

## The Social Construction of “Good Boy” and “Good Girl” as Determinants of Toxic Productivity in Adolescents

Fransina Alfonsina Izaac<sup>1</sup>, Natalia Paskawati Adimuntja<sup>1</sup>, Dolfinus Yufu Bouway<sup>1</sup>, Katarina Lodia Tutuop<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Cendrawasih, Jayapura, Indonesia

Correspondence: **Fransina Alfonsina Izaac**: Kampus Abepura, Universitas Cendrawasih, Abepura, Indonesia; [fanyizaac87@gmail.com](mailto:fanyizaac87@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Adolescents often internalize the labels “good boy” and “good girl” as indicators of obedience, achievement, and parental approval. These labels function as symbolic expectations that shape behavior, academic engagement, and daily routines. This study aimed to explore how the social construction of *good boy* and *good girl* labels influences adolescents’ productivity patterns and contributes to the emergence of toxic productivity among early adolescents in Jayapura. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed with eleven participants were selected through purposive sampling, consisting of six adolescents aged 10–13 years and five parents. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic content analysis. Credibility was ensured through source triangulation between adolescents and parents. Three major themes emerged. First, overscheduling and externally driven activities: Adolescents participated in multiple extracurricular activities, computer courses, drawing, sports, church music, karate, and English classes often because “my parents told me to,” leading to fatigue and limited rest. Second, fake personality and conditional approval: Adolescents reported emotional pressure to maintain the *good child* image, often pretending to be obedient to avoid criticism or comparison. One participant stated, “Sometimes I pretend to be good so people will call me a good child.” Third, academic stress: High parental expectations and fear of disappointing adults led adolescents to associate academic performance with moral worth. Many expressed guilt and anxiety when unable to meet expectations, believing they must study “to achieve my parents’ dreams.” In conclusion, the social construction of *good boy* and *good girl* labels significantly shapes adolescents’ behavior, emotional experiences, and productivity patterns. These labels contribute to overscheduling, identity suppression, and heightened academic stress, collectively fostering toxic productivity in early adolescents.

**Keywords:** good boy, good girl, toxic productivity, adolescents, parental expectations, academic stress, phenomenology

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescents often aspire to be addressed as *good boy* or *good girl*, as these labels function not merely as casual praise but as symbolic markers of achievement, obedience, and social approval within their immediate environment. These designations are typically granted to students who attain high academic rankings, excel in examinations, or demonstrate notable accomplishments in sports and Olympiad competitions. Within many families, such labels also serve as indicators of compliance, where children who follow parental instructions or exhibit disciplined behavior are more likely to be praised in this manner. Consequently, the desire to be recognized as a *good boy* or *good girl* becomes a powerful motivational force that shapes adolescents’ academic and behavioral choices [1].

In everyday social contexts, it is common to observe that becoming the top student or ranking within the top three in class is regarded as a significant source of pride, not only for the adolescent but also for their parents. This form of achievement is often celebrated as a reflection of good upbringing, parental success, and family honor. However, the internalization of such expectations may lead adolescents to push themselves excessively, striving to remain productive at all times in order to maintain the approval associated with these labels. Although continuous engagement in productive activities is generally perceived as a positive habit, the pressure to sustain such productivity can become counterproductive and may adversely affect mental health. This condition, widely referred to as *toxic productivity*, has increasingly been recognized as a psychological and social concern. With rapid societal changes, heightened competition, and the pervasive influence of digital culture, toxic productivity is no longer confined to adults but has become prevalent among adolescents and members of Generation Z [1].

Demographic data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) indicate that Indonesia’s population is significantly dominated by adolescents born between 1999 and 2012, commonly categorized as Generation Z. In Papua Province, BPS reports that the proportion of Generation Z reaches 30,845 individuals [2], placing them within the productive age group and positioning them as a central demographic in educational and developmental discourse. Istiqomah [3] characterizes Generation Z as a cohort with *less boundaries*, referring to their fluid engagement with information, technology, and social interactions. This generation is exposed to constant streams of digital content, academic expectations, and social comparisons, all of which may intensify the pressure to perform.

From a developmental perspective, Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development provides a relevant framework for understanding adolescent behavior. Individuals aged 10–15 typically occupy the stage of interpersonal concordance, also known as the “good boy–good girl orientation.” At this stage, adolescents tend to evaluate their actions based on the approval of authority figures such as parents, teachers, and peers. When their behavior receives positive reinforcement, they are likely to repeat and internalize such behaviors as part of their moral identity [4]. This developmental tendency may amplify the influence of labels such as *good boy* and *good girl*, making adolescents more susceptible to external expectations and social pressures.

Preliminary observations conducted in the Jayapura Utara District reveal that many junior high school students participate in multiple extracurricular activities beyond regular school hours, including academic tutoring, religious programs, and sports training. These activities, while beneficial in moderation, may contribute to an overloaded schedule when combined with high academic expectations. Initial interviews with several parents further indicate that many hold strong aspirations for their children’s academic success, often equating high achievement with future security and family pride. Such conditions suggest the presence of social and academic pressures that may contribute to the emergence of toxic productivity among adolescents. Despite these indications, the phenomenon has not been extensively examined within the specific sociocultural context of Jayapura Utara, where cultural norms, family structures, and community expectations may uniquely shape adolescent experiences.

Toxic productivity is defined as a condition in which individuals compel themselves to remain constantly productive, often disregarding personal well-being, rest, and mental health in pursuit of their goals [5]. Among adolescents aged 13–15, toxic productivity may arise from several interrelated factors. One of the primary influences is the social reinforcement associated with being labeled a *good boy* or *good girl* when achieving

high academic performance. These labels, frequently expressed within family and social environments, create a cycle in which adolescents feel obligated to maintain or exceed their previous achievements.

A critical concern is the limited self-regulation typical of early adolescence. Many adolescents may push themselves excessively, believing that constant productivity is necessary to maintain approval or avoid disappointment. Toxic productivity can lead to physical and mental exhaustion, heightened stress, sleep disturbances, and feelings of guilt when not engaging in activities perceived as useful or productive. A study by Deloitte reports that 77% of individuals have experienced burnout in their work, and 42% have left their jobs due to exhaustion [1], illustrating the severity of the issue and suggesting potential parallels in younger populations exposed to similar pressures.

Previous studies have explored toxic productivity among older adolescents and young adults. Research by Tsabita et al. examined toxic productivity in individuals aged 18–23 years and identified *fear of missing out* (FOMO) as a major contributing factor [1]. Another study investigated strategies for managing toxic productivity among university students [6], highlighting the need for emotional regulation and balanced time management. However, to date, no research has specifically examined how the social construction of *good boy* and *good girl* labels within family environments contributes to the development of toxic productivity among younger adolescents aged 10–13 years, particularly within the sociocultural setting of Jayapura City. This gap is significant, as early adolescence is a formative period during which identity, self-concept, and behavioral patterns begin to solidify.

Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the impact of the social construction of *good boy* and *good girl* labels on adolescent productivity, with particular attention to how these labels may contribute to the emergence of toxic productivity among adolescents in Jayapura.

## METHODS

This study was conducted in the District of North Jayapura, Jayapura City, Papua Province, over a two-month period from October to December 2024. The research setting was selected due to the observable social dynamics among early adolescents, particularly regarding the attribution of *good boy* and *good girl* labels within family and school environments. These contextual characteristics provided a relevant foundation for exploring how such social constructions influence the emergence of toxic productivity among adolescents aged 10–13 years.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology with a phenomenological approach. This design was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by adolescents and their parents regarding the *good boy* and *good girl* labels. Phenomenology allows the researcher to understand how individuals interpret and internalize these labels, and how such interpretations may contribute to patterns of excessive productivity or self-imposed pressure. The qualitative nature of the study further facilitated the examination of subjective experiences that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods.

The subjects of the research consisted of 11 participants selected through purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria. The sample included two categories of informants: six adolescents aged 10–13 years who were currently enrolled in junior high school and had previously or were currently receiving the *good boy* or *good girl* label, and five parents who had children within the same age range and were willing to participate in the study. The adolescents served as the primary informants, as they directly experienced the social expectations associated with the labels, while the parents served as key informants who provided contextual insights into family practices, expectations, and reinforcement patterns. The purposive sampling technique ensured that all participants possessed characteristics relevant to the research objectives.

Data collection was carried out using three techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to understand the natural interactions and behavioral patterns of adolescents within their daily environments. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to allow flexibility in probing participants' experiences while maintaining consistency across interviews. Each interview session lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted in a private and comfortable setting to ensure openness and confidentiality. With the consent of the participants, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of the data. Documentation, including field notes, reflective journals, and relevant contextual materials, was also collected to support the triangulation process.

The data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The analysis process involved several stages: repeated reading of interview transcripts to gain familiarity with the data; initial coding to identify significant statements and patterns; grouping of codes into broader categories; identification of overarching themes; and interpretation of the themes in relation to existing theoretical frameworks and the research objectives. This analytical approach enabled the researcher to systematically uncover the underlying meanings and social processes associated with the construction of *good boy* and *good girl* labels and their relationship to toxic productivity.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from primary informants (adolescents) and key informants (parents). This process helped validate the consistency of the data and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, the researcher maintained reflexive awareness throughout the study to minimize bias and enhance analytical rigor.

## RESULTS

### Characteristics of research informants

The study involved a total of 11 informants, consisting of 5 key informants (parents) and 6 main informants (adolescents aged 10–13 years). Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of all participants. One of the most prominent findings of this study is the high frequency of extracurricular involvement among adolescents. The desire to maintain the *good boy* or *good girl* label appears to influence adolescents' willingness to participate in numerous activities, often beyond their physical and emotional capacity. Extracurricular activities mentioned by informants include: computer courses, drawing classes, sports (especially football), church music ministry, karate, english courses. Most activities were conducted twice a week, with schedules either immediately after school or in the late afternoon. Many adolescents reported that these activities were not based on their personal interests, but rather initiated or mandated by their parents.

The desire to be recognized as a *good boy* or *good girl* serves as a powerful motivational force for adolescents, influencing not only their behavior within social environments but also their academic engagement. This label functions as a symbolic marker of approval, obedience, and achievement, and adolescents often internalize it as a standard they must continuously meet. As a result, many adolescents attempt to perform at their best across various domains, striving to maintain the positive image that parents, teachers, and peers expect of them.

However, the effort to uphold this label frequently shapes and even disrupts their daily activities. Adolescents tend to engage in numerous tasks without fully considering the purpose or personal relevance of these activities. Many of these commitments occur outside regular school hours, creating a dense schedule that leaves little room for rest or self-directed leisure. When asked about their routines after school, most

informants reported that they immediately transitioned into additional activities, indicating that their daily schedules were heavily structured and filled with obligations. This pattern reflects a broader phenomenon in which adolescents accumulate multiple responsibilities in an attempt to maintain the *good boy/good girl* identity.

Table 1. Characteristics of research informants

No.	Type of informant	Age (years)	Sex	Educational level	Religion	Ethnic origin
1	Key Informant 1 (Initial N)	45	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Islam	Javanese
2	Key Informant 2 (Initial D.A.)	47	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Islam	Javanese
3	Key Informant 3 (Initial A)	48	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Islam	Makassarese
4	Key Informant 4 (Initial H)	50	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Christian	Papuan
5	Key Informant 5 (Initial M)	51	Female	Senior High School	Christian	Papuan
6	Main Informant 1 (Initial M)	13	Female	Junior High School	Islam	Javanese
7	Main Informant 2 (Initial R)	13	Male	Junior High School	Christian	Papuan
8	Main Informant 3 (Initial F)	12	Male	Junior High School	Islam	Makassarese
9	Main Informant 4 (Initial YK)	13	Male	Junior High School	Christian	Papuan
10	Main Informant 5 (Initial F)	12	Female	Junior High School	Christian	Javanese
11	Main Informant 6 (Initial HAS)	13	Female	Junior High School	Islam	Makassarese

## Over-scheduling

Extracurricular activities, commonly referred to as *kegiatan ekstrakurikuler* constitute a major component of adolescents' schedules outside school hours. These activities include computer courses, drawing classes, sports, music ministry, karate, and English language courses. Most adolescents reported participating in these activities twice a week, with varying schedules: some activities were held immediately after school, while others took place in the late afternoon or evening.

## Illustrative quotes

Following statements illustrate that adolescents often participate in extracurricular activities not because of intrinsic motivation, but because of parental expectations. This dynamic becomes even clearer in the following testimonies.

IU1:

"Saya mengikuti kegiatan computer dan menggambar... Kursus computer saya ikut karena orang tua suruh ikut."

"I attend computer and drawing courses... I take the computer course because my parents told me to."

IU3:

"Kegiatan yang saya ikut tu olahraga... Orang tua dukung saya saja, tapi dong selalu bilang jangan lupa belajar."

"The activity I join is sports... My parents support me, but they always remind me not to forget studying."

## Extracurricular participation driven by parental influence

Many adolescents explicitly stated that their involvement in extracurricular activities was based on parental suggestion or instruction rather than personal interest. This indicates a pattern in which adolescents comply with parental expectations to maintain the *good boy/good girl* label and avoid being perceived as disobedient. Following accounts reveal that adolescents often negotiate between their own desires and parental expectations. Even when they express interest, fatigue and pressure remain dominant themes.

IU4:

"Sa ikut latihan music di gereja... Tong latihan hari jumat dan sabtu, jam 6 sore."

"I join music practice at church... We practice on Fridays and Saturdays at 6 p.m."

IU5:

"Saya ikut karate... katanya saya perempuan jadi harus bisa jaga diri."

"I take karate classes... they said because I am a girl, I must be able to protect myself."

IU2:

"Selain orang tua suruh ikut saya juga mau ikut, tapi ehhhh, cape juga kk."

"Besides my parents telling me to join, I also want to, but honestly, it's tiring."

## Fear of losing approval and conditional rewards

A recurring pattern in the interviews shows that adolescents fear being labeled as disobedient or "not a good child" if they refuse to participate in activities chosen by their parents. Some adolescents also described situations in which parental approval—and even material rewards—were contingent upon their compliance. These statements highlight the emotional and behavioral consequences of conditional parenting, where compliance becomes a prerequisite for affection or reward.

IU6:

"Kalau tidak ikut nanti orang tua bilang saya tukang melawan dan bukan anak baik."

"If I don't join, my parents will say I am rebellious and not a good child."

IU1:

"Saya kadang tidak pergi ikut kursus karena cape... nanti kalau saya minta sesuatu tidak dibelikan."

"Sometimes I don't attend the course because I'm tired... but then if I ask for something, they won't buy it for me."

## Parental perspectives on extracurricular activities

When parents were asked about their children's extracurricular involvement, they openly acknowledged that most activities were initiated based on their recommendations. Parents believed that these activities were essential for skill development, moral formation, safety, and future

opportunities. Following parental narratives reinforce the idea that extracurricular activities are perceived as investments in the child's future, even when they contribute to over-scheduling and fatigue.

IK1:

*"Anak mengikuti kursus computer, agar bisa lebih baik lagi dalam menggunakan computer."*

*"My child attends computer courses to improve their computer skills."*

IK4:

*"Anak punya kegiatan hari jumat dan sabtu... Anak-anak harus diajar untuk melayani supaya bisa hidup baik."*

*"My child has activities on Fridays and Saturdays... Children must be taught to serve so they can live a good life."*

IK5:

*"Karena dia anak cewe... dia harus bisa jaga diri."*

*"Because she is a girl... she must be able to protect herself."*

IK3:

*"Zaman sekarang Bahasa Inggris itu penting sekali... itu untuk dia punya masa depan."*

*"English is very important nowadays... it is for her future."*

## Fake personality

The aspiration to be labeled as a *good boy* or *good girl*, a term commonly associated with obedience, moral conduct, and parental approval emerges as a powerful psychological force shaping adolescent behavior. Within the context of this study, adolescents consistently described how the desire to maintain this socially constructed identity compelled them to comply with parental expectations, even when such expectations conflicted with their personal preferences, emotional comfort, or authentic sense of self.

This phenomenon reflects a deeper affective struggle, wherein adolescents internalize the belief that their worth is contingent upon meeting the behavioral standards set by parents and other authority figures. As a result, many adolescents reported experiencing anxiety, fear, and emotional discomfort when they felt unable to perform behaviors that align with the "good child" image. The data reveal that this internal conflict often leads to the development of what can be described as a *fake personality*, in which adolescents present a version of themselves that is carefully curated to satisfy external expectations rather than express their genuine identity.

## Expressions of fear, worry, and emotional conflict

Following statement reflects the adolescent's fear of disappointing her parents and the pressure to maintain an unrealistic image of perfection.

IU1:

*"Orang tua yang beranggapan kepada saya kalau saya anak baik, tapi takutnya mereka pikirnya kalau saya ini adalah gadis yang baik tanpa pernah berbuat salah seperti itu."*

*"My parents think that I am a good child, but I am afraid they expect me to be a girl who never makes any mistakes."*

Following quote highlights the conflict between authenticity and compliance, showing how adolescents suppress their true selves to avoid negative judgments.

IU2:

*"Saya harus menjaga ekspektasi orang lain terhadap saya, kadang saya tidak nyaman soalnya saya ingin menjadi diri sendiri. Tetapi tidak bisa karena kesannya itu tidak dengar orang tua seperti tidak belajar."*

*"I have to maintain other people's expectations of me, and sometimes it makes me uncomfortable because I want to be myself. But I can't, because it would look like I am disobedient or not studying."*

The adolescent expresses a sense of emotional overload resulting from continuous external demands.

Following quote reveals the social dimension of the pressure—adolescents fear not only parental disappointment but also social devaluation.

IU4:

*"Saya merasa terbebani jika harus selalu ikut ekspektasi orang tua dan guru."*

*"I feel burdened when I have to constantly follow the expectations of my parents and teachers."*

IU5:

*"Saya harus ngikutin standar itu biar saya tra dianggap remeh sama orang lain."*

*"I have to follow those standards so that people won't look down on me."*

Following statement clearly illustrates the emergence of a *fake personality*—a behavioral façade created to maintain approval.

IU6:

*"Kadang-kadang, itu buat sa merasa terkekang dan tidak bisa menjadi sa diri sendiri. Jadi saya kadang pura-pura bikin diri baik supaya dibilang anak baik. Di rumah saja saya dengar-dengaran."*

*"Sometimes it makes me feel restricted and unable to be myself. So I sometimes pretend to be good just so people will call me a good child. At home I just act obedient."*

## Emotional pressure and the burden of expectations

Beyond fear and worry, many adolescents described feeling significant emotional pressure due to the need to behave according to parental and societal expectations. The *good boy/good girl* label becomes a reward for compliance, and adolescents internalize the belief that deviating from expected behavior will result in criticism, comparison, or withdrawal of privileges.

IU1:

*"Pastinya saya merasa tertekan karena ekspektasi orang-orang sih. Saya harus ikuti apa yang orang tua kasitahu."*

*"Of course I feel pressured because of people's expectations. I have to follow whatever my parents tell me."*

IU2:

*"Merasa terbebani karena saya harus ikut harapan orang lain terhadap saya, terkadang saya tidak nyaman."*

*"I feel burdened because I have to follow other people's expectations of me, and sometimes it makes me uncomfortable."*

IU4:

*"Senang juga kalau dibilang anak baik tapi betul, kadang ada tekanan untuk lakukan apa yang saya tidak mau."*

"It feels good to be called a good child, but it's true that sometimes there is pressure to do things I don't want to do."

This quote demonstrates the duality of the experience—positive reinforcement mixed with emotional strain.

### Comparison, conditional approval, and withholding of rewards

A recurring theme in the interviews is the use of comparison and conditional approval by parents. Adolescents reported that when they failed to comply with expectations, parents compared them to other children who were perceived as more obedient or hardworking. Additionally, some adolescents described situations where their requests were denied because they had not followed parental instructions.

IU6:

*"Mama biasanya bandingkan saya dengan om punya anak... Kalau saya mama bilang saya kadang pamalas."*

"My mom usually compares me to my uncle's child... She says I am sometimes lazy."

IU2:

*"Kalau saya tidak seperti yang mama dong mau... saya minta belikan PS tapi dong tidak belikan. Waktu saya ikut apa yang mama dong bilang... langsung mama belikan saya."*

"If I don't do what my parents want... I once asked for a PlayStation but they didn't buy it. When I followed what they told me to do... they bought it right away."

This quote clearly illustrates conditional reinforcement, where compliance is rewarded and non-compliance is punished.

The findings in this section reveal a complex psychological landscape in which adolescents navigate between: the desire for authenticity, the fear of disappointing parents, the pressure to maintain a socially valued identity, and the emotional consequences of conditional approval. The emergence of *fake personality* behaviors can be understood as a coping mechanism an adaptive yet psychologically costly strategy that allows adolescents to maintain harmony with parents and avoid negative consequences. Over time, however, this pattern may contribute to: diminished self-esteem, emotional suppression, identity confusion, chronic stress, and internalized perfectionism.

### Academic stress

The aspiration to be labeled as a *good boy* or *good girl* does not only manifest in behavioral compliance within the family environment; it also extends deeply into the academic domain. For many adolescents, academic achievement becomes a central arena in which they attempt to prove their worthiness of this label. As a result, academic performance is no longer perceived merely as a measure of learning, but as a reflection of moral character, obedience, and familial pride. Within this context, adolescents frequently experience guilt, fear, and self-imposed pressure when they are unable to achieve high academic scores. The emotional burden arises from the belief that failing to meet parental expectations equates to failing as a "good child." This internalized pressure becomes a significant source of academic stress, particularly when expectations exceed the adolescent's actual capabilities. The findings of this study reveal that academic stress emerges from multiple sources: parental expectations, teacher demands, peer comparison, and the adolescents' own desire to maintain the *good boy/good girl* identity. The following interview excerpts illustrate these dynamics.

### Expressions of guilt, fear, and pressure related to academic performance

Following statement reflects the internalization of parental aspirations, where academic success becomes synonymous with fulfilling parental dreams rather than personal goals.

IU1:

*"Saya belajar untuk mencapai apa impian bapa dan mama. Saya harus bisa belajar dengan baik dan bisa dapat nilai dengan baik."*

"I study to achieve my parents' dreams. I must study well and get good grades."

Following quote demonstrates the direct transmission of parental expectations, which adolescents perceive as obligations.

IU2:

*"Bapak dan mama mau saya punya nilai bagus dan pintar."*

"My father and mother want me to have good grades and be smart."

Following reflects the fear of long-term consequences associated with poor academic performance.

IU4:

*"Pernah, karena sa tidak mau kalau saya pu nilai tu jelek. Nanti tidak bisa lulus dengan nilai yang bagus."*

"Yes, I have felt that way because I don't want my grades to be bad. Otherwise, I won't be able to graduate with good marks."

### Parental expectations and their influence on academic stress

Parents consistently expressed strong expectations regarding their children's academic performance. These expectations were often framed as necessary for future success, social mobility, and family pride. As a result, adolescents internalized the belief that academic excellence is a moral duty. Following parental narratives reinforce the idea that academic achievement is a prerequisite for future security, thereby intensifying the pressure adolescents feel.

IK2:

*"Anak harus lebih banyak belajar supaya bisa meningkatkan prestasi di sekolah."*

"Children must study more so they can improve their academic performance at school."

IK4:

*"Tidak langsung menuntut tapi bilang ke anak kalau ko harus rajin belajar supaya bisa dapat prestasi atau juara di kelas."*

"We don't directly demand it, but we tell the child that they must study diligently to achieve good results or become a top student in class."

IK3:

*"Punya nilai yang baik itu bagus supaya kalau mau kuliah atau cari pekerjaan tidak susah."*

"Having good grades is important so that later, when they want to go to university or find a job, it won't be difficult."

IK5:

*"Dunia sekarang tambah susah jadi anak-anak perlu belajar baik."*

"The world is getting harder, so children need to study well."

### Impact on study habits and daily routines

The pressure to meet academic expectations significantly influences adolescents' study habits. Many reported studying late into the night, sacrificing rest, and engaging in last-minute cramming, especially before major exams. Following accounts demonstrate how academic pressure disrupts sleep patterns and contributes to fatigue.

IU3:

*"Kalau ada PR baru skalian belajar."*

*"I study only when there is homework."*

IU4:

*"Untuk waktu belajar, saya tidak tiap hari belajar. Kalau ada tugas baru saya belajar."*

*"I don't study every day. I study only when there is an assignment."*

IU5:

*"Pas mau test itu biasa belajar sampai tidur subuh. Karena harus menghafal rumus-rumus tu susah sekali."*

*"Before a test, I usually study until dawn because memorizing the formulas is very difficult."*

IU6:

*"Terkadang istirahat larut malam karena belajar persiapan ulangan... tidur jam 3 baru bangun jam 7 pagi ke sekolah."*

*"Sometimes I sleep very late because I'm studying for exams... I sleep at 3 a.m. and wake up at 7 a.m. for school."*

### Emergence of stress symptoms

The study found that adolescents experienced moderate levels of academic stress, characterized by: sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, emotional tension, fear of failure, social pressure.

IU1:

*"Saya merasa terbebani... saya juga kan cuma manusia biasa yang tak luput dari kesalahan."*

*"I feel burdened... I am only human and I can't avoid making mistakes."*

IU5:

*"Sa rasa ada tekanan sosial... perlu untuk memenuhi harapan orang tua, guru, dan teman-teman."*

*"I feel social pressure... I feel the need to meet the expectations of my parents, teachers, and friends."*

IU6:

*"Kadang sedih kalau dapat nilai jelek... teman-teman suka ganggu-ganggu... pelajaran ada susah untuk tong mengerti."*

*"Sometimes I feel sad when I get low grades... my friends tease me... some lessons are really hard to understand."*

### Adaptive responses to academic stress

Despite the challenges, some adolescents demonstrated resilience by viewing poor grades as opportunities for improvement rather than personal failure.

IU3:

*"Sering sekali dapat nilai dibawah 60... tapi nanti belajar lagi supaya bisa perbaiki nilai."*

*"I often get scores below 60... but I just study again to improve my grades."*

IU2:

*"Guru ada yang mengerti... suruh kitong yang nilai tra baik bikin tugas... jadi kalau mau kerja ya bagadang."*

*"Some teachers understand... they ask those of us with low scores to do extra assignments... so if we want to finish them, we have to stay up late."*

### Extended interpretation

The findings in this section reveal that academic stress among adolescents is not merely a reaction to schoolwork but is deeply intertwined with: parental expectations, social comparison, internalized pressure to maintain the *good boy/good girl* identity, fear of disappointing significant others, long-term anxieties about future success. This constellation of pressures creates a psychological environment in which adolescents equate academic performance with personal worth, leading to chronic stress, emotional fatigue, and unhealthy study habits.

## DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to examine the impact of parental labeling, specifically the attribution of *good boy* and *good girl* on adolescent behavior and psychological well-being. The primary focus was placed on junior high school students, as this developmental stage represents a critical period in which identity formation, social conformity, and sensitivity to parental expectations are particularly heightened. The findings demonstrate that the parental use of *good boy/good girl* labels contributes significantly to the emergence of toxic productivity among adolescents. Within the context of this study, toxic productivity manifests through two major patterns: over-scheduling and academic stress.

The first pattern, over-scheduling, refers to adolescents' involvement in multiple structured activities outside regular school hours. These activities include sports, karate, computer courses, church music practice, and English tutoring. Although such activities may appear beneficial, the findings indicate that adolescents often participate not because of intrinsic motivation, but because of parental insistence. Excessive involvement in these activities without adequate rest increases the risk of physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and reduced autonomy. This aligns with the broader conceptualization of toxic productivity, in which individuals feel compelled to remain constantly productive regardless of personal needs or limitations.

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, one of the key determinants of behavior is subjective norms, defined as an individual's perception of social pressure to perform or avoid certain behaviors. Adolescents' actions are shaped by whether significant others, such as parents or peers approve or disapprove of their behavior. Prior research confirms that subjective norms exert a positive and significant influence on behavioral intentions among younger generations [8]. In this study, adolescents comply with parental expectations to maintain the identity of being a "good child." Parental behavior, which often becomes unilateral or coercive, is justified by the belief that these activities are necessary for the child's future success. High parental expectations ultimately lead adolescents to follow parental directives in order to preserve the *good boy/good girl* label [9].

These findings are consistent with Setyaningrum et al., who reported that parents frequently expect children to perform beyond their developmental tasks, viewing them as individuals who must comply with all parental wishes. Children, in turn, obey these expectations because they wish to be perceived as “good children” [10]. The present study reinforces this pattern, showing that adolescents’ participation in multiple extracurricular activities is driven more by external pressure than by personal interest.

Data from this study indicate that most adolescents engage in more than one extracurricular activity, including sports, karate, computer courses, church music, and English tutoring. The critical issue is not merely the number of activities, but the underlying motivation: most participation is driven by parental instruction rather than intrinsic desire [11,12]. Adolescents comply with these expectations to maintain the perception of being a “good child” and to avoid being labeled as disobedient.

Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior further explains this phenomenon. Subjective norms, perceptions of what significant others expect play a dominant role in shaping adolescent behavior [13]. In this study, subjective norms override personal attitudes, leading adolescents to act primarily to gain social approval and avoid rejection. This shift from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation increases the risk of psychological strain, especially when activities do not align with adolescents’ developmental needs.

From a developmental psychology perspective, this condition aligns with research on academic burnout, which shows that excessive activity without autonomy reduces psychological well-being [14]. Setyaningrum et al. (2024) similarly found that unrealistic parental expectations push children beyond their normative developmental boundaries [10]. Thus, over-scheduling in this study is not merely a matter of time management; it represents a social construction of the “good child” who must always be productive.

Self-Determination Theory also provides a relevant framework. This theory emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic psychological needs [15]. When autonomy is restricted, as seen in adolescents who participate in activities solely to meet parental expectations psychological pressure increases even if the adolescent appears outwardly successful. The findings of this study therefore support the argument that positive social labels can function as mechanisms of control that limit adolescent autonomy [16].

Another significant finding of this study is the emergence of fake personality among adolescents. The *good boy/good girl* label becomes internalized as a moral standard: a “good child” is obedient, compliant, non-confrontational, and consistently meets parental expectations. Several adolescents reported participating in courses or activities not because they desired to, but because they feared being perceived as disobedient or “not a good child” [17]. Many expressed the need to maintain parental expectations to continue receiving positive recognition. This indicates that the label functions not only as praise but also as a behavioral standard that shapes adolescent identity.

This process aligns with Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, particularly the “good boy–good girl orientation,” in which individuals behave in ways that elicit approval from authority figures and avoid disapproval [18]. Adolescents in this study demonstrate this orientation clearly: their actions are guided by the desire to maintain approval and avoid negative judgments.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research showing that parental expectations significantly influence children’s behavior and psychological stress. Study [9] found that high parental expectations correlate with increased academic anxiety among adolescents. Research by Rizka Puspita Ningtias and Fitri Andriani (2022) similarly demonstrated that perceived parental expectations contribute to psychological distress during adolescence [19]. Ayu Setyaningrum et al. (2024) further emphasized that unrealistic parental expectations push children beyond their developmental limits in order to gain recognition as “good children” [20]. Thus, the fake personality associated with the *good boy/good girl* label in this study illustrates how family social constructions shape normative adolescent compliance while simultaneously generating psychological pressure.

The next major impact of the *good boy/good girl* label is academic stress. Academic stress arises when expected academic achievement does not align with actual performance. In many families, academic achievement becomes a primary indicator of whether a child is considered “good” or “smart.” This label motivates adolescents to study harder to meet parental expectations. However, when adolescents fail to meet these expectations, they experience anxiety, guilt, and fear of disappointing parents, teachers, or peers.

Parental expectations are a major factor shaping children’s behavior [21]. Parents often expect children to obey instructions and fulfill academic demands [22]. When children comply, they are labeled as “good”; when they fail, they experience anxiety and fear of losing approval. This study’s findings align with Ningtias and Andriani (2022), who found that parental expectations significantly contribute to psychological distress during adolescence [19].

YangMi’s research further shows that junior high school students experience greater pressure to achieve high academic scores compared to elementary school students, and they engage in more social comparison with peers [23]. This intensifies psychological strain, as adolescents strive to meet the expectations of parents, teachers, and their social environment.

Kontas and Ozakan (2022) found that unrealistic parental expectations lead children to study beyond their natural capacity, driven by the belief that children must excel in everything to bring pride to the family. The gap between parental expectations and children’s actual abilities creates negative psychological consequences [24]. Liu et al. also found that parental involvement in children’s education can have negative psychological effects [25], and in some cases, adolescents may even experience depression [26]. Adolescents in this study reported stress not only from parents but also from teachers and peers [14].

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the parental attribution of the labels *good boy* and *good girl* produces negative consequences for adolescents. The findings indicate that adolescents become compelled to engage in a wide range of activities, often beyond their physical and psychological capacity, as a means of fulfilling parental expectations. This behavioral pattern ultimately contributes to the emergence of toxic productivity, in which adolescents feel obligated to remain constantly active and high-performing solely to maintain the perception of being a “good child” in the eyes of their parents.

## Ethical consideration, competing interest and source of funding

-Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including parental consent for adolescent informants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing all personal identifiers and using initials in transcripts and reports. The researcher also ensured that the interviews were conducted respectfully and sensitively, particularly given the age of the adolescent participants. All procedures adhered to ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

-There is no conflict of interest related to this publication.

-Source of funding is authors.

## REFERENCES

1. Tsabita A, Febriyanti F, Komariah S, Wahyuni S. Tren toxic productivity sebagai gejala terjadinya burnout syndrome terhadap prestasi akademik pada remaja rentang usia 18–23 tahun di Kota Bandung. *Sosmaniora J Ilmu Sos Hum*. 2023;2(4):495–501.
2. BPK Kota Jayapura. Jumlah penduduk menurut kelompok umur dan jenis kelamin di Kota Jayapura, 2022. Jayapura: Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Jayapura.
3. Istiqomah N, Sabrina N, Humaya S, Rahmi SA. Peningkatan partisipasi Gen Z dalam perencanaan pembangunan. *J Pedamas*. 2024;2(1):543–54.
4. Purba RT. Perkembangan moral menurut Kohlberg dan implementasinya dalam perspektif Kristen terhadap pendidikan moral anak di sekolah dasar. *Aleth Christ Educ J*. 2022;3(1):11–20.
5. Perempuan P, Aprianti K, Purnama I. Menelisik dampak fenomena toxic productivity era Society 5.0. *J Pendidik Manaj Perkantoran*. 2025;10(1):1–14.
6. Ramadhina C, Safitri D, Annisa F, Fadilah O. Pengendalian toxic productivity dalam menjaga kesehatan mental pada mahasiswa Universitas Negeri Jakarta di masa pandemi COVID-19. *Interak J Ilmu Komun*. 2023;12(2):250–66.
7. Taufik T. Limitasi stres akademik siswa SMP Negeri di Kabupaten Barru. *J Wahana Konseling*. 2021;4(2):113–22.
8. Liu P. Stress buffering effects of physical activity in adolescents: The moderating role of physical activity attitudes. 2025.
9. Xing Y, Yang Z, Zhang L. The effect of parental expectations on high school students' test anxiety: The mediating role of academic self-efficacy. *Lect Notes Educ Psychol Public Media*. 2023;2(1):738–45.
10. Setyaningrum A, Rahman AM, Ngesti M. Dampak harapan orang tua yang tidak realistis terhadap akademik remaja: Kajian sistematis. *J Psikol*. 2024;1(4):16–22.
11. Nissa A. Analisis rasional dan emosional orang tua dalam memotivasi anak memilih Pondok Pesantren Di' Ayatul Islamiyah Seriguna sebagai lembaga pendidikan remaja awal. Thesis. UIN Raden Intan Lampung; 2022.
12. Melinda M. Hubungan motivasi terhadap aktivitas fisik siswa ekstrakurikuler olahraga SMA Negeri 8 Merangin. Thesis. Universitas Jambi; 2024.
13. Bahtiar DH. Pengaruh attitude towards using, subjective norm, dan perceived behavioral control terhadap minat penggunaan dompet digital (Studi kasus mahasiswa IAIN Purwokerto). *Front Neurosci*. 2021;14(1):1–112.
14. Wu K, Wang F, Wang W, Li Y. Parents' education anxiety and children's academic burnout: The role of parental burnout and family function. *Front Psychol*. 2022;12(1):1–9.
15. Wadi H, Mukminin EZ. Dukungan interpersonal untuk kebutuhan psikologis dasar dan hubungannya dengan motivasi, kesejahteraan, dan kinerja: Analisis meta. *Harapan J Ilmu Kesehat Psikol*. 2024;1(2):61–70.
16. Surya S, Wajdi NK, Sulistiyani N, Rusmayadi R, Herman H, Rahayu R. Meningkatkan motivasi: Tantangan dari teori determinasi diri dalam mengembangkan kemampuan menulis. *Edu Sociata*. 2024;7(1):798–806.
17. Ibda F. Perkembangan moral dalam pandangan Lawrence Kohlberg. *Intelekt J Educ Sci Teach Train*. 2023;12(1):82–8.
18. Harahap D. Studi kasus dalam aspek perkembangan moral remaja. *J Al-Irsyad Bimbing Konseling Islam*. 2022;4(2):301–16.
19. Ningtias RP, Andriani F. Pengaruh perceived parental expectation terhadap psychological distress pada emerging adulthood di Indonesia. *Bul Ris Psikol Kesehat Ment*. 2022;2(1):37–48.
20. Florencia A, Hutapea J, Nurcahyanie OP. Faktor-faktor harapan orang tua yang tidak realistis terhadap anak: Tinjauan pustaka sistematis. *J Binagogik*. 2024;11(2):34–48.
21. Yusuf NM, Yusuf JM. Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi stres akademik. *Psyche 165 J*. 2020;235–9.
22. Monika M, Honnodottir V, Mohr M, Davidsen AH. The paradox of endless options and unrealistic expectations: Understanding the impact on youth mental health. *Int J Adolesc Youth*. 2023;28(1):1–29.
23. Lim Y. School and bicultural factors as mediators between immigrant mothers' acculturative stress and adolescents' depression in Korea. *Children*. 2023;10(6):12–8.
24. Li J, Xue E, You H. Parental educational expectations and academic achievement of left-behind children in China: The mediating role of parental involvement. *Behav Sci*. 2024;14(5):1–19.
25. Khalda A, Herlina H, Ihsan H. Pengaruh keterlibatan orang tua dan grit terhadap stres akademik pada siswa sekolah menengah atas di Kota Bandung. *J Psikol Insight*. 2023;7(1):39–52.
26. Xie J, Li J, Zhang C, Zhou Y, Luo X, Liu M, et al. Factors associated with circadian rhythm, job burnout, and perceived stress among nurses in Chinese tertiary hospitals: A cross-sectional study. 2021;8(2):22–8.