



## Role of Family and Social Support in Reducing Depression and Anxiety Among Adolescents and Young Adults

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### Abstract

This study explores the crucial role of family and social support as protective factors in reducing depression and anxiety among adolescents and young adults. Young adulthood and adolescence are crucial developmental stages that are marked by major physical, emotional, and social changes. At this stage, people tend to experience academic stress, identity development, peer pressure and responsibilities, and this might make them more susceptible to mental health issues. The study examines the role of supportive family and good social relations in psychological health and resilience. The quantitative research design was used and the cross-sectional survey design was employed with a sample of adolescents (14-18 years old) and young adults (18-24 years old). The data were gathered using self-administered questionnaires, which were standardized using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) assessing the support of family, friends, and significant others and the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 mental health scales to determine depression and anxiety. The results show that greater magnitude of perceived family and social support is linked to low scores of depression and anxiety symptoms. Affirming, feeling, and good parenting styles enhance self-esteem, good coping mechanisms, and emotional regulation.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Young Adults, Family Support, Social Support, Depression, Anxiety, Mental Health, Psychological Well-being

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### Introduction

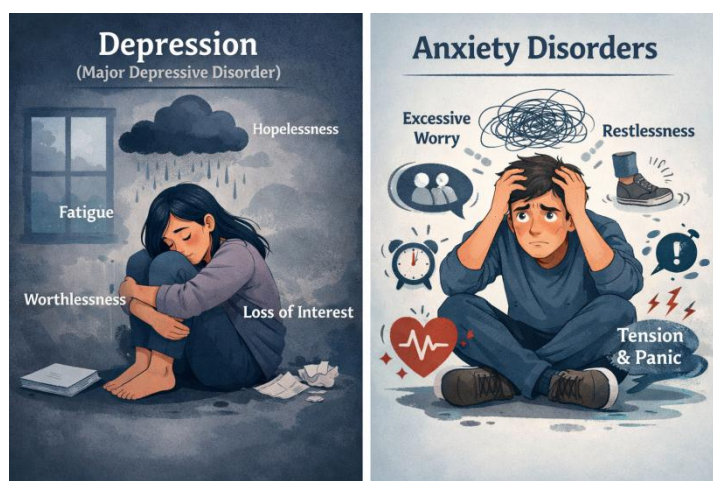
Social and family support has been commonly acknowledged as being a significant protective issue in the alleviation of depression and anxiety in adolescents and young adults. These are the developmental stages that are marked by physical, emotional and social change whereby in most cases, people tend to face the pressure of their academics, the establishment of their identity, societal expectations and the gradual shift towards independence. Mental health issues may be susceptible to such problems when there is lack of proper support mechanisms. Social support is the perceived presence of care, guidance, and support by the family, friends, and the general community in emotional, instrumental and informational ways. A positive family upbringing with a coherent family, flexibility, and open communication is quite a major factor that facilitates psychological well-being and reduces the chances of depression and anxiety. The emotional security, support, and feeling of belonging that are achieved through parents and siblings contribute to stress management and avoidance of uncertainty among young individuals. On the same note, affirmative peer relations, teacher-student, and community relations encourages good communication, emotional expression and problem solving. These positive relationships foster self-esteem, resiliency, healthy coping patterns, and perceived stress. Conversely, the lack of positive relations can cause isolation, loneliness, and emotional distress, which means that the reliance on family and social support should be reinforced.

### Definition of Depression and Anxiety

**Depression (Major Depressive Disorder):** Depression is a severe mood disorder that influences the behavior, thoughts, and feelings of an individual. It is defined by constant depression, despair and lack of interest or enjoyment in things that used to bring enjoyment in life. Symptoms include physical exhaustion, grumpiness, lack of concentration, alteration of appetite or sleep habits, and the worthlessness. Depression can be caused by a complex of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological conditions, including stress, trauma, or chemical disproportions in the brain, and it may seriously affect everyday functions and relations.

**Anxiety Disorders:** Anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive, unending worry and apprehension on something that occurs daily that might disrupt normal life. Symptoms that people with anxiety usually have include restlessness, fatigue, irritability, muscle tension, sleep disturbance, and inability to concentrate. Ordinary ones include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and specific phobias. The genetic predisposition, stressful life events, or environmental factors may cause

the development of anxiety. When not addressed it may have adverse consequences to academic performance, social relations, and general well-being.



**Depression vs Anxiety: A Visual Comparison**

### **Adolescent and Young Adult Development**

Teenagers (10-19) and young adults (up to the middle of the 20s) are going through an important transition period between childhood and adulthood characterized by dramatic physical, mental, and social development. It is a time of rapid physical growth, i.e. the process of puberty, growth spurts, hormonal changes and sexual maturation (typically starting at age 10). Simultaneously, the brain is still developing and especially in areas that concern reasoning, decision-making and emotional control, which develops abstract thinking, but also results in impulsive or risk-taking behaviors. Youths strive to form their identity, independence and self values psychosocially, and peer relations gain more significance than parental control. This is also important in the development of long-term health behaviors though it can be accompanied by risks like mental health issues, substance abuse and accidental injuries. The development can take a path of early, mid-adolescence (10-14) and late adolescence, or young adulthood (15-24+) stages.

### **Family Support as a Protective Factor in Reducing Depression and Anxiety Among Adolescents and Young Adults**

At this stage, adolescence and young adulthood are the significant periods of human development characterized by the active physical, emotional, and social transitions. At this time of transition, one is likely to encounter numerous challenges including the academic stress, peer pressure, identity development, and added responsibility. Such difficulties can be stressful and emotionally vulnerable and can potentially lead to mental health issues like depression and anxiety. In such a situation, family becomes an essential factor in terms of being the major support system of the youth. An upbringing family environment is positive and nurturing and offers emotional and moral stability as well as guidance to teenagers to overcome life challenges. Depending on the family relationships, communication strategies, and parenting styles, families that do not have any conflict and whose members are always ready to support each other and communicate with them help young people to gain self-confidence, become strong, and develop healthy emotional responses. Conversely, families with conflict, neglect or communication problems may augment the chances of psychological distress.

The main functions of family support in minimizing depression and anxiety in adolescents and young adults are the following:

**1. Positive Communication in the Family:** Open and efficient communication between parents and children is important in ensuring that there is mental well-being. The environment of trust and understanding is formed when the members of the family promote the expression of thoughts, concerns, and emotions among adolescents and encourage them to express their views, worries, and feelings freely. Positive communication makes the young people feel listened to and appreciated and this will lessen the feeling of being isolated and emotional distress. Teenagers who are able to share their issues with their parents may find it very difficult to internalize negative emotions and develop thoughts of depression. Moreover, frequent contact enables the parents to identify the initial signs of stress, anxiety, and behavioral change to support and guide them. Therefore, communication in the family plays a major role in preventing depression and anxiety.

**2. Emotional Support and Parental Warmth:** An emotional support provided by the members of the family is another important variable to safeguard the mental health of adolescents. Caring, emphatic and responsive parents make their children feel



loved, secure and accepted. This emotional support gives strength to the self-esteem and motivates adolescents to have positive perceptions about themselves. Young people can easily absorb stress and cope with disappointments in their lives when they are emotionally supported. The emotional warmth is also used to make adolescents better control their emotions, thereby minimizing the chances of acquiring anxiety and depressive symptoms. It is a protective buffer against mental health issues therefore a caring and supporting family setting.

**3. Democratic or Authoritative Parenting Style:** The parenting style can play a major role in shaping the psychological development of the adolescents. The most advantageous style of parenting that is deemed beneficial to the mental health is a democratic or authoritative style of parenting that is characterized by a balance between guidance and independence. In this style, the parents set clear rules and expectations and also consider the opinions and freedom of choice of children. Teens brought up in such settings get encouraged rather than confined and this encourages their self-esteem and ability to make decisions. It is a moderate way to avoid anxiety and promote a positive emotional growth since young people do not feel that they are distrusted or unable to cope with the responsibilities they have to carry.

**4. Family Structure, Cohesion and Stability:** Stable Cohesive family structure is a significant factor in eliminating emotional issues in adolescents. Families where there is harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect give one a feeling of security and belonging. Adolescents tend to build positive coping skills and close emotional bonds when the members of their families have high-quality time together and have positive relationships. A stable environment caused by clear family rules and organized routines also helps to decrease the uncertainty and stress. This type of family functioning enhances self-esteem and prevents internalization of the problems like depression and anxiety.

**5. Healthy Coping Skills Development:** Families have a strong influence on the way of how adolescents react on difficulties and stressful events. Effective coping skills are developed by the children through the support of their parents who teach them how to solve problems, think positively, etc. Adolescents learn positive ways of managing their own emotions through watching the way parents manage stress and conflicts. These coping mechanisms help them to confront the academic, peer, and social issues with confidence. And because of it, adolescents have fewer chances to develop severe anxiety symptoms or depressive symptoms.

**6. Promoting Help-Seeking and Reducing External Stress:** The family members tend to be the first to see the behavioral or emotional shifts in adolescents. Parents should be in the know of mental health problems and have a supportive attitude so that they can have the ability to make their children seek the help of a professional in case they need any. This could involve the use of counselors, psychologists or other mental health practitioners. Besides, a friendly family serves as a cushion to external stresses like competition in schools, social media pressure and society. The knowledge that they can be able to rely on a support system at home makes adolescents feel more at ease in dealing with life challenges.

### **Social Support and Its Role in Reducing Depression and Anxiety Among Adolescents and Young Adults**

Social support, which will be referred to as the perceived or actual care, support, and emotional comfort of the family members, friends, and the community, is significant in ensuring the enhancement of mental health and well-being in adolescents and young adults. This is an important, developmental phase, where the person makes a major psychological, social, and academic shift. Juveniles are highly pressured with regards to school work, career choice, peer relations, and identity. Such difficulties can make one prone to mental illnesses like depression and anxiety. Powerful social support networks have a protective and curative role in such circumstances. Studies have found out that people who feel that they are supported more by their families, friends and institutions are less likely to experience the stress and emotional distress. The feeling of security, belonging, and acceptance offered by social support can assist people to deal with the hard situations and emotional issues. It has also been demonstrated that the risk of severe anxiety and depressive symptoms can be decreased greatly with the help of the effective support systems, which tend to decrease the risk by approximately 22%-47%. In this way, social support is a crucial determinant of mental health protection in the adolescence and early adulthood.

#### **Types of Social Support for Youth**

Social support can be used in various dimensions that will support various emotional and practical requirements of youths.

**1. Emotional Support:** Emotional support is a type of showing empathy, love, care, and understanding offered by the family members, friends, and other close people. When adolescents are listened to, they feel that they are being heard and valued and, therefore, feel less lonely and emotionally distressed. Such kind of support boosts self esteem and also emotionally stable so that people can cope with stressful events better.



**2. Informational Support:** Informational support is the act of giving advice, suggestions and guiding the young people in making decisions and solving problems. Parents, teachers, mentors and peers can also be very instrumental in providing helpful feedback and information. This kind of advice can make adolescents aware of intricate circumstances and create more effective coping mechanisms in case they are confronted with academic, social or personal adversities.

**3. Instrumental or Tangible Support:** Instrumental support involves direct help and assistance in day to day tasks. They might be such as assistance in homework, financial aid, assistance in duties, or resources required to break the challenges. This form of assistance lessens stress because it covers the practical issues that are likely to cause anxiety.

**4. Belonging Support:** Belonging support- This is the feeling of belonging to a group or community. Social group activities, clubs, peer networks, and community activities make the adolescents feel appreciated. This feeling of belonging helps lessen the feeling of loneliness and enhances feelings of emotional health.

### **Reducing Depression and Anxiety Mechanisms**

The social support lessens depression and anxiety by using multiple psychological and physiological processes. There are two commonly accepted theoretical explanations of the functioning of this process, the main-effect model and the buffering model.

The main-effect model implies that good social relations contribute to overall well-being of the mind irrespective of the degree of stress. Having positive relationships is in itself a way of enhancing happiness, confidence and emotional stability.

The buffering model, however, hypothesizes that social support cushions people during stressful events. In cases where the adolescents are under pressure of academic performance, the relationship, or unsure of what to do next, the positive relationship serves as the shield against the stress-induced development into a severe psychological disorder.

Emotional regulation is enhanced by social support too. Sharing concerns with somebody that a young person trusts, will allow them to overcome emotions easier, and eliminate the sense of fear and stress. Good social interaction may as well affect the biological processes in making the stress hormones to decrease and feelings of calmness and safety to emerge.

Also, good support systems are useful in building resilience. Young people who have their support build a stronger self-confidence, gratefulness, and optimism. Such attributes help them to better cope with the challenges they may face in the future and stay psychologically healthier.

The other significant advantage of social support is that it decreases the maladaptive responses of coping. Positive environments tend to suppress negative behaviors like drug abuse, overuse of the internet, or isolation that are always linked to anxiety and depression.

### **Sources of Social Support**

Adolescents and young adults receive support at different social environments.

- **Family:** Family support is usually the primary and the most effective one. Emotional security, stability, and guidance are offered through parents and siblings particularly in the early adolescence stage.
- **Friends and Peers:** Peer relationships and friendships gain importance as the adolescents get older. Peers provide an insight, a sense of experience and emotional confirmation, which makes the youth feel less isolated.
- **Community and Educational Institutions:** The schools, teachers, counselors and community institutions are also of significance in helping the youth. Being active in school life, clubs and programs in the community have the effect of fostering social interaction, decreasing the stigma around mental health and providing a conducive environment to the development of emotions.

### **Research Methodology**

The researchers tend to choose the quantitative cross-sectional or longitudinal survey design to investigate the impact of family and social support on the mental health of adolescents and young adults. The study will enable researchers to examine the correlation between the perceived social support and psychological well being of a large sample.

- **Participants:** The adolescents between 14 and 18 years old and young adults between 18 and 24 years are normally involved in the study. The respondents are normally selected in secondary schools, colleges, and universities to present various educational and social backgrounds.



- **Data Collection:** Self-administered questionnaires are made use of to collect the data. One of the most popular tools is the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) that is an assessment of perceived social support provided by family, friends, and others.

#### Variables and Measures:

- **Independent Variable:** Level of perceived social support (family support, parent–child communication, teacher and peer support).
- **Dependent Variables:** Mental health outcomes, measured using standardized scales such as the PHQ-9 for depression and the GAD-7 for anxiety symptoms.

**Data Analysis:** Researchers apply correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis to examine relationships between support and mental health while controlling for demographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status.

**Table: Relationship Between Support Level and Mental Health Outcomes**

Support Level	% Participants	Mean Anxiety Score	Mean Depression Score
High Support	61.3%	4.2 (Low)	3.5 (Low)
Moderate Support	25.0%	7.8 (Moderate)	6.9 (Moderate)
Low Support	13.7%	12.5 (High)	11.2 (High)

**Interpretation:** The statistics indicate that the participants who have high scores in family and social support display much lower anxiety and depression scores, which explains the protective power of supportive relations in the mental health of adolescents.

#### Result and Discussion

Findings of the research indicate that there is a close connection between family and social support and the mental health of young adults and adolescents. The participants who had indicated high levels of perceived support by family members, friends and community networks demonstrated lower scores on anxiety and depression scales in comparison to those who had moderate or low perceived support. The statistical analysis indicated that the average anxiety score of people with high support was 4.2 and the level of depression was 3.5, showing rather low psychological distress. On the contrary, the participants with moderate level of support had higher level of anxiety and depression whereas those with low level of support had the highest level of emotional distress whereby anxiety and depression scores were 12.5 and 11.2 respectively. The results are in line with the theoretical views of the main-effect and buffering models of social support. The main- effect model indicates that good social relations help to maintain overall psychological well-being irrespective of stress levels and the buffering model gives an explanation of how supportive social relations help individuals to remedy the negative impacts of stressful experiences. Open communication and warm emotional and supportive parenting styles of families were identified to reinforce self-esteem and emotional stability. Equally, peer associations and school and community support to assist the adolescents to gain a sense of belonging and social acceptance. These positive interactions promote healthy coping behaviors, alleviate loneliness and isolation, and inhibit maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as substance use or withdrawal, and decrease chances of depression and anxiety.

#### Conclusion

In the end, the study concludes that the family and social support are significant in helping to guard teenagers and young adults against depression and anxiety. Positive relationships with family members in the form of positive communication, emotional warmth, and balanced parenting allow young people to gain confidence, strength, and healthy emotional control. Furthermore, good social networks with the peers, teachers, and neighborhood members offer a sense of belonging and emotional safety that reinforces the psychological health even further. These research results indicate that the higher the perceived support levels, the lower the anxiety and depressive symptoms levels are. Hence, enhancing family cohesion and encouraging supportive social conditions can be viewed as one of the key approaches to enhancing mental health among the youth. With the support of communities, schools, and families, it is time to establish powerful structures to promote open communication, early intervention, and proper coping mechanisms.



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