



## The Influence of Peer and Parental Support on Adolescent Mental Health

Srinoviyanti Malanding<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Public Health, Institut Kesehatan Deli Husada, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: Srinoviyanti Malanding

E-mail: [srrmlngffd@gmail.com](mailto:srrmlngffd@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Adolescent mental health has become an important global concern due to increasing levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional instability during developmental transitions. This study aimed to examine the influence of peer and parental support on adolescent mental health, particularly anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was employed involving 500 adolescents for quantitative analysis and 30 participants for qualitative interviews. Quantitative findings revealed that both peer and parental support significantly reduced anxiety and depression while positively influencing self-esteem. Parental support demonstrated a stronger predictive contribution compared with peer support. The qualitative findings further showed that adolescents perceived peers as sources of emotional companionship, whereas parents provided emotional security and stability. The novelty of this study lies in identifying the synergistic interaction between peer and parental support in strengthening adolescent psychological well-being. The findings imply that adolescent mental health interventions should integrate family-based and peer-support approaches to promote emotional resilience and sustainable psychological development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a critical transitional stage characterized by rapid biological, psychological, emotional, and social changes that significantly shape individual well-being and future development. During this period, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and low self-esteem. The increasing prevalence of adolescent mental health disorders has become a major global public health concern, as psychological difficulties experienced during adolescence often persist into adulthood and negatively affect academic performance, social functioning, and quality of life. According to recent international studies, social environments constitute one of the most influential determinants of adolescent mental health because adolescents continuously negotiate interpersonal relationships while simultaneously developing emotional autonomy and identity formation (De Beer et al., 2024; Simmons et al., 2023). Within this context, peer relationships and parental support emerge as two dominant social influences that significantly affect adolescent psychological

adjustment (Sun et al., 2023; Volk et al., 2022; Yildirim et al., 2025; Al-Ansi et al., 2023).

The growing importance of peer relationships during adolescence has attracted substantial scholarly attention. Adolescents spend considerable time interacting with peers, making friendships an important source of emotional validation, social belonging, and psychological support. Positive peer support has been associated with reduced anxiety, lower depressive symptoms, enhanced resilience, and improved self-esteem (Simmons et al., 2023; Zhou & Cheng, 2022; Assarian et al., 2023; Richard et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2024; Abu Omar et al., 2024). Adolescents who perceive their peers as empathetic and supportive are generally more capable of coping with emotional stressors and social challenges. Peer support also facilitates adaptive coping mechanisms by creating opportunities for emotional expression and mutual understanding (Suresh et al., 2021). However, peer relationships are not universally beneficial. Negative peer experiences such as bullying, peer victimization, social exclusion, and conformity pressure may increase emotional distress and contribute to the development of mental health problems (Carapeto et al., 2025; Juliyanti, 2025). Consequently, peer influence functions as both a protective and risk factor in adolescent mental health development.

Simultaneously, parental support continues to play a central role in adolescent psychological well-being despite adolescents' increasing desire for independence. Parents provide emotional security, guidance, and social stability that contribute to healthy emotional regulation and resilience. Studies have consistently demonstrated that adolescents who experience supportive parenting characterized by warmth, trust, communication, and involvement exhibit lower levels of anxiety and depression and higher self-esteem (Panhwar et al., 2023; Butler et al., 2022; Mičková & Levická, 2025). Attachment theory further emphasizes that secure parent-child relationships foster emotional stability and strengthen adolescents' ability to manage stress effectively (Obeldobel et al., 2023; Godor et al., 2024). In addition, effective parental communication has been shown to improve adolescents' coping strategies and reduce emotional vulnerability (Zapf et al., 2024; Suizzo et al., 2025; Ding et al., 2022). Nevertheless, inadequate parental communication, emotional neglect, or excessive control may weaken adolescents' psychological adjustment and increase mental health risks.

Although the significance of peer and parental support has been widely acknowledged, existing literature demonstrates several conceptual and empirical limitations. Most previous studies have examined peer support and parental support independently, focusing primarily on their separate effects on adolescent mental health outcomes (Butler et al., 2022; Haddow et al., 2021; Richard et al., 2022). This fragmented perspective overlooks the reality that adolescents simultaneously interact with peers and parents within interconnected social environments. As a result, the combined influence and interaction between these two support systems remain insufficiently explored. Current studies rarely investigate whether parental support strengthens the protective effect of peer support or whether positive peer relationships compensate for inadequate parental involvement. This gap limits the understanding of how multiple social support systems collectively shape adolescent mental health.

Another limitation in previous research concerns the dominance of quantitative approaches that primarily emphasize statistical associations while neglecting adolescents' subjective experiences regarding social support. Although quantitative findings have identified significant correlations between social support and mental health, they often fail to explain how adolescents interpret and experience support from peers and parents in daily life. Qualitative exploration is therefore necessary to understand the emotional mechanisms through which social support contributes to

psychological well-being. Furthermore, studies examining adolescent mental health in diverse socio-cultural contexts, particularly in developing countries, remain relatively limited despite increasing mental health challenges among adolescents globally.

The present study addresses these limitations by employing a mixed-methods approach to examine the influence of peer and parental support on adolescent mental health, specifically anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. Unlike previous studies that analyze peer and parental support separately, this research integrates both forms of support within a single analytical framework to investigate their individual and interactive effects. The study combines quantitative analysis with qualitative exploration to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how adolescents perceive and experience social support. The novelty of this research lies in its examination of the synergistic relationship between peer and parental support in influencing adolescent mental health outcomes. By exploring how these support systems complement one another, this study contributes to the development of a more holistic understanding of adolescent psychological well-being. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to social support and adolescent development literature while offering practical implications for parents, educators, schools, and mental health practitioners in designing collaborative interventions that strengthen adolescent mental health support systems.

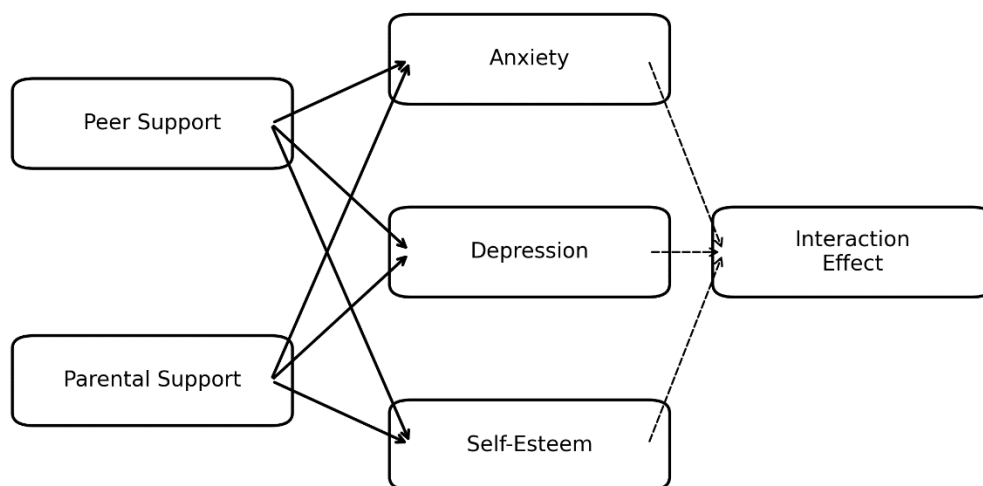


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Peer and Parental Support on Adolescent Mental Health

Source: Developed by the authors, 2025

Based on the theoretical and empirical review, this study proposes an integrated framework explaining how peer and parental support influence adolescent mental health outcomes, particularly anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. The conceptual relationship among variables is presented in Figure 1.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine the influence of peer and parental support on adolescent mental health. A cross-sectional correlational design was adopted to investigate the relationships between peer support, parental support, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem without manipulating the observed variables. The mixed-methods design was selected because it enables a comprehensive understanding of adolescents' psychological experiences by combining statistical

measurement with in-depth personal perspectives (Fusar-Poli et al., 2024). Quantitative data were used to identify patterns and correlations, while qualitative data provided contextual explanations regarding adolescents' perceptions of social support.

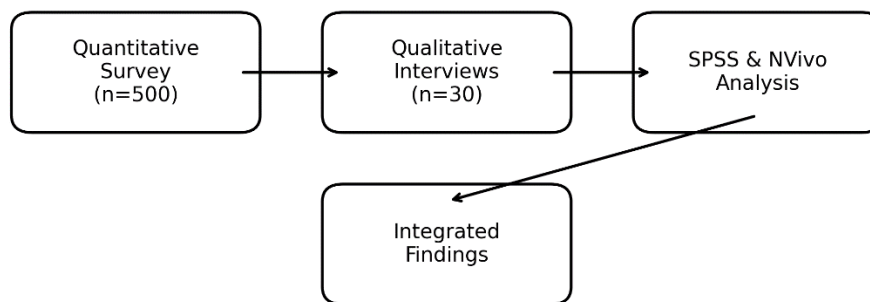


Figure 2. Mixed-Methods Research Design

Source: Developed by the authors, 2025

This study employed a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The overall research procedure is illustrated in Figure 2.

### Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in secondary schools located in both urban and rural areas to capture diverse socio-cultural contexts influencing adolescent mental health. Participants consisted of 500 adolescents aged 12–18 years selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation based on gender, socio-economic background, and geographical location. Inclusion criteria required participants to live with at least one parent and obtain parental consent prior to participation. Adolescents with severe psychiatric disorders or communication limitations were excluded to maintain research focus and data consistency. The inclusion of varied demographic characteristics increased the representativeness of the sample and strengthened the generalizability of findings (Borodovsky, 2022).

### Data Collection Techniques

Quantitative data were collected using standardized instruments, namely the Peer Support Scale (PSS), Parental Support Scale (PPS), and Adolescent Mental Health Questionnaire (AMHQ). These instruments measured perceived social support, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem using Likert-scale responses adapted from established psychological scales such as the DASS-21 and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 selected participants to explore adolescents' experiences regarding peer and parental support. Interview questions focused on emotional coping, communication patterns, and perceived psychological well-being.

### Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis to examine the predictive influence of peer and parental support on mental health outcomes. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically using NVivo software following coding, categorization, and theme development procedures proposed by Rosen et al. (2023). Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, while validity was strengthened through triangulation between quantitative and qualitative findings. Ethical approval and informed consent procedures were implemented to ensure research credibility and participant confidentiality.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings concerning the influence of peer and parental support on adolescent mental health, particularly anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. The findings are organized into quantitative and qualitative results following an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative findings are presented first to identify statistical relationships between variables, followed by qualitative findings to provide deeper explanations regarding adolescents' experiences of social support. Data were obtained from 500 adolescent survey respondents and 30 interview participants. The quantitative findings include descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis, while the qualitative findings were derived from thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

### Peer Support and Adolescent Mental Health

The first quantitative analysis examined the relationship between peer support and adolescent mental health outcomes, namely anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables analyzed.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Peer Support and Mental Health Outcomes

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Peer Support	3.8	0.6
Anxiety	2.7	0.8
Depression	2.5	0.7
Self-Esteem	3.2	0.9

Source: Processed survey data (2025).

The findings indicate that adolescents generally perceived peer support positively, with a mean score of 3.8 on a five-point scale. Anxiety and depression scores remained within moderate levels, whereas self-esteem scores reflected relatively stable psychological adjustment among participants.

Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated that peer support was negatively correlated with anxiety ( $r = -0.42, p < 0.01$ ) and depression ( $r = -0.39, p < 0.01$ ). Conversely, peer support showed a positive correlation with self-esteem ( $r = 0.44, p < 0.01$ ). These findings suggest that adolescents experiencing stronger peer support tended to report lower anxiety and depression alongside higher self-esteem.

Multiple regression analysis further confirmed that peer support significantly predicted adolescent mental health outcomes after controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and socio-economic background. Peer support explained 18% of the variance in anxiety ( $\beta = -0.42, p < 0.01$ ), 15% of the variance in depression ( $\beta = -0.39, p < 0.01$ ), and 19% of the variance in self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.44, p < 0.01$ ). These results indicate that peer relationships contribute substantially to emotional resilience and psychological well-being among adolescents.

### Parental Support and Adolescent Mental Health

The second analysis focused on the influence of parental support on adolescent mental health. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics regarding parental support and psychological outcomes.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Parental Support and Mental Health Outcomes

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Parental Support	4.2	0.5
Anxiety	2.7	0.8

Depression	2.5	0.7
Self-Esteem	3.2	0.9

Source: Processed survey data (2025).

The findings reveal that parental support obtained the highest mean score among all variables ( $M = 4.2$ ), indicating that adolescents generally perceived their parents as emotionally supportive and available.

Pearson correlation analysis showed that parental support was negatively associated with anxiety ( $r = -0.50, p < 0.01$ ) and depression ( $r = -0.48, p < 0.01$ ). At the same time, parental support demonstrated a positive relationship with self-esteem ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ). Compared with peer support, parental support showed stronger correlations with all mental health outcomes.

Regression analysis further demonstrated that parental support explained 24% of the variance in anxiety ( $\beta = -0.50, p < 0.01$ ), 23% of the variance in depression ( $\beta = -0.48, p < 0.01$ ), and 27% of the variance in self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ). These findings indicate that parental support plays a dominant role in reducing emotional distress and strengthening adolescent psychological resilience.

### Interaction Between Peer and Parental Support

The final quantitative analysis examined how peer and parental support interacted in predicting adolescent mental health outcomes. Table 3 summarizes the interaction effects between both forms of support.

Table 3. Interaction Between Peer and Parental Support in Predicting Adolescent Mental Health

Mental Health Outcome	Peer Support ( $\beta$ )	Parental Support ( $\beta$ )	Interaction ( $\beta$ )	R <sup>2</sup> (%)
Anxiety	-0.42	-0.50	-0.35	30
Depression	-0.39	-0.48	-0.32	29
Self-Esteem	0.44	0.52	0.36	31

Source: Processed survey data (2025).

The findings indicate that the interaction between peer and parental support significantly contributed to adolescent mental health outcomes. Together, both support systems explained 30% of the variance in anxiety, 29% of the variance in depression, and 31% of the variance in self-esteem. The interaction coefficients demonstrate that the combined effect of peer and parental support was stronger than the contribution of either source independently.

Further subgroup analysis revealed that adolescents with high parental support demonstrated stronger positive effects from peer support compared with adolescents who experienced lower parental support. Adolescents with high parental support showed a stronger negative correlation between peer support and anxiety ( $r = -0.60, p < 0.01$ ), whereas adolescents with lower parental support showed a weaker relationship ( $r = -0.25, p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the positive relationship between peer support and self-esteem was stronger among adolescents with high parental support ( $r = 0.65, p < 0.01$ ) compared with those experiencing lower parental support ( $r = 0.22, p < 0.05$ ).

To further illustrate the moderating role of parental support, the interaction effects between peer support and mental health outcomes are presented in Figure 3.

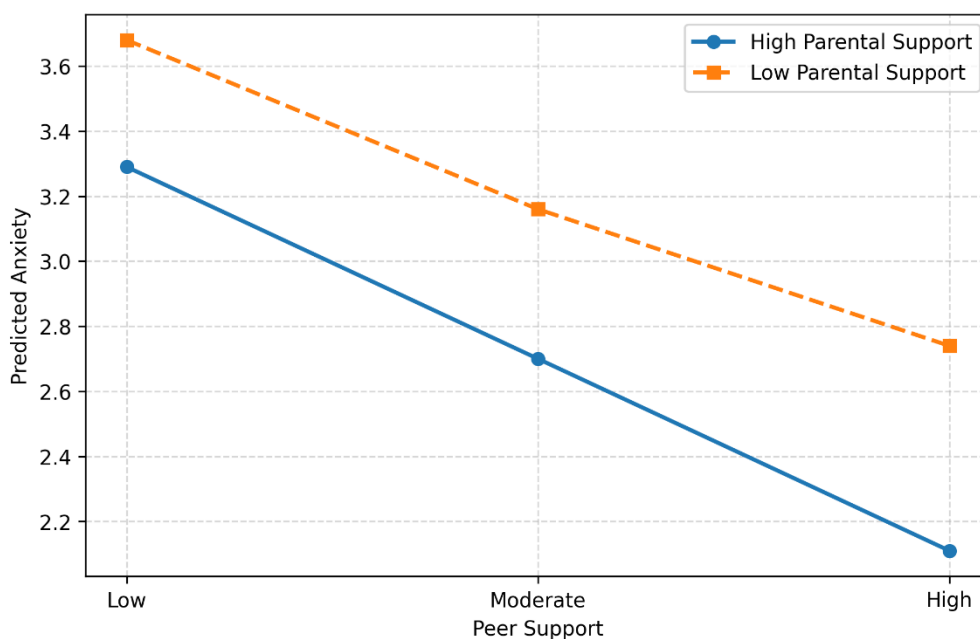


Figure 3. Interaction Effect of Peer and Parental Support on Adolescent Mental Health Outcomes

Source: Processed survey data (2025)

The interaction effect graph demonstrates that adolescents who simultaneously experienced high peer support and high parental support reported the lowest anxiety levels and the highest self-esteem scores. This finding suggests that both forms of support operate synergistically in strengthening adolescent mental health.

### Peer Support Experiences

The qualitative findings revealed that peer relationships played an important role in helping adolescents manage emotional stress and psychological difficulties. Most participants described peers as sources of emotional comfort, companionship, and understanding during difficult situations.

One participant explained:

*“When I feel stressed because of school pressure or personal problems, I usually talk to my close friends first. They do not always give solutions, but they listen to me carefully and make me feel calmer. Sometimes we just joke together, and that alone already reduces my anxiety. I feel less alone when I know someone understands what I am experiencing.”*

This statement indicates that emotional validation from peers contributed to emotional regulation and psychological comfort. Adolescents perceived supportive friendships as spaces where they could express emotions openly without fear of judgment.

Another participant highlighted the role of peers in strengthening self-confidence:

*“There are moments when I doubt myself, especially when I compare my academic achievements with others. My friends usually encourage me and remind me that everyone has different abilities. Their support makes me feel more confident and accepted.”*

The narrative suggests that peer affirmation positively influenced adolescents’ self-esteem and emotional security. Emotional encouragement from peers appeared to strengthen adolescents’ confidence and sense of belonging.

However, several participants also described negative peer experiences that contributed to anxiety and emotional pressure.

One participant stated:

*“Sometimes I feel pressured to follow what my friends want because I am afraid of being excluded from the group. Even if I disagree with them, I still worry about losing friendships. That situation often makes me anxious.”*

This finding confirms that peer influence possesses both protective and risk dimensions. While positive friendships promote emotional well-being, peer pressure and fear of exclusion may simultaneously intensify psychological distress.

### **Parental Support Experiences**

The interviews also revealed that parental support played a central role in providing emotional stability and psychological security for adolescents. Many participants emphasized that parents represented a source of comfort and guidance during stressful experiences.

One participant explained:

*“When I feel emotionally exhausted or overwhelmed, my parents usually try to comfort me before giving advice. My mother often tells me that every problem can be solved slowly and that I should not carry everything alone. Hearing that makes me feel calmer and more secure.”*

This narrative illustrates that emotional reassurance from parents contributed to adolescents’ sense of safety and resilience. Emotional warmth and parental presence appeared to reduce anxiety and emotional instability.

Another participant emphasized the importance of emotional communication within the family:

*“I feel more comfortable when my parents ask about my feelings instead of only asking about school results. Sometimes I just need someone to understand me emotionally. When my parents listen carefully, I feel less stressed.”*

The statement highlights that adolescents valued empathy and active listening from parents. Emotional attentiveness was perceived as a meaningful form of support that strengthened psychological well-being.

Nevertheless, some participants also reported communication barriers with parents.

One adolescent stated:

*“Sometimes my parents compare my problems to their experiences when they were young. I know they care about me, but there are moments when I feel they do not completely understand what I am going through.”*

This finding indicates that the effectiveness of parental support depends not only on parental presence but also on the quality of emotional communication and understanding.

### **Interaction Between Peer and Parental Support**

The qualitative findings further demonstrated that peer and parental support complemented each other in shaping adolescent mental health. Adolescents described relying on different support systems depending on the nature of the problems they experienced.

One participant explained:

*“If I have problems related to school or friendships, I usually talk to my friends because they understand situations that are similar to mine. But when the*

*problem feels more serious, especially related to family or emotional pressure, I prefer talking to my parents because they make me feel protected.”*

This statement suggests that adolescents viewed peers and parents as complementary sources of emotional support serving different psychological functions.

Another participant highlighted the importance of receiving support from both environments simultaneously:

*“I feel mentally stronger when both my parents and my friends support me at the same time. If one of them is missing, I still feel supported, but not completely. When both are there, I become more confident dealing with problems.”*

The narrative indicates that consistent support across multiple social environments strengthened adolescents’ emotional resilience and coping abilities.

However, several participants also reported conflicts between peer expectations and parental values.

One participant stated:

*“Sometimes my friends encourage me to do things that my parents would disagree with. In those situations, I feel confused because I want to stay accepted by my friends while also respecting my parents’ advice.”*

This finding reflects the complex social dynamics experienced during adolescence, where competing influences from peers and parents may create emotional tension. Overall, the qualitative findings support the quantitative results by demonstrating that peer and parental support interact synergistically in reducing anxiety and depression while strengthening adolescent self-esteem and emotional resilience.

### **The Synergistic Role of Peer and Parental Support in Adolescent Mental Health**

The results from this study show that peer and parental support have a significant impact on mental health of adolescents in that it helps to decrease anxiety and depression and increase self-confidence. The findings support a growing body of evidence highlighting the significance of social support systems in adolescents, who are a time of heightened emotion, identity development, and risk for psychological distress. In the present study, the authors expand on previous research by establishing that peer and parental support can have independent effects and that peer and parental support can work synergistically to impact adolescent psychological well-being.

The quantitative results showed that peer support was negatively correlated with anxiety and depression, and positively correlated with self-esteem. These findings are consistent with existing research, which has shown that peer relationships are an important protective factor for psychological distress in adolescents (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2023; Simmons et al., 2023). When adolescents feel emotionally accepted and validated by peers, they will learn to build healthy coping skills and emotional resilience. The buffering hypothesis put forward by Montecillo et al. (2024) suggests that positive peer relationships buffer the impact of stress through offering emotional support and social connections. The qualitative results also aligned with the quantitative results, where it was observed that adolescents turned to peers for immediate emotional support, especially in the face of academic pressures and social insecurity. Nevertheless, the negative aspect of peer influence, such as fear of exclusion and peer pressure, was also identified in the present study which led to emotional anxiety. This discovery aligns with the viewpoint of Wang et al. (2025) regarding the protective and risk aspects of peer relationships, contingent upon the nature of social interaction.

Peer support did not show as much as parental support predicted mental health in adolescents. This is in line with the findings of Butler et al. (2022) and Zapf et al. (2024) who found that emotionally supportive parenting is highly effective in lowering emotional distress in adolescents. The results of the present study agree with previous research that adolescents who receive warmth, empathy and open communication in the family have less anxiety and depression and have higher self-esteem. An important explanation for this phenomenon is attachment theory, which teaches that a good parent-child relationship will foster an emotional sense of security and adaptive emotional regulation (Eilert & Buchheim, 2023; Formisano et al., 2025). The present study emphasizes emotional communication as the main mechanism that fosters psychological well-being, rather than a number of earlier studies that studied parental involvement mostly through the lens of behavioral supervision. The adolescents in this study highlighted that it was more important that they felt understood by their parents than that they received advice or control.

An important finding of this study is the discovery of the interaction between peer and parental support. The results show that those who had high levels of peer support and high levels of parental support had the best mental health results as adolescents. This finding builds on the previous studies, which predominantly have studied peer or parental support on their own (Haddow et al., 2021; Zhou & Cheng, 2022). Based on the synergy found in this study, it is recommended that emotional support be provided across different social settings so that adolescents can benefit from it. Parents' support may bolster adolescents' self-confidence in establishing healthy peer relationships, and good peer relationships can positively influence adolescents' willingness to discuss their relationships with their parents (Delgado et al., 2022; Ding et al., 2022). The integrated perspective is the main novelty of the study and it is a contribution theoretically to the social support frameworks and the framework of adolescent development, by highlighting the interconnections of social relationships in the psychological adjustment of adolescents.

This research has very real implications for families, schools and mental health professionals. Peer-support programs and mental health awareness efforts should encourage positive social interaction among adolescents in school. At the same time, parents should be promoted to foster emotional communication and supportive families. Adolescent mental health interventions should, therefore, be done in a collaborative way with peer and parental support systems, not just individual interventions. Family-based and peer-based strategies can be used together in mental health counseling programs to support the emotional resilience of adolescents.

However, there are some drawbacks to this study. A cross sectional design does not allow for causal relationships to be drawn between social support and mental health outcomes. Moreover, the use of the self-reported questionnaires might lead to response bias and subjective interpretation. The study also had a limited sample of adolescents in specific educational settings, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across other cultural contexts. Future studies should thus use longitudinal designs to explore the changes in mental health that are associated with peer and parental support over time. Comparative research between various socio-cultural contexts is also essential to gain an understanding of the differences in the supports that are available for adolescents in these contexts. More research into digital peer interaction and online social support could also yield valuable clues to today's adolescent mental health landscape. The present study's findings add to the body of research on adolescent mental health by showing that peer and parental support can be used synergistically to improve emotional health, decrease psychological distress, and foster adolescent self-esteem.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that peer and parental support significantly influence adolescent mental health by reducing anxiety and depression while enhancing self-esteem. Parental support demonstrated a stronger contribution to psychological well-being, although peer support also functioned as an important emotional resource during adolescence. The findings further reveal that peer and parental support interact synergistically, indicating that adolescents experience better mental health outcomes when supportive relationships are consistently available across family and peer environments. The study contributes theoretically to adolescent development and social support literature by integrating peer and parental support within a single analytical framework. Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of collaborative interventions involving families, schools, and peer-support systems to strengthen adolescent emotional resilience. Despite these contributions, the study is limited by its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, which restrict causal interpretation. Future research should employ longitudinal and cross-cultural approaches to examine the long-term dynamics of social support and adolescent mental health across different social contexts.

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