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Psychological and social adjustment in refugee adolescents: The role of parents' and adolescents' friendships

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(Article begins on next page)

Running Head: FRIENDSHIPS AND ADJUSTMENT

**Psychological and Social Adjustment in Refugee Adolescents: The Role of Parents' and Adolescents' Friendships**

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***Data Availability Statement***

*The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.*

## **Psychological and Social Adjustment in Refugee Adolescents: The Role of Parents' and Adolescents' Friendships**

### **Abstract**

Friendships have important implications for adolescents' psychological and social adjustment. However, there is still limited evidence on how different same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships are formed and regarding their role in refugee adjustment. Therefore, the present study was designed to examine the interplay of parents' and adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships with adolescents' *own* psychological and social adjustment among refugee adolescents. Participants were 208 Syrian refugees (71.2% female;  $M_{\text{age}}=15.35$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}}=0.95$ ) in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey. Findings indicated that refugee parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships were positively related to their children's same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships. Moreover, parents' same-ethnic friendships were negatively linked with adolescents' social well-being, whereas parents' cross-ethnic friendships were positively related to adolescents' social well-being. Furthermore, adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships were both positively related to adolescents' social well-being, and cross-ethnic friendships were also positively associated with psychological well-being. These findings suggest that adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships mediated the positive associations of parents' cross-ethnic friendships with adolescents' social and psychological well-being. Overall, our study provides novel insights into the protective roles of diverse friendships for refugee adolescents.

*Keywords:* Cross-Ethnic Friendships, Same-Ethnic Friendships, Migration, Refugees, Parents

### Introduction

As autonomy increases during the adolescent years, parent-child relationships become more egalitarian (e.g., De Goede et al., 2009a, 2009b; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), and peers become another important socialization agent for adolescents (e.g., Crocetti et al., 2018; Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Accordingly, a large body of literature indicates that maintaining close friendships supports adolescents' identity formation (Albarello et al., 2018, 2020), improves positive emotions and life satisfaction (Demir et al., 2013; Demir & Weitekamp, 2006), and reduces symptoms of loneliness and depression (Spithoven et al., 2017). Given the value of friendship for adolescents' adjustment, it is of the utmost importance to explore how ethnic minority adolescents form their friendships in ethnically diverse societies (Motti-Stefanidi, 2019). Herein, parents' friendship patterns might be an important factor that can affect their children's friendship preferences (see intergenerational transmission processes, Degner & Dalege, 2013).

In light of the interplay between parents' and adolescents' friendship preferences and the protective role of friendships, the present study addresses how adolescents' *psychological* (Ryff, 1989) and *social well-being* (Keyes, 1998) can be influenced by parents' and adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships (as reported by adolescents) among Syrian refugee families in Turkey. Psychological well-being refers to individuals' perceived psychological adjustment to everyday challenges and responsibilities (Ryff, 1989). More specifically, psychological well-being is characterized by feelings of mastery over one's daily life, maximizing one's potentials, feeling positively toward oneself, and maintaining positive relationships with others (i.e., environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and autonomy; Ryff, 2014; Ryff & Singer, 1996). On the other hand, social well-being is generally described as individuals' feeling of being a

part of, and having an active role in, society (Keyes, 1998). In particular, social well-being refers to maintaining an active role in society, having the ability to contribute to the common good, and holding positive attitudes towards other members of one's society (i.e., social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, social acceptance; Keyes, 1998). In general, these two forms of well-being are strongly related to each other (Demirci & Akin, 2015; Keyes, 2005).

### **Parents' and Adolescents' Same-Ethnic and Cross-Ethnic Friendships: Transmission Processes**

Several processes can influence whether adolescents form their friendships with individuals from their same ethnic group (i.e., same-ethnic friendships) and/or from other ethnic groups (i.e., cross-ethnic friendships). In line with the literature on intergenerational transmission processes (Degner & Dalege, 2013; Meeusen, 2014; Phalet & Schönplflug, 2001), parents' friendship patterns represent an important factor that can influence adolescents' preferences for same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships. As suggested by models of ethnic socialization (Hughes et al., 2006), parents might influence their children's friendships by sending explicit or implicit messages about their cultural heritage, ethnicity, and social status (Edmons & Killen, 2009; Hitti et al., 2020). Indeed, Edmons and Killen (2009) found that parents' ethnic socialization messages are related to their children's engagement (or lack thereof) in cross-ethnic friendships. However, in their recent study, Hitti et al. (2020) emphasized that, despite parents' socialization messages, adolescents usually form friendships based on their common interests. Considering the differential results regarding the influences of parents' ethnic socialization messages on adolescents' friendship choices, in this study we sought to investigate the direct associations between parents'

friendships and adolescents' friendships. Such an endeavor can provide further insights into how adolescents form their own friendships.

So far, however, relatively little research has focused directly on the effects of parents' friendship preferences (i.e., cross-ethnic and same-ethnic) on adolescents' friendship choices (e.g., Bagci et al., 2020; Meeusen, 2014; Smith et al., 2015). Among the few studies, Meeusen (2014) found similar patterns between parents' and adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships, and suggested the importance of those cross-ethnic friendships on providing contact opportunities for their children (see extended contact theory; Wright et al., 1997). Similarly, Bagci et al. (2020) documented that the quality of perceived parents' cross-ethnic friendships was positively related to adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships. Although parental influences on adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships have been documented, the effects of parents' same-ethnic friendships on adolescents' corresponding friendships remain underexplored. Accordingly, the first aim of the present study was to investigate the potential associations of parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships with adolescents' corresponding friendships among Syrian refugee families in Turkey.

### **The Influences of Parents' and Adolescents' Same-Ethnic and Cross-Ethnic Friendships on Adolescents' Psychological and Social Adjustment**

In line with social cure theory (Jetten et al., 2017), according to which friendships and group memberships have important consequences for individuals' psychological and social adjustment, maintaining same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships might serve a protective function for adolescents, particularly for those living in multi-ethnic societies (Graham et al., 2014; Ward et al., 2020). Moreover, according to intergroup contact theory (Jugert et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008), having friends from outgroups (e.g., immigrants or

refugees with host-national friends) is a unique and powerful form of direct contact that promotes beneficial intergroup outcomes. Along this line, previous studies have documented direct and indirect effects of cross-group friendships on adolescents' psychological and social adjustment (e.g., Bagci et al., 2017; Benner & Wang, 2017; Lease & Blake, 2005; Tip et al., 2019). For instance, Lease and Blake (2005) found that cross-ethnic friendships facilitated social adjustment and prosocial behaviors of majority children in the United States. Similarly, Bagci et al. (2017) documented positive influences of cross-ethnic friendships on psychological and social adjustment among minority adolescents. Other studies have also consistently highlighted the protective role of cross-ethnic friendships against the adverse effects of prejudice and discrimination on adolescents' psychological and social adjustment (Bagci et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2020; Tropp et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2020). In particular, Liu et al. (2020) found that maintaining cross-ethnic friendships was related to low levels of depressive symptoms and relatively high self-esteem in multi-ethnic school contexts where adolescents from migrant families are numerically marginalized or experience high levels of ethnic prejudice.

Research has taken additional steps to compare the effects of both same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships on adolescents' psychological and social adjustment (e.g., McGill et al., 2012). Comparative studies have documented the advantages of having both cross-ethnic and same-ethnic friendships. On the one hand, they have highlighted that cross-ethnic friendships are related to stronger leadership and social-relational abilities, higher identification with the destination culture, greater perceived social-emotional safety, and fewer experiences of victimization (Graham et al., 2014; Munniksma et al., 2015; Kawabata & Crick, 2008). On the other hand, studies have found that having same-ethnic friendships contribute more to ethnic identity than cross-ethnic friendships do (e.g., Chen & Graham,

2017). Further, Graham et al. (2014) suggest that these two forms of friendships are equally and complementarily associated with friendship quality among minority-group adolescents. Overall, therefore, one might conclude that having both same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friends is protective for adolescents' psychological and social adjustment.

Although research has found that establishing friendships with same-ethnic and cross-ethnic peer confers several advantages vis-à-vis psychological and social adjustment among adolescents from migrant families (e.g., Graham et al., 2014; Jetten et al., 2017), the role of *parents'* friendships in these associations remains underexplored. Considering that adolescents' friendships are likely influenced by their parents' friendships (Degner & Dalege, 2013), the second aim of the present study was to explore the interplay between parents' and adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships and adolescents' *own* psychological and social adjustment among Syrian refugee youth in Turkey.

### **The present study**

In this study, we examined how refugees' psychological and social adjustment is associated with their own same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships and with their perceptions regarding the parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships. We conducted this study in Turkey, the nation that hosts the largest refugee population in the world with 3.7 million refugees (International Organization for Migration, 2019). However, Turkey is also the nation with the lowest value (among 38 countries) on the Migrant Integration Policy Index (Huddleston et al., 2015), which measures the degree to which a given country endorses integration policies across multiple policy areas (i.e., labor market mobility, family reunion, education, health, political participation, permanent residence, access to formal citizenship, and anti-discrimination policies). Recent studies with Syrian refugees in Turkey have indicated that experiencing ethnic discrimination is negatively related to maintaining one's



Syrian cultural heritage, and is positively linked to adopting the destination (Turkish) culture among refugee adults (Bagci & Canpolat, 2020). In addition, Çelebi et al. (2017) found that high perceived ethnic discrimination is associated with poor physical and mental health among refugee adults who do not experience a sense of control, distinctiveness, and meaningfulness derived from their ethnic identity. Notably, Demir and Ozgul (2019) also found that refugee adolescents experience ethnic discrimination and ostracism in different societal contexts such as schools, hospitals, parks, and public transportation. Considering that almost half (47.6%) of Syrian refugees in Turkey are children and adolescents below 18 years of age (Republic of Turkey Directorate General of Migration Management, 2017), and they are more vulnerable than adults because of additional threats to their physical health, psychological and social adjustment (e.g., child labor; Sahin et al., 2020), it is extremely important to identify protective factors vis-à-vis the psychological and social adjustment.

Accordingly, in the current study, we sought to address this issue by integrating family literature about intergenerational transmission processes (Degner & Dalege, 2013) with social-psychological frameworks on intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) to examine the interplay of parents' and adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships with adolescents' own psychological and social adjustment among refugee adolescents who migrated from Syria into Turkey. First, we expected that parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships would be positively related to adolescents' corresponding friendships (H1, *transmission hypothesis*). Additionally, we expected that both adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships would be positively associated with adolescents' psychological and social adjustment (H2, *direct-effects hypothesis*). Finally, we hypothesized that parents' friendships would be associated with adolescents' psychological and social adjustment, and that this link would be mediated by adolescents' friendships (H3,

*mediational hypothesis*).

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Participants were 208 Syrian refugee adolescents (71.2% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 15.35$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 0.95$ ) attending the first or the second years (i.e., 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades) of high school in a large metropolitan area with about 2 million inhabitants in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey. All participants were recruited from multi-ethnic classrooms in different types of high schools (i.e., vocational and technical high schools, religious vocational high schools). The proportion of Syrian adolescents in these classes ranged from 5.6% to 61.5%. All participants had migrated from Syria to Turkey between 2011 and 2019 to escape the civil war or to avoid serious political and economic turmoil. On average, participants had been in Turkey for 4.62 years ( $SD_{\text{years}} = 1.60$ ) at the time of the data collection, and 39.6% of them had not visited Syria after arriving in Turkey.

With regard to family structure, 87% of participants came from two-parent families, 9.1% reported other family situations (e.g., one deceased parent), and 3.9% specified that their parents were separated or divorced. In addition, most participants (98%) reported living with at least one parent; only 2% indicated living with other relatives (e.g., grandparents). The educational levels of participants' fathers were as follows: 24.1% held less than a high school diploma, 38.2% held a high school diploma, and 37.7% had a university degree. The educational levels of adolescents' mothers were as follows: 39.6% held less than a high school diploma, 40.1% held a high school diploma, and 20.3% had a university degree.

### ***Procedure***

The study was approved by both the Ethics Committee of the Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna (Italy) and the local authorities in Turkey. Before initiating the study, permission was obtained from school principals to administer a questionnaire during class time. Researchers then contacted adolescents to inform them about the study and to ask for their active assent to participate. Participants received oral and written information about the study and were asked to sign the informed consent form. For minors, active parental consent was also obtained. Data were collected in April 2019 using paper-and-pencil questionnaires in students' classrooms during regular school hours.

### **Measures**

Participants completed a questionnaire, including socio-demographic questions and measures of their own friendships, of parents' friendships, and of their psychological and social adjustment. To provide an opportunity to complete the questionnaire with the language in which participants were more comfortable, both Turkish and Arabic versions of the questionnaire were presented to participants. Therefore, the entire questionnaire was translated from Turkish into Arabic by a professional translator, and the Arabic translation was checked by another professional translator. Unclear concepts were then corrected by the first translator.

**Adolescents' own friendships and parents' friendships.** Adolescents' friendships and their perceptions of parents' friendships were assessed in terms of frequency of adolescents' and parents' interactions with Syrian and Turkish friends. Specifically, adolescents were asked to think about their own [their parents'] friendships. Thereafter, frequency of their interactions with same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friends were assessed using simplified and shortened versions of two items adapted from previous studies (Bagci et al.,

2014; Binder et al., 2009; Tip et al., 2019). The first item assessed the frequency of interactions with same-ethnic friends (i.e., Think about your [your parents'] friendships, how much do you [your parents] interact with people from your country of origin?) and the second item measured the frequency of interactions with cross-ethnic friends (i.e., Think about your [your parents'] friendships, how much do you [your parents] interact with Turkish people?). These items were answered on a 5-point Likert type rating scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*).

**Psychological and social adjustment.** Adolescents' psychological and social adjustment was assessed using the psychological and social well-being subscales of the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF; Keyes, 2005; Keyes et al., 2008; for the Turkish validation see Demirci & Akın, 2015). These subscales consist of 11 items (6 for psychological well-being and 5 for social well-being) scored on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = *never*, 5 = *every day*) referring to the last month. Each item on the psychological well-being subscale refers to one of the components of psychological adjustment (i.e., environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and autonomy; Ryff, 2014). Similarly, each item on the social well-being subscale represents one of the dimensions of social adjustment, namely social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, social acceptance (Keyes, 1988). Sample items include: “How often did you feel good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life?” (psychological well-being) and “How often did you feel that you had something important to contribute to society?” (social well-being). Cronbach's Alphas were .87 for psychological well-being and .83 for social well-being.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

As the first step, we conducted Mardia's test (Korkmaz et al., 2014) to evaluate multivariate normality. The results indicated that the data did not meet the assumption of multivariate normality (Mardia's multivariate skewness statistic = 347.382,  $p < .001$ , Mardia's multivariate kurtosis statistic = 399.014,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, Structural Equation Model (SEM) analyses were conducted in *Mplus* 8.1 (Kelloway, 2015; Muthén & Muthén, 1988-2018) using the maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard errors (MLR).

As a second step, missing value analysis was conducted using Little's (1988) missing completely at random (MCAR) test. The results ( $\chi^2/df = 1.05$ ,  $p = .331$ ) indicated that data were likely missing at random (the rate of missingness ranged from 0.5% to 13.5% across the study variables). Therefore, all participants were included in the analyses, and missing data were handled using the Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) procedure available in *Mplus*.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables are displayed in Table 1. Mean level differences in adolescents' and parents' friendships were examined using paired sample t-tests. Results showed that both adolescents' and their parents' same-ethnic friendships were significantly higher than their cross-ethnic friendships ( $t(204) = 12.176$ ,  $p < .001$ , for adolescents friendships;  $t(203) = 12.871$ ,  $p < .001$  for parents' friendships). In addition, adolescents engaged in significantly more cross-ethnic friendships than their parents,  $t(201) = 3.400$ ,  $p = .001$ , whereas same-ethnic friendships of adolescents and their parents did not significantly differ from each other,  $t(202) = 1.130$ ,  $p = .260$ .

### **Main Analyses**

To examine how parents' and adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships were related to psychological and social adjustment among refugee adolescents in Turkey,

Structural Equation Model (SEM) analyses were conducted. The model included a combination of four observed (i.e., parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships; adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships) and two latent (i.e., psychological and social well-being) variables. Model fit was evaluated using the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), with values higher than .90 indicative of an acceptable fit, and values higher than .95 demonstrating excellent fit; and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), for which values below .08 represent acceptable fit and values lower than .05 indicate very good fit (Byrne, 2012). We also examined the 90% Confidence Interval (CI) for the RMSEA (i.e., good fit is indicated by an upper bound lower than .10; Chen et al., 2008).

Findings indicated that the model fit the data well ( $\chi^2(79) = 154.355$ , CFI = .911, RMSEA [90% CI] = .068 [.052, .084], SRMR = .069).<sup>1</sup> Correlations between study variables indicated that same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships were not significantly related for either parents or adolescents. As expected, psychological well-being was significantly associated with social well-being ( $r = .582$ ) among refugee adolescents. Results regarding regression paths (see Table 2 and Figure 1) indicated that parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships were positively related to corresponding friendships of adolescents ( $\beta = .404$  for same ethnic friendships, and  $\beta = .326$  for cross-ethnic friendships). Moreover, parents' same-ethnic friendships were negatively linked ( $\beta = -.192$ ), whereas parents' cross-ethnic friendships were positively related to adolescents' social well-being ( $\beta = .174$ ). Furthermore, both adolescents' same-ethnic ( $\beta = .191$ ) and cross-ethnic ( $\beta = .278$ ) friendships

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<sup>1</sup> Given that students were recruited from 25 classrooms in this study, we have checked the intraclass correlation coefficients and have found them to be low (average = 0.032; range: 0.000 - 0.131). In addition, we tested the same structural equation model with the "type = complex" command in *Mplus* indicating the classroom as the cluster variable, to adjust the standard errors for the nested structure of the data. The results obtained in this way replicated those presented above.

were positively related to adolescents' social well-being. In addition, adolescents' cross-ethnic, but not same-ethnic, friendships were positively associated with their psychological well-being ( $\beta = .225$ ).

To investigate potential indirect effects, we used the Model Indirect procedure available in *Mplus*. Specifically, we tested the mediating roles of adolescents' friendships in the relationships between parents' friendships and adolescents' psychological and social well-being. Findings (see Table 3) indicated that adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships mediated the positive association of parents' cross-ethnic friendships with psychological ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = .073$  [.010, .136],  $p = .023$ ) and social ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = .091$  [.016, .165],  $p = .017$ ) well-being of refugee adolescents.

Finally, we performed ancillary sensitivity analyses to examine whether the model results were replicated across gender groups. Thus, we estimated a multigroup model with gender as the grouping variable. Results indicated that the fit of the model in which all parameters were fixed to be equal was not significantly different from that of the model in which parameters were free to vary across gender groups ( $\Delta\chi_{\text{SB}}^2 = 13.795$ ,  $\Delta\text{df} = 15$ ,  $p = .541$ ,  $\Delta\text{CFI} = .003$ ,  $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = -.004$ ). We, therefore, concluded that our model fits equivalently for boys and girls.

## Discussion

By integrating recent theoretical contributions related to family processes (Degner & Dalege, 2013), intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and social cure (Jetten et al., 2017), the present study provides novel evidence on the interplay of Syrian refugee parents' and adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships vis-à-vis adolescents' psychological and social adjustment. Our findings supported a transmission effect between

youths' perceptions of their parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships with the adolescents' corresponding friendships. Our results also indicated that both adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships are related to their own social adjustment while adolescents' cross-ethnic (but not same-ethnic) friendships are associated with their psychological adjustment. Finally, our findings suggest direct and indirect contributions of perceived parents' friendships vis-à-vis adolescents' own psychological and social adjustment.

As we expected in the *transmission hypothesis* (H1), our results indicated that both parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships appeared to be transmitted to their adolescents' corresponding friendships. Thus, our study expands prior literature reporting similar patterns of parents' and adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships (e.g., Meeussen, 2014; Smith et al., 2015), by adding that parent-child similarities apply to both same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships among Syrian refugee families in Turkey. Our results are in line with intergenerational transmission processes, according to which several attitudes (e.g., Degner & Dalege, 2013), values (e.g., Min et al., 2012; Phalet & Schönplflug, 2001), self-characteristics (e.g., Crocetti et al., 2016), and behaviors (e.g., Soenens et al., 2007) may be transmitted from parents to their children. Transmission processes can be the result of parental modeling effects as well as of socialization practices. Parents who have Turkish friends can serve as an important point of reference for their children in establishing cross-ethnic friendships by delivering them explicit and implicit messages regarding the possible positive influences of forming and maintaining cross-ethnic friendships in the destination society. In this respect, the literature on ethnic socialization within the family context (Hughes et al., 2006) suggests that parents can transmit their own values, perspectives, and experiences about same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships to their children via specific ethnic socialization messages.



In line with the *direct-effect hypothesis* (H2) and bringing support to the theories of social cure (Jetten et al., 2017) and intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships were found to be associated with their psychological and social well-being. Similarly, Tip et al. (2019) recently found that, among refugees in the UK, having cross-ethnic friends from the majority group increased general well-being over time. The current results extend previous findings (e.g., Bagci et al., 2014, 2017), which have primarily emphasized the protective role of cross-ethnic friendships, by examining associations between adolescents' same-ethnic friendships and their social well-being. Additionally, these contributions of adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships to their psychological and social adjustment appear parallel to the acculturation literature (Berry, 1997), which suggests integration (i.e., retaining the heritage culture while adopting the customs and traditions of the destination society; Berry, 1997, 2005) as the most adaptive acculturation approach. In this regard, maintaining relationships with individuals from one's same ethnic group (i.e., Syrian refugees) *and* establishing new friendships with the individuals from majority Turkish group might reflect being integrated (or a desire to be integrated) within the interpersonal domain of acculturation (Navas et al., 2005). Indeed, integration in the interpersonal domain is commonly identified as the most favorable strategy in terms of individuals' well-being (Barros & Albert, 2020; Berry, 2017; Berry et al., 2006; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013).

In line with our *mediational hypothesis* (H3), the present findings indicate that adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships mediated the positive links of parents' cross-ethnic friendships with adolescents' social and psychological well-being. As the role models within both primary socialization and acculturative contexts (Crocetti et al., 2016; Karataş et al., 2020; Ward & Geeraert, 2016), parents can provide guidance for their children via their own

intergroup contact experiences (Wright et al., 1997), and refugee parents can therefore model cross-ethnic friendships for their adolescents. Moreover, adolescents might also establish cross-ethnic friendships due to their parents' friendship networks. Taking a step further from their experiences under the parental guidance, adolescents might also be encouraged to form their own cross-ethnic friendships in other contexts, such as school or neighbourhood.

Together with the possible influences of the parental behaviors (as being role models for their children) and their contacts, supportive attitudes of the parents might also provide alternative explanation for these results. Given that perceived social support from parents helps to facilitate well-being among adolescents from migrant families (Kayama & Yamakawa, 2020; Runarsdottir & Vilhjalmsón, 2019), supportive attitudes among refugee parents toward their youth's establishing and maintaining more cross-ethnic friendships could facilitate formation of cross-ethnic friendships among adolescents (Arar et al., 2020; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2014), and in turn, lead to more favorable psychological and social well-being. Notably, Edmonds and Killen (2009) found that lower parental support for and approval of adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships might reduce the positive effects of cross-ethnic friendships. It is, therefore, essential for parents to be supportive of their adolescents engaging in friendships with youth from other ethnic groups.

In contrast to these significant indirect effects of parents' cross-ethnic friendships on adolescents' psychological and social well-being, no indirect effects of parents' same-ethnic friendships on adolescents' well-being emerged in our results. This might be due to the fact that having same-ethnic friendships might improve adolescents' own psychological and sociocultural adjustment only to a certain degree. In fact, these friendships may not reduce intergroup anxiety and improve perspective-taking skills (Hayward et al., 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) as much as establishing cross-ethnic friendships do.

Consistent with the above observations, we also found that parents' cross-ethnic friendships were positively related to adolescents' social well-being, whereas parents' same-ethnic friendships were negatively related to adolescents' social well-being. This is a very intriguing finding as it suggests that, although adolescents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships both contribute to their social well-being, parental same-ethnic friendships appear to exert detrimental effects. In addition, it should also be considered that the zero-order correlation between parents' same-ethnic friendships and adolescents' social well-being was not significant; however, this association became significant in the structural equation model. This finding suggests a more complex interplay between study variables at the multivariate level. Considering the structural equation model results, once again, these conflictual findings may be explained in terms of adolescents' perceptions of parents' endorsement of inclusive versus exclusive norms in the family context (Munniksma et al., 2012; Hitti et al., 2020). It could be the case that parents who endorse inclusive norms might maintain more cross-ethnic friendships, and their children, accordingly, might engage in more positive interactions with youth from other groups. However, parents who adopt more exclusive norms may prefer to associate with friends from the same ethnic group. Adolescents may choose to follow a similar pattern, even if they are in classes with primarily Turkish peers. Therefore, they might experience more intergroup anxiety (Hayward et al., 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), which might negatively influence refugee adolescents' social well-being.

Generally, our findings suggest that the effects of both adolescents' and parents' friendships were usually stronger for adolescents' social well-being than for their psychological well-being. Considering that adolescents from migrant families are facing acculturative and developmental tasks that require defining their roles and positions both in the Turkish society and in their Syrian-cultural community (Berry, 2017; Schwartz et al.,

2006), having both Syrian and Turkish friends might provide them more insights on how they are part of the entire society and this, in turn, may increase their social well-being. It is, of course, possible that other individual-level factors (e.g., personality, personal aspirations) might impact the psychological components of well-being to a greater extent.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The present findings should be considered in light of some limitations. First, parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships were measured through adolescents' perceptions, and therefore, refugee adolescents might have projected their own friendships onto their parents if they were uncertain about parents' friendships. To avoid this potential projection problem and single reporter bias, future studies should examine the interplay between parents' and adolescents' friendships using a multi-informant design where data on parents' friendships are gathered directly from parents. Likewise, parents' friendships were considered as a whole, rather than separately for mothers and fathers. Hence, we were not able to investigate whether paternal or maternal friendships were more strongly related to children's friendships. To provide further insights on this issue, mothers and fathers should be considered separately in future studies. Additionally, we only examined quantity, but not quality, of adolescents' and parents' friendships. Future studies might investigate both quality and quantity of parents' and adolescents' friendships (Bagci et al., 2017; Binder et al., 2009) to provide more insights on the interplay between friendships and adjustment among refugee adolescents.

Another important limitation of this research stems from the cross-sectional design used, which does not allow us to draw conclusions regarding (a) the directionality of the associations examined, (b) stability of adolescents' and parents' friendships over time, and (c)

the longitudinal associations of friendships with psychological and social adjustment. Considering that parents' and adolescents' friendships might mutually influence each other and that cross-ethnic friendships tend to be less stable than same-ethnic friendships (Jugert et al., 2013), further research with longitudinal designs is necessary to provide in-depth information about the interplay among these factors. Furthermore, a longitudinal study would allow us to test formally for mediation, which is not possible using cross-sectional data (Maxwell & Cole, 2007).

Finally, research has suggested that greater diversity within the school context promotes adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships (e.g., Bohman & Miklikowska, 2020). However, it is not clear how adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships in the school context can affect cross-ethnic friendships in other contexts (e.g., neighbourhood). Therefore, future studies are needed to investigate how friendships established in one context might also contribute to establishing high-quality friendships in other social contexts.

## **Conclusions**

Despite these limitations, the current study advances the literature by demonstrating, on the one hand, the transmission from parents' same-ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships to adolescents' corresponding friendships, and on the other hand, the interplay between parents' friendships and adolescents' friendships with adolescents' psychological and social adjustment by underlying the indirect role of adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships. Overall, by integrating theories of family intergenerational transmission (Degner & Dalege, 2013), intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and social cure (Jetten et al., 2017), this study provides novel insights on the crucial importance of adolescents' and parents' friendships vis-à-vis enhancing psychological and social adjustment among refugee

adolescents. Considering that refugee youths in Turkey have experienced a range of migration-related difficulties (Demir & Ozgul, 2019) and that they are more vulnerable to additional risk factors (e.g., child labor, Sahin et al., 2020), such findings provide further evidence regarding the protective role of friendships (Motti-Stefanidi, 2019) in enhancing the psychological and social adjustment of Syrian refugee adolescents. Thus, the present study can inspire further work in this direction.

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## Tables

**Table 1***Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Bivariate Correlations among Study Variables*

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.</b> Parents' same-ethnic friendships	4.307	1.097	-					
<b>2.</b> Parents' cross-ethnic friendships	2.955	1.158	.123	-				
<b>3.</b> Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships	4.404	0.911	.387***	-.089	-			
<b>4.</b> Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships	3.248	1.034	-.010	.312***	.028	-		
<b>5.</b> Adolescents' psychological well-being	3.491	1.142	-.006	.073	.128	.228**	-	
<b>6.</b> Adolescents' social well-being	2.663	1.275	-.092	.203**	.096	.307***	.566***	-

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

**Table 2***Standardized and Unstandardized Estimates of the Study Model*

<b>Regression paths</b>	<b>Standardized Estimates (Errors)</b>	<b>Unstandardized Estimates (Errors)</b>
Parents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships	.404*** (.084)	.336*** (.084)
Parents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships	-.038 (.078)	-.036 (.074)
Parents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships	-.123 (.073)	-.097 (.059)
Parents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships	.326*** (.067)	.292*** (.062)
Parents same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	-.056 (.095)	-.052 (.086)
Parents same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	-.192* (.083)	-.209* (.090)
Parents cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	.020 (.088)	.017 (.077)
Parents cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	.174* (.082)	.180* (.087)

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Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	.148 (.094)	.163 (.104)
Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	.191* (.088)	.251* (.117)
Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	.225** (.080)	.218** (.081)
Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	.278** (.093)	.332** (.110)
<b>Correlations</b>		
Parents' same-ethnic friendships ↔ Parents' cross-ethnic friendships	.124 (.082)	.157 (.108)
Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships ↔ Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships	.083 (.086)	.067 (.071)
Adolescents psychological well-being ↔ Adolescents' social well-being	.582*** (.081)	.613*** (.139)

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

**Table 3***Standardized and Unstandardized Indirect Effects*

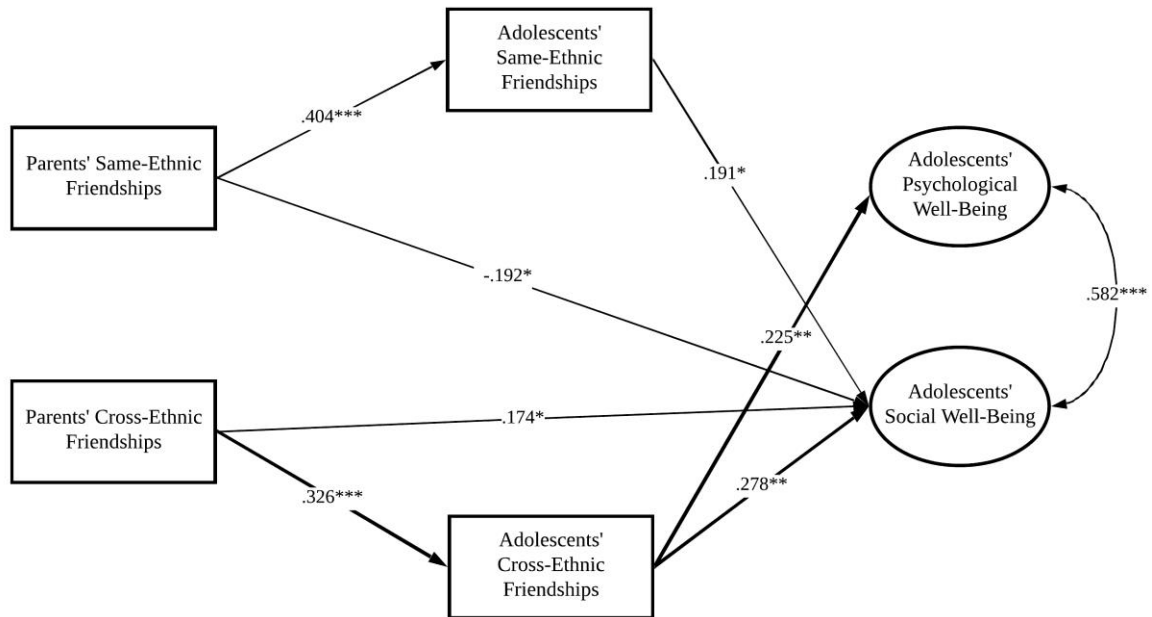
	<b>Standardized Indirect Effects [95% CI]</b>	<b>Unstandardized Indirect Effects [95% CI]</b>
Parents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	.060 [-.024, .143]	.055 [-.020, .130]
Parents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	-.009 [-.044, .027]	-.008 [-.040, .025]
Parents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	-.018 [-.045, .009]	-.016 [-.039, .007]
Parents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' psychological well-being	.073* [.010, .136]	.064* [.007, .120]
Parents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	.077 [-.003, .158]	.084 [-.005, .173]
Parents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	-.011 [-.054, .033]	-.012 [-.059, .036]
Parents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' same-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	-.023 [-.059, .012]	-.024 [-.061, .012]
Parents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' cross-ethnic friendships → Adolescents' social well-being	.091* [.016, .165]	.094* [.015, .173]

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ .

**Figure**

**Figure 1**

*Standardized Results of the Study*



*Note.* For the sake of clarity, only significant standardized estimates are displayed. Bold arrows indicate indirect effects.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .