N | Mean (SD) | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attachment security | 104 | 3.30 (.48) | 1.67 | 4.00 |
| Positive emotion experience | 106 | 7.30 (1.97) | 2.00 | 10.00 |
| Negative emotion experience | 106 | 1.94 (1.76) | .00 | 8.30 |
| Social-support coping | 106 | 3.62 (.71) | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Problem-solving coping | 106 | 3.11 (.60) | 1.93 | 4.93 |
| Friendship conflict | 97 | 1.91 (.80) | 1.00 | 4.00 |
| Friendship positive quality | 97 | 4.13 (.66) | 2.30 | 5.00 |
| Peer rating | 73 | 3.77 (.93) | 1.50 | 6.00 |

Note. N = 106.

**Table 2.**  Correlations among attachment, emotion, and friendship variables used in analyses

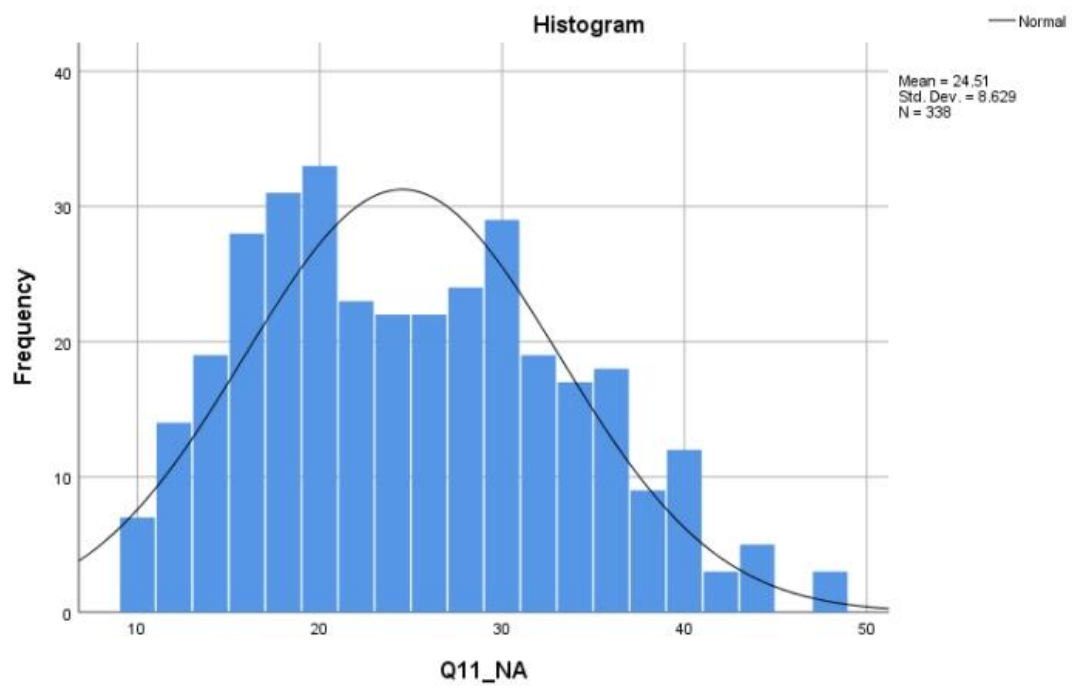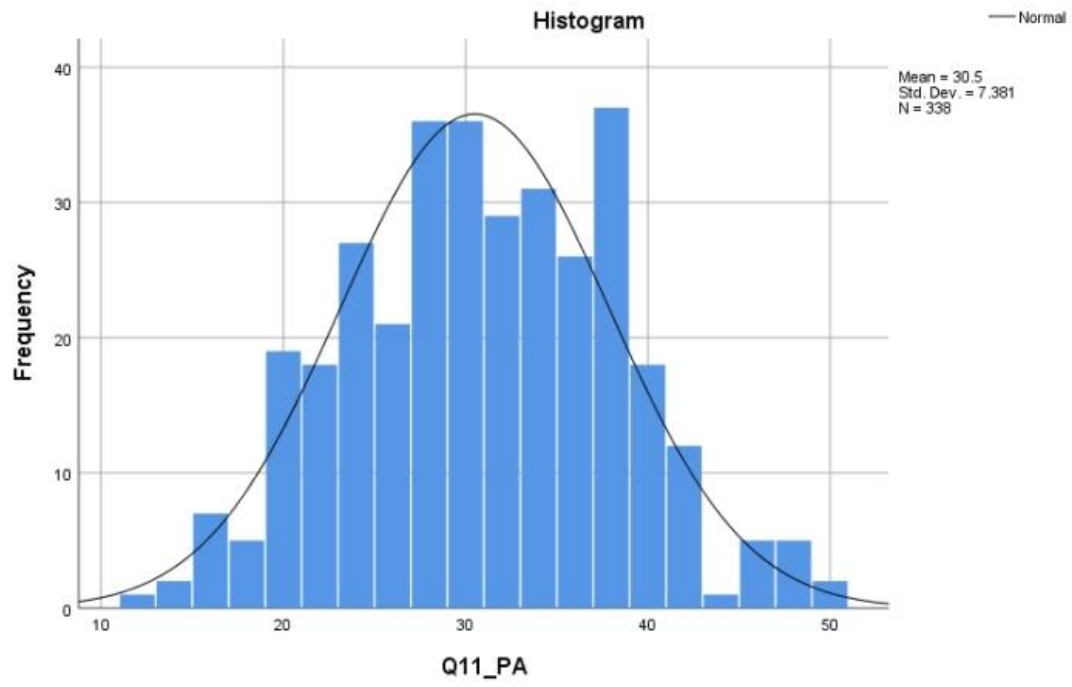|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Attachment security | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 2. Positive emotion experience | .34** | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 3. Negative emotion experience | –.43** | –.26** | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 4. Social-support coping | .33***ᵃ | .07 | –.18 | – | – | – | – | – |
| 5. Problem-solving coping | .21* | .01 | –.25** | .44***ᵃ | – | – | – | – |
| 6. Best-friend conflict | –.17 | –.16 | –.25** | –.14ᵃ | –.19 | – | – | – |
| 7. Best-friend quality | .32** | .38** | –.11 | .27*ᵃ | .14 | –.27** | – | – |
| 8. Peer rating | .27* | .28* | –.04 | .17ᵃ | .15 | .07 | .24* | – |

Note. ᵃPartial correlation controlling for age. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
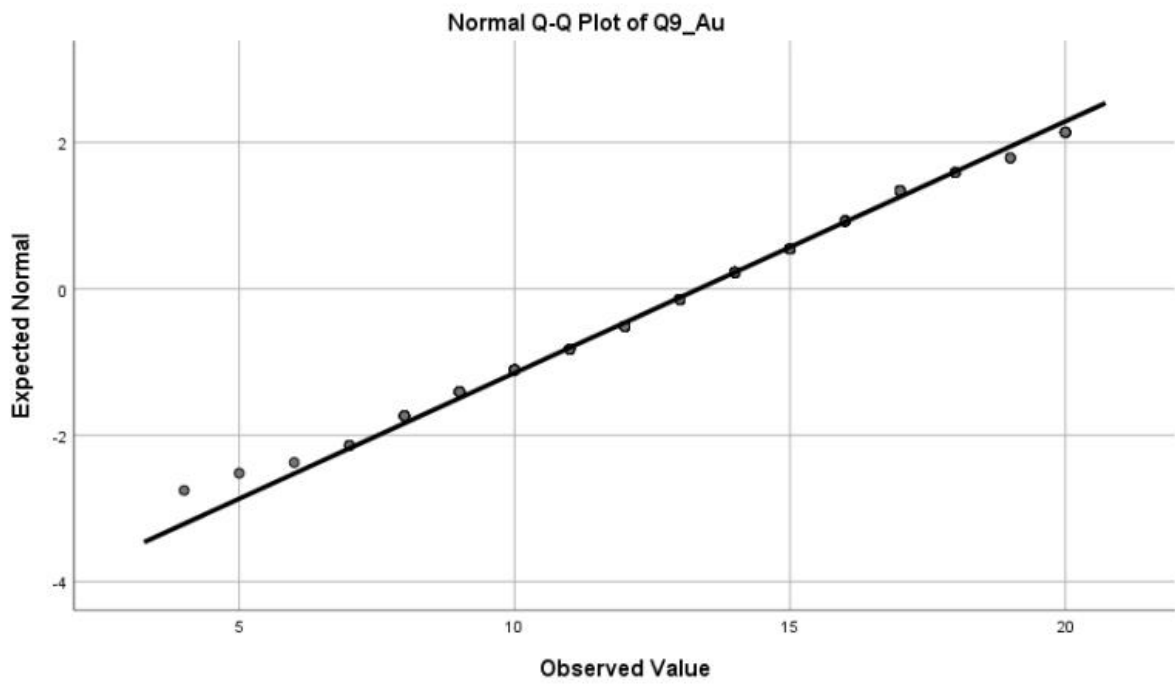
**Appendix C1**

**Histogram**

**Appendix C2**

**P-P Plot**

Normal Q-Q Plot of Q9_Fr



Normal Q-Q Plot of Q10_FQ

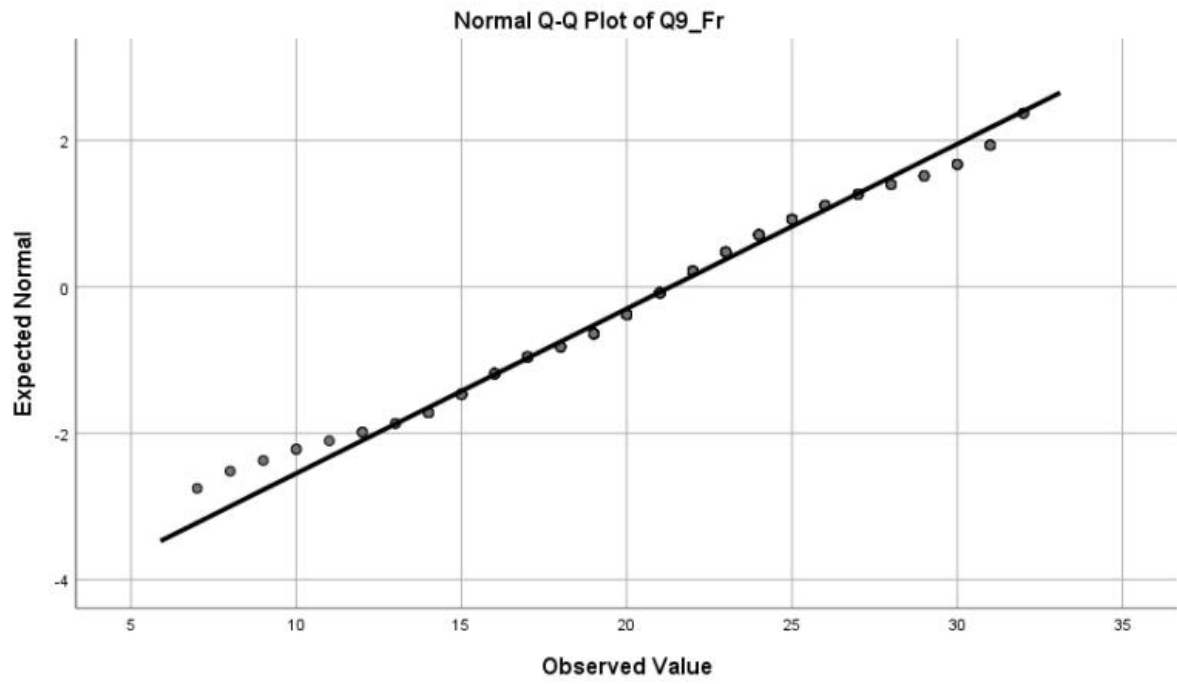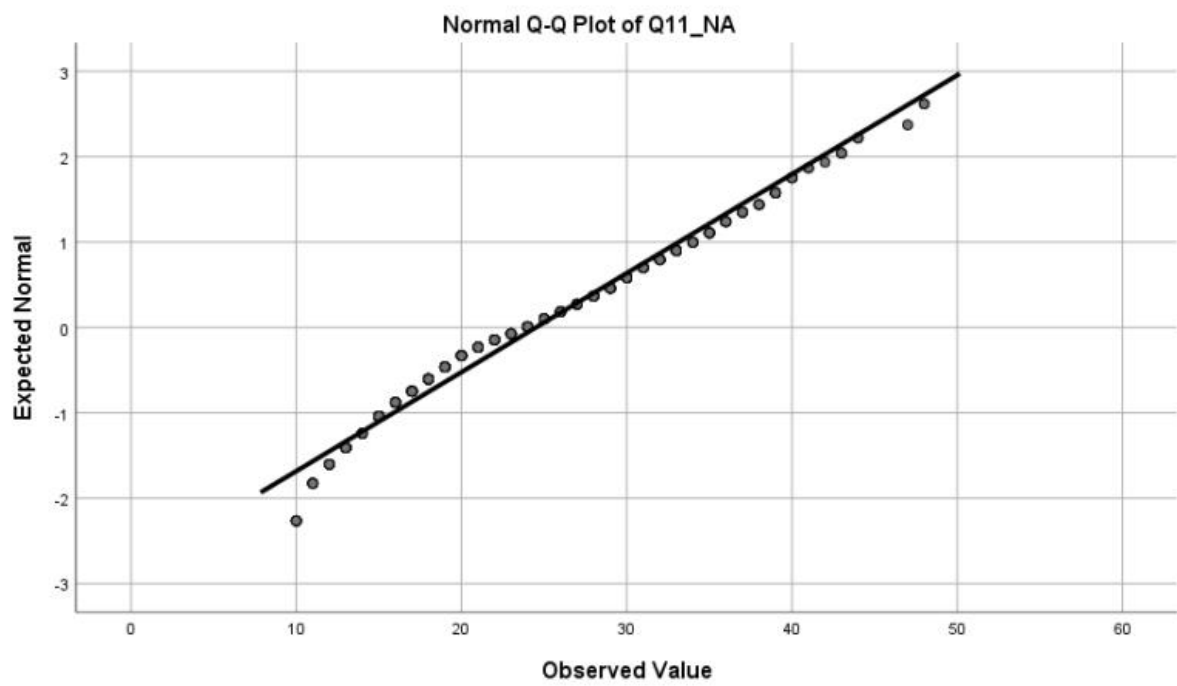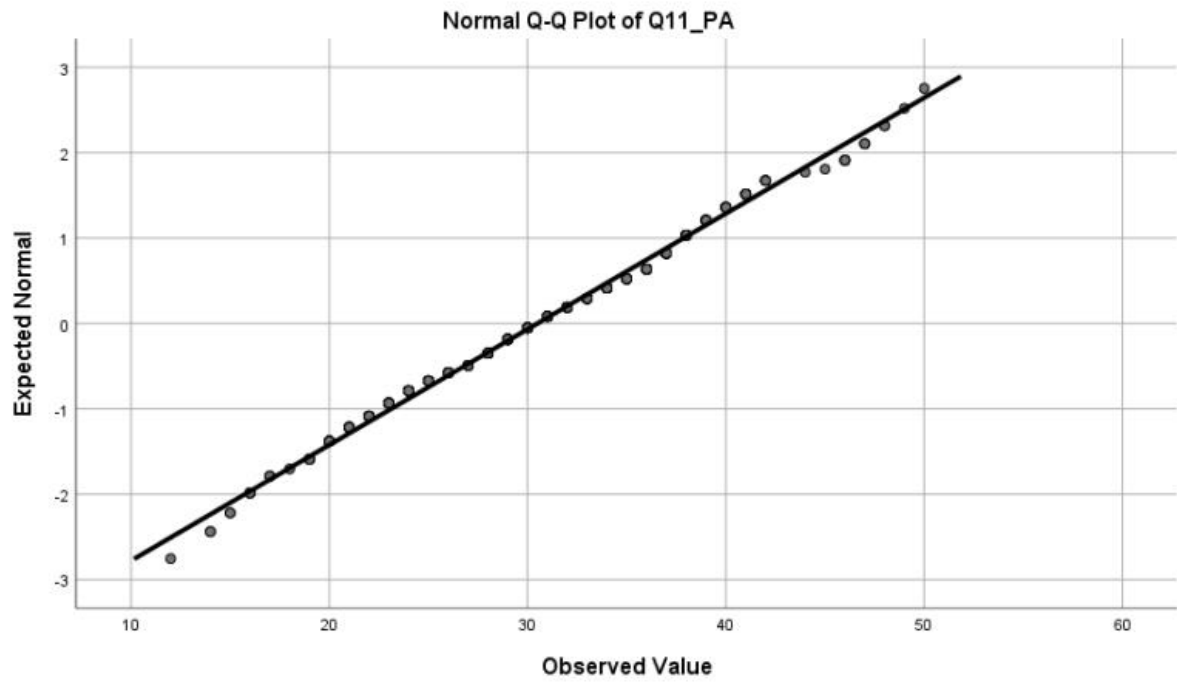Normal Q-Q Plot of Q11_PA



Normal Q-Q Plot of Q11_NA
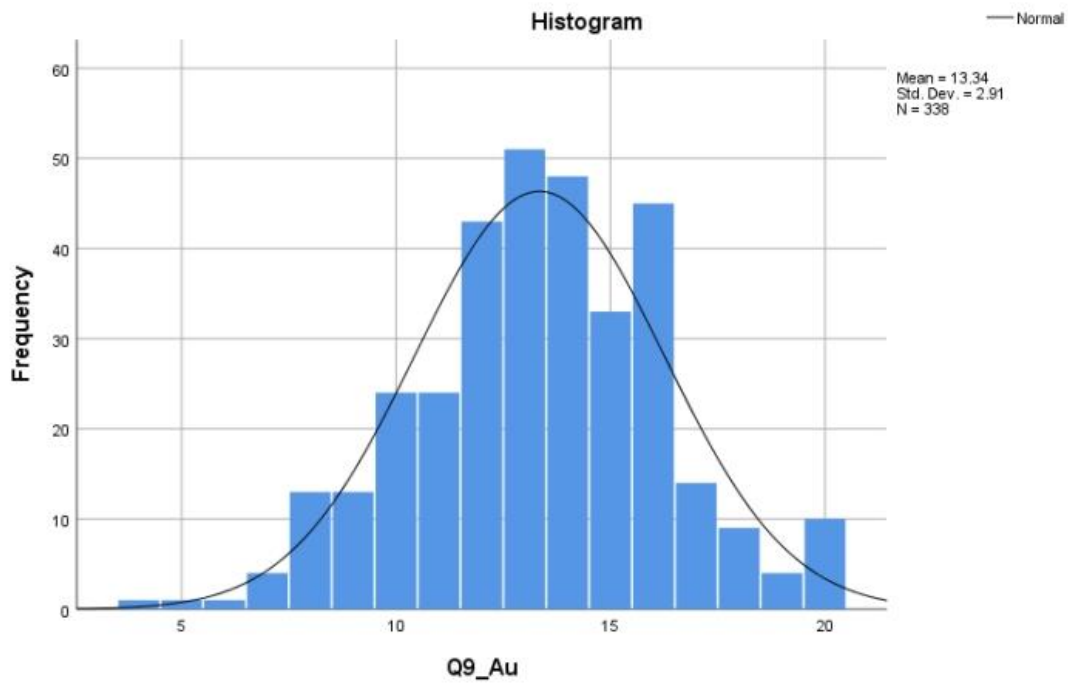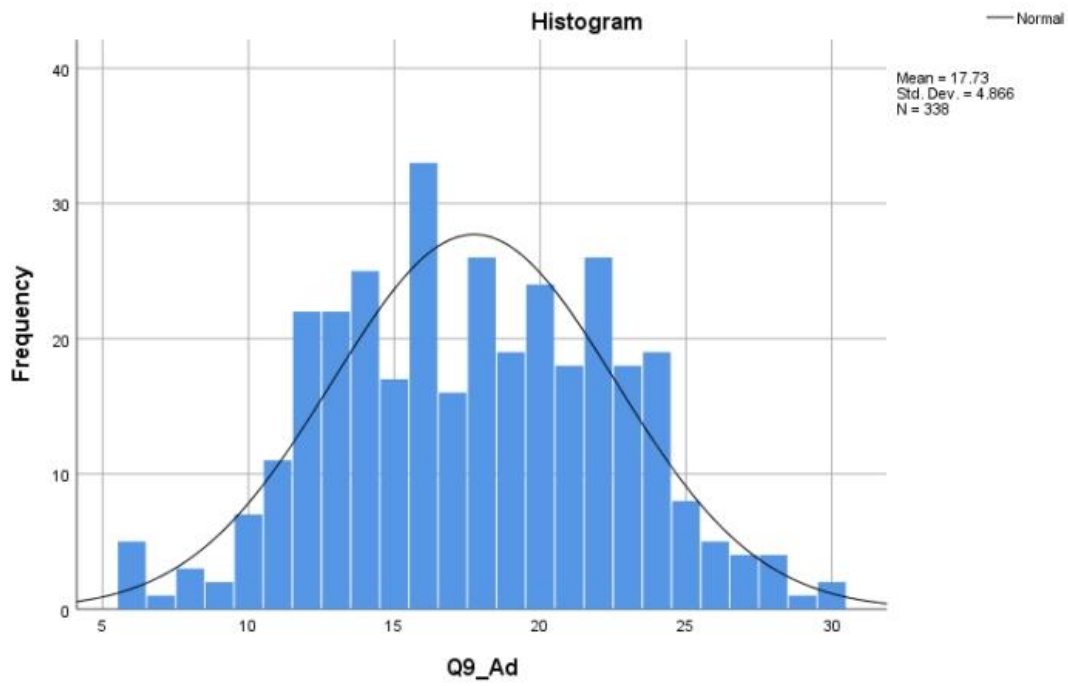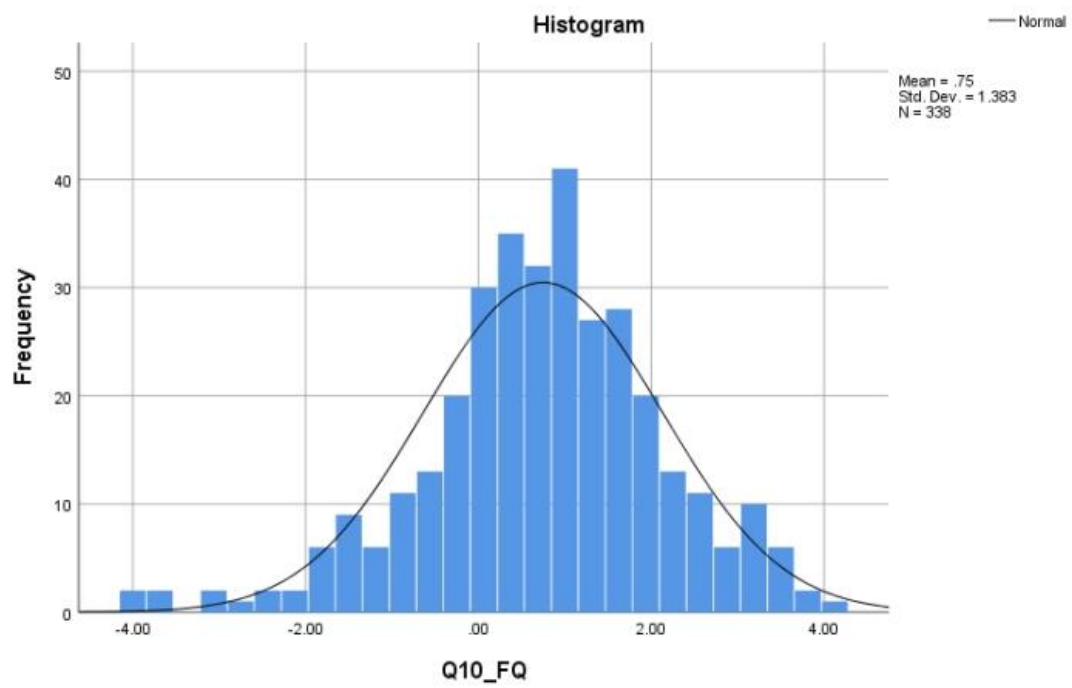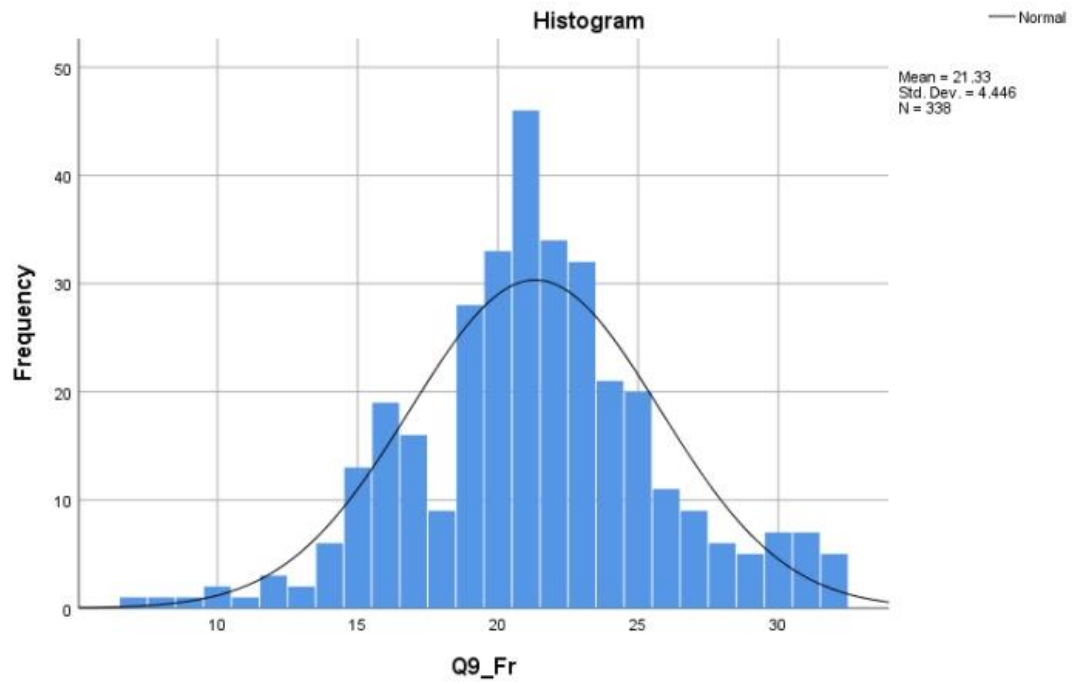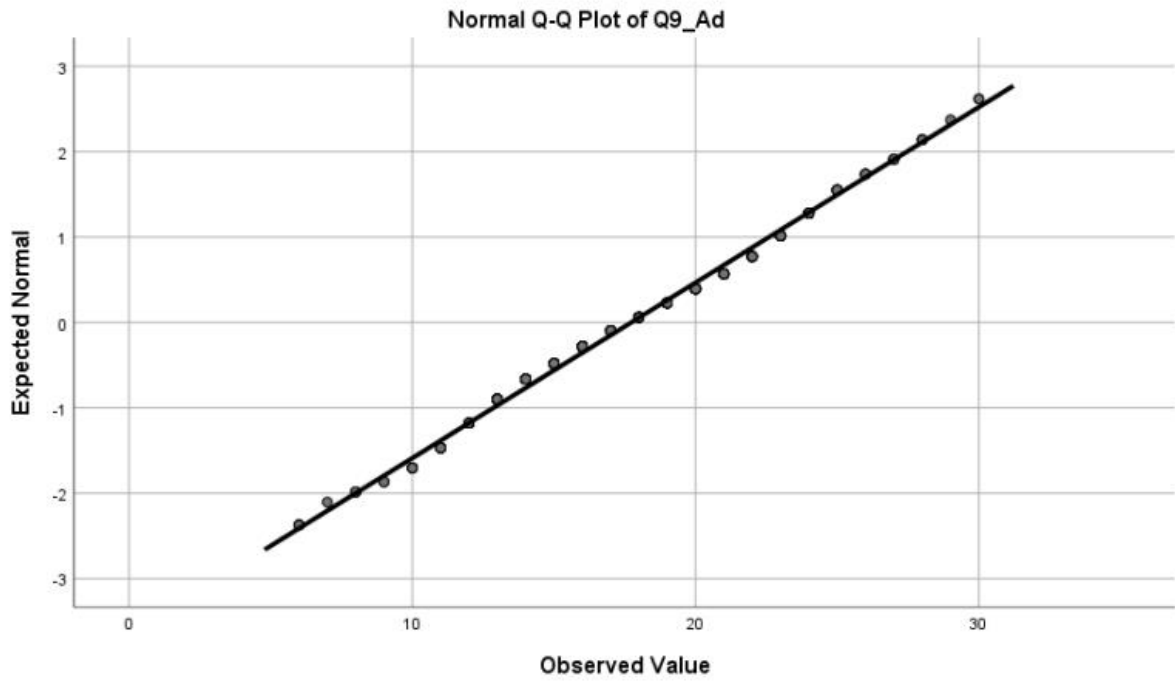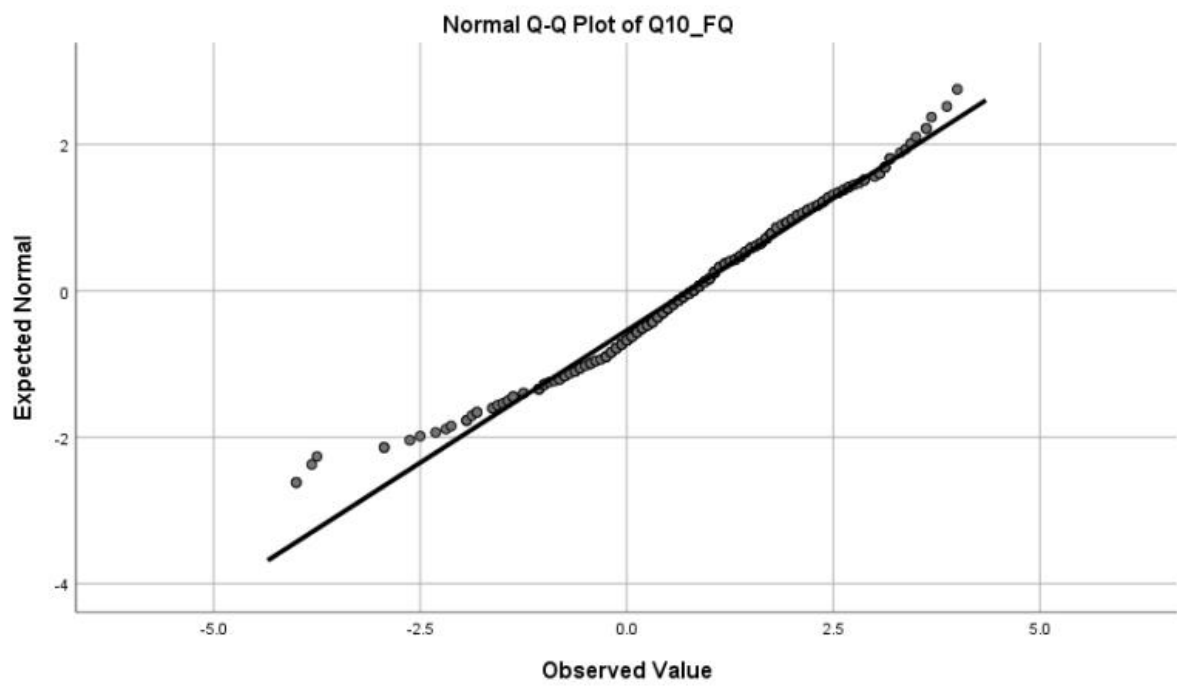
## Appendix D

## Durbin Watson value

*Modal Summary of predictors*

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|----|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .21 | .04 | .03 | 7.27 | 1.68 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q10_FQ, Q9_Au, Q9_Fr, Q9_Ad
b. Dependent Variable: Q11_PA
*Note*. Q9_Ad (Adaptable Self); Q9_Au (Authentic Self); Q9_Fr (Freedom of self online); Q10_FQ (Online Friendship Quality); Q11_PA (Positive Affect)

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|----|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .29 | .09 | .08 | 8.33 | 1.94 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q10_FQ, Q9_Au, Q9_Fr, Q9_Ad
b. Dependent Variable: Q11_NA
*Note*. Q9_Ad (Adaptable Self); Q9_Au (Authentic Self); Q9_Fr (Freedom of self online); Q10_FQ (Online Friendship Quality); Q11_NA (Negative Affect)

**Appendix E1**

**Author's Approval for Instrument Use**

**Adoptation and Psychometric Evaluation of The Presentation of Online Self Scale in Adults**

Computers in Human Behavior Reports
Volume 3, January–July 2021, 100073

# Adaption and psychometric evaluation of the Presentation of Online Self Scale in adults

N. Strimbu ⊠, M. O'Connell ⊠, F. Nearchou ⊠, C. Ó'Sé ⊠

University College Dublin, School of Psychology, Dublin, 4, Ireland

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**Appendix E2**

**Author's Approval for Instrument Use**

**McGill Friendship Questionnaire-Respondent's Affection**

From: **Morton J. Mendelson** <morton.mendelson@mcgill.ca>
Date:  Tue, 27 July 2021, 10:35 am
Subject: Re: Permission to Use Questionnaire Tool
To:  Cheong Wan Ning <bunny.ning@1utar.my>


Hello,

Please see the attached.

Good luck with your research.

MJM

---

From: Cheong Wan Ning <bunny.ning@1utar.my>
Sent:  Monday, 26 July 2021, 7:45 pm
To: Morton J. Mendelson <morton.mendelson@mcgill.ca>
Subject: **Permission to Use Questionnaire Tool**

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Cheong Wan Ning, and I am currently a final year Psychology student from University Tunku Abdul Rahman at Kampar, Perak, Malaysia. My team and I are conducting a research entitled "Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being among Emerging Adults in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Online Friendship Quality" for our thesis. I am writing to obtain your permission to use the McGill Friendship Questionnaire-Respondent's Affection (MFQ-RA) by Mendelson and Aboud (2012) in my research study. The article can be found using this hyperlink: https://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/mfqlng.pdf). My research is being supervised by my supervisor, Mr. Tan Soon Aun, Lecturer and Head of Programme at University Tunku Abdul Rahman, who can be reached at tansa@utar.edu.my.

**Appendix E3**

**Author's Approval for Instrument Use**

**Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)**

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION LICENSE
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

July 29, 2021

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**Appendix F**

**Ethical Approval from UTAR Scientific and Research Committee**

**UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN**
Wholly Owned by UTAR Education Foundation (Company No. 578227-M)

Re: U/SERC/196/2021

3 September 2021

Dr Pung Pit Wan
Head, Department of Psychology and Counselling
Faculty of Arts and Social Science
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
Jalan Universiti, Bandar Baru Barat
31900 Kampar, Perak.

Dear Dr Pung,

**Ethical Approval For Research Project/Protocol**

We refer to the application for ethical approval for your students' research projects from Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) Psychology programme enrolled in course UAPZ3013/UAPZ3023. We are pleased to inform you that the application has been approved under Expedited Review.

The details of the research projects are as follows:

| No | Research Title | Student's Name | Supervisor's Name | Approval Validity |
|----|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Role of Happiness Belief: Mediating Lying Flatism and Attitudes Toward Singlehood | 1. Heng Zeng Qing<br>2. Chin Joey | Dr Tan Chee Seng | 3 September 2021 - 2 September 2022 |
| 2. | The Association Between Online Self-Presentation and Emotional Well-Being Among Emerging Adults in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Online Friendship Quality | 1. Avethra Muthu Pandian<br>2. Cheong Wan Ning<br>3. Lee Sue Qin | Mr Tan Soon Aun | |

The conduct of this research is subject to the following:

(1) The participants' informed consent be obtained prior to the commencement of the research;

(2) Confidentiality of participants' personal data must be maintained; and

(3) Compliance with procedures set out in related policies of UTAR such as the UTAR Research Ethics and Code of Conduct, Code of Practice for Research Involving Humans and other related policies/guidelines.

(4) Written consent be obtained from the institution(s)/company(ies) in which the physical or/and online survey will be carried out, prior to the commencement of the research.

Should the students collect personal data of participants in their studies, please have the participants sign the attached Personal Data Protection Statement for records.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Ts Dr Faidz bin Abd Rahman**
Chairman
UTAR Scientific and Ethical Review Committee

c.c    Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Science
       Director, Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research