

Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being: A Correlational Study on Senior High School Students

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Abstract

Psychological well-being is important for adolescents' social, emotional, and academic development. Previous studies have mainly examined broad factors such as social support, social competence, and communication skills, while the specific role of pragmatic sensitivity remains less examined. This study examines the relationship between pragmatic sensitivity and psychological well-being among high school students. A quantitative cross-sectional correlational design was used with 80 tenth-grade students from SMA Negeri 93 Jakarta Timur, selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using two five-point Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, linearity testing, and Pearson correlation. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between pragmatic sensitivity and psychological well-being ($r = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that students who are better at understanding and responding appropriately in communication tend to have better psychological well-being. This study contributes to the study of psychological well-being by highlighting pragmatic sensitivity as an important communication skill. The finding also has practical implications for guidance and counseling services that support students' communication skills and psychological well-being.

Key words: *Adolescence; Pragmatic Competence; Social Communication; Interpersonal Functioning; Psychological Functioning.*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is an important developmental stage marked by substantial biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this period, students must adapt simultaneously to academic demands, peer relationships, and increasingly complex social environments. Psychological well-being is therefore an important dimension of healthy adolescent development because it encompasses positive functioning, meaningful relationships, personal growth, autonomy, and effective engagement with the surrounding environment (Ryff, 1989, 2014). Recent research further indicates that adolescents' psychological well-being is closely associated with the quality of their social relationships and social functioning, including support from peers, family, and school environments (Chan et al., 2022).

One interpersonal factor that may be relevant to students' psychological well-being is pragmatic sensitivity. Within the perspective of Pragmatic Competence/Interlanguage Pragmatics, pragmatic ability involves understanding and using language in relation to communicative intentions, contextual conditions, and socially appropriate norms (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Pragmatic sensitivity can consequently be understood as an individual's attentiveness to contextual meaning, interlocutors' intentions, and the appropriateness of communicative responses. This dimension is particularly relevant during adolescence, when peer interaction and social acceptance become increasingly important. Previous research also suggests that linguistic abilities are associated with broader aspects of communication, including sociocultural dimensions of language use, indicating that effective communication extends beyond linguistic form to the social context in which language is used (Masrul & Melani, 2024). Contemporary research on adolescent social interaction similarly demonstrates that social interaction skills are associated with dimensions of well-being, while research on pragmatic and

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social-communication assessment highlights the importance of context-sensitive communication abilities during the school years (Butler et al., 2022; Gómez-López et al., 2022; Lamash et al., 2024; Timler & Covey, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, Psychological Well-Being is conceptualized within Ryff's eudaimonic well-being framework as multidimensional functioning encompassing self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989, 2014). Several of these dimensions have an inherently interpersonal component, particularly positive relations with others and environmental mastery. Empirical studies among adolescents support the relevance of interpersonal functioning to well-being; for example, social competence and psychological well-being have been found to be positively associated over time, while supportive relationships across family, school, and peer contexts are related to better psychological functioning (Butler et al., 2022; Gómez-López et al., 2022). Research also indicates that adolescents' social interaction skills are associated with subjective well-being across both face-to-face and digital contexts (Lamash et al., 2024). The importance of contextual and sociocultural dimensions in communication is further illustrated by research showing that integrating cultural identity into language education can strengthen intercultural competence and contextual relevance (Kurniati et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, previous research has examined adolescent psychological well-being primarily through broad factors such as social support, peer relationships, and social competence (Butler et al., 2022; Chan et al., 2022; Gómez-López et al., 2022), while recent studies also highlight the roles of social competence, communication patterns, and pragmatic-social communication in adolescent psychological functioning (Aneesh et al., 2024; Den Hartog et al., 2023; McNeilly et al., 2023; Sia & Aneesh, 2024). Studies of adolescent language use further show that communication changes according to social relationships and context, as seen in the use of politeness strategies and social media communication (Saefudin, Santosa, et al., 2026; Saefudin, Sentosa, et al., 2026). Pragmatic studies also show that communicative intentions and social relationships influence how language is used to express emotions, create humor, and build solidarity (Albab et al., 2026; Saefudin et al., 2024, 2025). Together, these findings show that effective communication involves more than linguistic form; it also requires sensitivity to context, relationships, intentions, and appropriate responses. However, previous studies have mainly examined broad social and communication constructs or specific pragmatic practices, rather than Pragmatic Sensitivity as a specific interpersonal-communicative capacity. Thus, it remains unclear whether sensitivity to communicative intentions, contextual meaning, and appropriate responses is related to adolescents' psychological well-being.

Pragmatic sensitivity is also different from broader social competence and general communication skills. Social competence generally refers to a wider ability to function effectively in social situations. Communication skills also cover a broad range of abilities used to exchange information and interact with others. Pragmatic sensitivity focuses more specifically on how individuals understand and respond to meaning in context. It involves noticing communicative intentions, understanding contextual expectations, considering the interlocutor, and selecting a response that is appropriate for a particular situation. Therefore, pragmatic sensitivity can be viewed as a specific interpersonal-communicative capacity that may support broader social functioning. This distinction is important because previous research has provided evidence for the role of broad social and communication factors in well-being, but less is known about the specific role of context-sensitive pragmatic processes.

The main gap in previous research is therefore not the lack of evidence about communication and adolescent well-being, but the limited attention to the specific pragmatic processes involved in communication. Previous studies have shown that social support, social competence, communication skills, and social interaction are related to adolescent psychological functioning (Butler et al., 2022; Chan et al., 2022; Gómez-López et al., 2022; McNeilly et al., 2023). Pragmatic studies have also shown that adolescents and young people use language in ways that depend on context, social relationships,

communicative intentions, and interpersonal closeness (Albab et al., 2026; Saefudin et al., 2024, 2025; Saefudin, Santosa, et al., 2026; Saefudin, Sentosa, et al., 2026). However, these broad constructs do not specifically explain the role of recognizing communicative intentions, contextual meaning, and appropriate responses. The present study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among Grade X students at SMA Negeri 93 East Jakarta. The novelty of the study lies in connecting a specific pragmatic-linguistic construct with a broader psychosocial outcome. By examining these constructs together, the study provides a more specific perspective on the role of context-sensitive communication in adolescent psychological functioning.

Building on this gap, the present study examines the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among Grade X students at SMA Negeri 93 East Jakarta. Rather than viewing pragmatic sensitivity only as a language-related ability, this study considers it as an interpersonal capacity that may be relevant to how adolescents navigate social interactions and maintain psychological functioning. Using a quantitative cross-sectional correlational design, the study examines whether students with greater sensitivity to communicative intentions, contextual expectations, and appropriate responses also tend to report higher psychological well-being. This study brings together Pragmatic Competence/Interlanguage Pragmatics (Kasper & Rose, 2002) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being framework (Ryff, 1989, 2014). Through this connection, the study aims to provide a more specific understanding of the communicative dimension of psychological well-being and a practical basis for educational and guidance-and-counseling programs that promote contextual communication, perspective-taking, and socially appropriate interaction among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional correlational survey design to examine the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among Grade X students at SMA Negeri 93 East Jakarta. A quantitative approach is appropriate for examining relationships between measurable variables using numerical data and statistical procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study involved 80 students selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires, consisting of one instrument for Pragmatic Sensitivity and one instrument for Psychological Well-Being. The Pragmatic Sensitivity instrument had validity coefficients between 0.312 and 0.761, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.872, while the Psychological Well-Being instrument had validity coefficients between 0.305 and 0.784, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.901. These results indicated that both instruments met the required validity and reliability criteria. No exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in the present study. Ethical principles were maintained through informed consent and confidentiality of participants' data. Data were analyzed using Python with pandas, NumPy, SciPy, Statsmodels, and Matplotlib. Descriptive statistics, linearity tests using the Ramsey RESET and Rainbow tests, and Pearson's product-moment correlation were conducted, with statistical significance evaluated at $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This study examined the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among Grade X students at SMA Negeri 93 East Jakarta. The results are presented in terms of respondents' characteristics, descriptive statistics, the linearity assumption, and the Pearson correlation analysis.

Respondents' Characteristics

The study involved 80 Grade X students at SMA Negeri 93 East Jakarta, comprising 59 female and 21 male students. The participants were selected using cluster random sampling. As Grade X students are in an early stage of senior high school, they are experiencing a developmental transition involving increasing social interaction, greater independence, and broader participation in peer and

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school environments. This context is relevant to the study because pragmatic sensitivity concerns students' ability to recognize communicative intentions, contextual expectations, and socially appropriate responses in interpersonal interactions.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being.

Tabel 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Pragmatic Sensitivity	80	1.49	0.19	0.58	1.50	1.83
Psychological Well-Being	80	4.07	0.55	2.00	4.00	5.00

As shown in Table 1, Pragmatic Sensitivity had a mean score of 1.49 (SD = 0.19), whereas Psychological Well-Being had a mean score of 4.07 (SD = 0.55). The mean and median values were relatively close for both variables, indicating that their central values were broadly similar. These descriptive results provide an overview of the distribution of Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being in the sample.

Linearity Test

Before conducting the correlation analysis, a linearity test was performed to examine whether the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being could be appropriately examined using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The Ramsey RESET test produced a significance value of 0.3577, while the Rainbow test produced a significance value of 0.2984. Both values were greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no statistically significant deviation from linearity. Therefore, the linearity assumption was considered satisfied, and Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Test Results

Tested Relationship	r	Sig.
Pragmatic Sensitivity → Psychological Well-Being	0,668	<0,001

The Pearson correlation analysis showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being ($r = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$). The magnitude of the correlation indicates a strong positive association within the present sample. Thus, students with higher levels of Pragmatic Sensitivity tended, on average, to report higher levels of Psychological Well-Being. However, because the study employed a cross-sectional correlational design, this finding should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that Pragmatic Sensitivity causes changes in Psychological Well-Being.

DISCUSSION

The main finding indicates that Pragmatic Sensitivity was positively associated with Psychological Well-Being among Grade X students in the present sample. This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting relationships between social communication, interpersonal competence, and psychological well-being among adolescents (Dall et al., 2022; Gómez-López et al., 2022). Pragmatic competence has also been associated with effective communication and the development of interpersonal relationships (García-Gómez, 2022). In addition, adolescents' social interaction skills have been related to well-being in both face-to-face and social media interactions (Lamash et al., 2024). A meta-analysis has further reported an association between language ability and social competence (Wieczorek et al., 2024). Taken together, these studies provide a relevant context for understanding the positive association observed in the present study.

The finding is also consistent with research concerning adolescent social functioning. Previous studies have indicated that pragmatic abilities are associated with peer support, prosocial behavior, and broader social functioning during adolescence (Dall et al., 2022; McNeilly et al., 2023). Social-communication abilities have likewise been linked to mental health outcomes across childhood and adolescence (Xu et al., 2023). From this perspective, Pragmatic Sensitivity may be relevant to students' ability to understand social cues, communicative intentions, and contextual meanings. Such abilities may facilitate more contextually appropriate responses during interpersonal interactions. In turn, positive interpersonal experiences may be associated with students' Psychological Well-Being. Nevertheless, the present study did not directly examine these processes.

One possible theoretical explanation for the observed association concerns social cognition. Pragmatic communication requires individuals to attend to social cues, communicative intentions, and contextual information. Students who are more sensitive to these aspects may be better able to interpret what is occurring in an interaction and distinguish between different communicative meanings. For example, recognizing whether a statement is intended as a joke, a serious comment, or an indirect expression may reduce the possibility of misunderstanding. Pragmatic Sensitivity may therefore be related to more accurate interpretation of social situations and more appropriate interpersonal responses.

Empathy and perspective-taking may provide another possible explanation. Interpersonal communication often requires individuals to consider what other people may think, feel, or intend. Sensitivity to others' perspectives may help students select responses that are more appropriate to a particular social context and may reduce the likelihood of interpersonal misunderstanding or conflict. Positive interpersonal interactions may provide experiences of acceptance, connection, and social support that are relevant to Psychological Well-Being. However, empathy and perspective-taking were not directly measured in the present study. Accordingly, they should be regarded as possible theoretical explanations rather than mechanisms established by the empirical findings.

Pragmatic Sensitivity may also be related to interpersonal adaptation. Students communicate with different interlocutors in different contexts, and communication with a close friend may require different linguistic and interpersonal choices from communication with a teacher or a new classmate. Sensitivity to contextual differences may help students adjust their words, tone, and responses according to the interactional situation. Such adaptation may be associated with fewer misunderstandings and more positive interpersonal experiences. Again, this interpretation represents a possible explanation of the observed association rather than a causal pathway tested in the present study.

Emotional regulation and communication anxiety may also be relevant to the relationship between the two variables. Social interactions can involve emotions such as embarrassment, disappointment, anxiety, or anger, while uncertainty about what to say or how to respond may make communication more difficult. Greater sensitivity to communicative context may help students interpret social situations more clearly and consider their responses before reacting. This possibility may help explain why Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being were positively associated. Nevertheless, emotional regulation and communication anxiety were not measured in this study. Their roles therefore remain theoretical possibilities that require direct examination in future research.

Taken together, the proposed explanations suggest a possible pathway in which Pragmatic Sensitivity is related to students' interpretation of social cues, communicative intentions, and contextual meanings. These abilities may be associated with social cognition, perspective-taking, and interpersonal adaptation, which may in turn correspond with more positive interpersonal experiences. Such experiences may be related to Psychological Well-Being. Importantly, this proposed pathway was not directly tested in the present study. The analysis examined the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being only; therefore, the proposed mechanisms should not be interpreted as confirmed causal processes.

From the perspective of Pragmatic Competence and Interlanguage Pragmatics, the finding

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suggests that pragmatic ability may have relevance beyond linguistic performance and communicative success. Pragmatic competence involves understanding and using language appropriately according to context, communicative purpose, and interpersonal relationships. The observed association between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being suggests that sensitivity to these pragmatic dimensions may also be related to how adolescents experience their interpersonal and social environments. In this respect, the finding extends the discussion of Pragmatic Competence and Interlanguage Pragmatics toward a psychosocial outcome, while recognizing that the present design does not establish a causal relationship.

The findings also have practical implications for educational contexts. Communication-oriented activities may provide opportunities for students to recognize contextual cues, identify communicative intentions, consider different perspectives, and select contextually appropriate responses. Activities such as role-play, discussion of everyday social situations, and analysis of authentic communication may be relevant to the development of pragmatic awareness. However, given the correlational design of the present study, such activities should not be presented as established interventions for improving Psychological Well-Being. Experimental or longitudinal research would be needed to determine whether changes in Pragmatic Sensitivity are followed by changes in Psychological Well-Being.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional correlational design does not permit causal conclusions regarding the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being. Consequently, the theoretical pathways discussed above cannot be confirmed using the present data. Second, the sample was relatively limited and was drawn from a single senior high school, which restricts the extent to which the findings can be generalized to students from other schools, regions, and sociocultural contexts. Third, both constructs were assessed using self-report questionnaires. Such measures may be affected by response bias and may not fully represent students' actual pragmatic behaviour or psychological experiences.

Future research could address these limitations by involving larger and more diverse samples and employing longitudinal designs to examine the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being over time. Future studies could also combine quantitative measures with behavioural or qualitative assessments of Pragmatic Sensitivity. In addition, variables such as social cognition, empathy, emotional regulation, interpersonal adaptation, communication anxiety, peer relationship quality, and social support could be examined when they are directly measured. Mediation or moderation analyses may also be considered in future research to investigate whether these variables are associated with the relationship between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being.

Overall, the findings indicate a strong positive association between Pragmatic Sensitivity and Psychological Well-Being among the Grade X students included in this study. The result provides empirical evidence concerning the relationship between an interpersonal-communicative construct and a psychosocial outcome in an adolescent educational context. The contribution of the study lies in examining Pragmatic Sensitivity in relation to Psychological Well-Being and in connecting perspectives from pragmatic competence and Interlanguage Pragmatics with adolescents' psychosocial experiences. The findings should, however, be interpreted within the limits of the correlational design, single-school sample, and self-report measures used in the study.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Pragmatic Sensitivity is positively and significantly associated with Psychological Well-Being among Grade X senior high school students, indicating that students who are more sensitive to communicative intentions, contextual expectations, and socially appropriate responses tend to report better psychological well-being. This finding reinforces the view that adolescent well-being is shaped not only by intrapersonal psychological resources but also by the capacity to navigate interpersonal communication effectively. At the broader level, the study addresses

a gap in previous research by positioning pragmatic sensitivity as a specific interpersonal-communicative correlate of psychological well-being, extending the application of pragmatic competence beyond communicative effectiveness toward adolescent psychosocial functioning. Practically, schools and teachers are encouraged to incorporate contextualized communication activities, perspective-taking, pragmatic awareness, and appropriate response strategies into classroom interaction and student-development programs to support students' interpersonal functioning and well-being. Academically, future research should examine this relationship using larger and more diverse populations, longitudinal or experimental designs, and complementary behavioral or qualitative measures, while considering potential mediating or moderating factors such as social competence, emotional regulation, peer relationship quality, and social support to clarify how pragmatic sensitivity may be connected to psychological well-being.

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