



Contemporary Models of Psychological Support for Families with Adolescents under Social Stress

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Abstract

This article offers a comprehensive theoretical and analytical review of current models of psychological support for families with adolescents facing social stress. Framed within an interdisciplinary perspective that brings together family psychology, developmental psychiatry, and social epidemiology, the review focuses on the conceptual rigor and empirical validity of the Family Stress Model (FSM) alongside alternative buffering and mediational support frameworks. International studies published between 2022 and 2025—employing regression analyses and structural-equation models—are examined to illustrate how family and peer support influence adolescent anxiety and depression. Results indicate that the FSM consistently yields superior fit indices, demonstrates gender invariance, and highlights the protective role of family assets. The integration of the FSM with the dual-factor model of mental health is recommended to capture both negative and positive dimensions of adolescent well-being. Limitations of existing approaches are critically discussed, including gaps in cross-cultural and gender representation and a scarcity of longitudinal intervention data. The review underscores the importance of developing multi-level support programs that weave together family, school, clinical, and digital resources. Future research directions include designing multi-agent preventive strategies and adapting these support models to diverse cultural and social contexts. This work will inform practitioners in adolescent psychology, family therapy, social policy, medicine, and educational support amid rising social pressures.

Keywords: Psychological Support, Family Stress, Adolescents, Social Distress, Family Functioning, Emotional Resilience, Social Support, Anxiety, Fsm, Interdisciplinary Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Across Russia and beyond, contemporary families encounter mounting social stressors that profoundly reshape intrafamily dynamics and the psychoemotional well-being of adolescents. Economic volatility, information overload, the COVID-19 pandemic, widening inequality, and the pervasive digitalization of everyday life have engendered chronic tension, often outstripping the capacity of traditional support mechanisms [2]. Rising rates of adolescent anxiety and depression, declining academic and social adjustment, and eroded feelings of safety and belonging underscore the urgency of effective intervention [4].

Against this backdrop, interest has surged in psychological support models capable of buffering stress and bolstering family resilience. Empirical evidence underscores the critical impact of perceived social and emotional support—particularly from family members—on adolescents' mental health outcomes [1, 10]. Yet the complex realities of the

modern era demand adaptive, culturally sensitive strategies that transcend one-size-fits-all frameworks.

The Family Stress Model (FSM), rooted in psychosocial developmental theory, serves as the primary analytical lens of this review. It explicates how external socioeconomic pressures and intrapersonal factors affect adolescent behavior indirectly through parental distress and family interaction quality. Concurrently, multifactorial and dual-factor models of mental health—which acknowledge both positive and negative dimensions of emotional well-being—have gained traction [5].

Contemporary psychological support under social stress is increasingly conceived as a systemic, multi-layered practice that integrates cognitive, emotional, informational, and behavioral interventions. These efforts unfold through direct interactions (parent-adolescent, educator-adolescent) and institutional initiatives designed to strengthen family resources, emotional resilience, and social cohesion [7].

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The diversity of these approaches necessitates systematic comparison, critical evaluation, and identification of best-practice models.

The present study aims to conduct a thorough theoretical and analytical review of modern psychological-support models for families with adolescents under social stress. Emphasis is placed on assessing the effectiveness of various support forms, identifying mediating and moderating factors (such as family assets, gender, and attachment patterns), and evaluating the applicability of the Family Stress Model in today's rapidly changing social environment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological foundation of this study lies at the intersection of family psychology, social epidemiology, and developmental psychiatry, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. The principal tool is a theoretical analysis of publications that address contemporary approaches to psychological support for families with adolescents under conditions of social instability and stress.

Included in the review are validated sources presenting original data, theoretical models, and comparative studies. These comprise the national-level report by B. Zablotzky, A.E. Ng, L.I. Black et al. [1]; the narrative review by T.L. Anderson, R. Valiauga, C. Tallo et al. [2]; the cross-cultural panel study by X. Yu, X. Kong, Z. Cao et al. [10]; and articles on youth mental health, including the work of E.F. Acoba [7].

Special emphasis was placed on publications employing the Family Stress Model (FSM) and its adaptation to post-pandemic conditions: the investigation by S.M. Reich, Y. Liu, N. Tulagan et al. [5], which examines links between family stress, media use, and children's behavioral responses; and the study by J.-H. Chen, C.-H. Huang, C.-F. Wu et al. [9], which explores the moderating role of family assets in adolescent problem behaviors within the FSM framework.

Content analysis followed this logic:

- Identification of family-based social and emotional support factors for adolescents;
- Description of FSM's structural elements and its mediating mechanisms;
- Examination of regression and structural-equation models;
- Detection of differences by gender, income level, asset presence, and forms of support.

The qualitative component involved comparing psychological-support concepts with outcomes in perceived support, emotional stability, and family functioning. The focus was on uncovering resilient patterns of family interaction in contexts of social stress—such as economic hardship, post-pandemic tension, and resource scarcity.

In sum, the methodological strategy rests on juxtaposing conceptual frameworks with empirical evidence, enabling the identification of robust distinctions in approaches to psychological support for families with adolescents. This approach allowed us to interpret trust and supportive interaction as key variables mediating between external-pressure compensation strategies and internal family-system development paradigms.

RESULTS

On the basis of a structured synthesis of empirical findings from leading international studies [4, 5], a theoretical–analytical integration was conducted to identify robust patterns of psychological support for families with adolescents under social stress. The analysis focused on associations among the quality of social support, adolescents' emotional well-being, and family adaptive functioning, as well as the validity of the assessment models employed.

Table 1 presents the results of a multiple linear regression—drawn from a sample of 1,348 adolescents—estimating the impact of perceived social support on levels of depression and anxiety [4].

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression Results (Source: [4])

	Depression		Anxiety	
	b (SE)	95% CI	b (SE)	95% CI
Family support	−0.53 (0.05) ^a	(−0.63, −0.43)	−0.39 (0.07) ^a	(−0.53, −0.25)
Friend support	−0.52 (0.06) ^a	(−0.64, −0.41)	−0.44 (0.08) ^a	(−0.60, −0.29)

Both family and peer support show statistically significant negative associations with depression and anxiety. Each one-unit increase in perceived family support corresponds to a 0.53-point decrease in depressive symptoms and a 0.39-point reduction in anxiety. Comparable effect sizes were observed for friend support. These findings underscore the compensatory role of social support in mitigating adolescent emotional distress under elevated social pressure.

Table 2 displays multi-group SEM results assessing the fit of the Family Stress Model separately for mothers and fathers [5]. Fit indices (χ^2 , RMSEA, CFI) indicate excellent model correspondence across both the overall multi-group and gender-invariant configurations.

Table 2. Results from Multi-Group Analysis comparing Family Stress SEM between Mothers and Fathers (Source: [5])

Model	χ^2	df	SCF	p-value	TRd	Δ df	CD	TRd p-value	RMSEA	90% CI	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Multi-group	89.884	82	1.020	.258	–	–	–	–	.028	[.000; .059]	.981	.962	.051
Gender invariant	108.738	95	1.014	.159	19.02	13	.98	.122	.034	[.000; .061]	.968	.942	.050

The RMSEA remains below the .06 threshold and the CFI exceeds .96 in both models, confirming the FSM’s reliability and its gender-invariant applicability. This supports the model’s use for differentiated analysis of parental stress perception and supportive strategies, enabling more precisely tailored interventions.

Finally, Table 3 compares the fit indices of the classic Family Stress Model against three alternative specifications, including reverse and reciprocal paths.

Table 3. Comparative Fit Indices for the Family Stress Model and Alternative Models (Compiled by the author based on: [5])

Model	χ^2	df	p	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Family Stress Model	55.94	41	.060	.038	.965	.919	.038
Alternative Model 1 – Reverse	57.87	44	.078	.036	.968	.930	.040
Alternative Model 2 – Fully Rec.	57.25	39	.030	.044	.957	.896	.042
Alternative Model 3 – Part. Rec.	55.86	40	.049	.040	.963	.912	.040

Although the alternative models demonstrate acceptable fit, the classic FSM outperforms them on key criteria (χ^2 /df, RMSEA, CFI) or maintains higher TLI values. These results affirm the FSM as the most robust conceptual framework for capturing the interplay of stressors, family resources, and adolescent responses in unstable environments.

Overall, the data confirm the high validity and prognostic utility of family-centered models: both intra-family and peer support effectively buffer against adolescent emotional distress, while the FSM provides a solid theoretical foundation for clinical, educational, and counseling interventions.

DISCUSSION

Recent research on adolescent mental health underscores the mounting importance of conceptualizing social support as a principal buffer against stress. Three theoretical frameworks have proved particularly resilient for analyzing this phenomenon, each spotlighting a different layer of interplay among environmental pressures, adolescents’ internal resources, and their adaptive responses to social instability.

The buffering-support model posits that perceived social support directly attenuates the impact of stressors. Longitudinal and regression-based studies confirm that adolescents who report higher levels of family and peer support experience significantly lower anxiety and depressive symptoms. For example, Fitzpatrick et al. [4] demonstrate that both familial and friend support exert comparable, positive effects on youth emotional well-being, irrespective of gender or other sociodemographic variables. These findings align with Yu et al. [10], who document a reciprocal strengthening of social support and overall family functioning.

The Family Stress Model (FSM) offers a deeper, systemic view by framing the family as a core resilience factor. Reich et al. [5] report that the FSM achieves excellent fit with empirical data—surpassing alternative specifications (see Table 3)—and remains invariant across both mothers and fathers, underscoring the model’s structural universality. Chen et al. [9] further clarify that family assets and broader social resources moderate stress responses within the household, shaping adolescents’ behavioral and emotional profiles. In this context, support emerges not as an isolated input but as an integral component of the family’s adaptive system under external pressure.

The mediational model of support, emotional stability, and academic anxiety highlights how family functioning indirectly influences school-related anxiety by fostering emotional resilience. Gao and Liu [3] show that stable family dynamics bolster adolescents’ emotional regulation, which in turn diminishes academic stress; conversely, emotional stability amplifies perceived support. This dual pathway underscores the need for differentiated interventions that combine external assistance with deliberate cultivation of adolescents’ internal coping capacities. Such a framework offers strong explanatory power for how the integration of familial and educational resources can alleviate scholastic anxiety.

Collectively, these models point to the necessity of a multi-level, cross-sectoral approach to psychological support. Health-care professionals—particularly school nurses who play a pivotal role in early identification of anxiety symptoms—are vital [6], as is the school environment’s role in daily socialization [10]. Parental behavior, especially constructive stress management within the home, remains equally critical [9].

Analysis of contemporary theoretical and empirical models examining the impact of social support on adolescent mental health reveals several systemic limitations that demand further refinement in future research. Despite the clear significance of these frameworks, their application exhibits gaps rooted in both methodological and sociocultural factors.

First, existing studies display inadequate cross-cultural representation. Most research draws on samples from the United States, China, and, to a lesser extent, Europe, limiting the universality of observed patterns. For example, Anderson et al. [2] document rising anxiety primarily among adolescents in Western nations, yet the mechanisms of social buffering in other cultural and economic contexts remain unexplored. Cosma et al. [6] further emphasize the role of culture-specific factors—such as familial values, structural variations in family organization, and stigma surrounding mental illness—in shaping support dynamics. To address these blind spots, future investigations must employ cross-cultural designs that incorporate representative data from diverse sociocultural settings.

Second, gender stratification remains insufficiently addressed. Although some studies report differences in both the perception and efficacy of social support between boys and girls, systematic incorporation of gender as a variable is sporadic. Yu et al. [10], for instance, identify a bidirectional relationship between social support and family functioning only among girls, suggesting potential gender-specific processes in the cognitive and emotional reception of support. Ignoring these distinctions risks underestimating individual needs and skewing the development of preventive programs.

A third major challenge is the dearth of longitudinal data on intervention outcomes. While short-term benefits of social support are documented in several studies [2, 3, 6], understanding the persistence of these effects over time remains limited. Chen et al. [9] offer preliminary evidence of delayed behavioral effects, but their findings require replication in larger, culturally varied samples to confirm their generalizability.

Given these limitations, a promising future direction is the integration of the Family Stress Model with the dual-factor model of mental health, which assesses pathological and positive dimensions in parallel. Such a theoretical synthesis would simultaneously account for negative influences (stress, distress) and resilience resources (support, affective stability, life satisfaction). This approach holds particular value in preventive psychology, where the emphasis is shifting from corrective interventions to the promotion of positive adolescent functioning amid social instability.

In conclusion, advancing the field will require expanding cultural and gender representation, extending longitudinal coverage, and enriching existing models through interdisciplinary integration. Only by addressing these gaps

can truly robust and universal mechanisms of support be established to guide adolescents through the challenges of rising social pressure.

CONCLUSION

This study has systematically organized contemporary scientific insights into the mechanisms of social and family support for adolescents under heightened stress. It identified three productive frameworks for interpreting adolescents' psychoemotional states in unstable social environments: the buffering-support model, the resilience model within the Family Stress framework, and the mediation model linking emotional stability to academic anxiety.

Comparative analysis of empirical data confirmed that both family and peer support are significantly associated with reduced levels of anxiety and depression. Special focus was placed on the Family Stress Model, which demonstrated high adaptability and predictive power in explaining adolescents' distress responses—findings reinforced by comparisons with alternative models. The FSM proved to be a robust theoretical framework, invariant across parent gender, stress type, and support source.

Critical appraisal of existing research revealed gaps in cross-cultural comparisons, limited attention to gender differences in perceived support, and a shortage of longitudinal data on the long-term effects of interventions. Of particular importance is the need for further empirical development of comprehensive models that encompass both negative and positive mental-health dimensions, for example by integrating the FSM with the dual-factor model of mental health.

In sum, these results underscore the vital role of social and family support as buffers against adolescent distress and highlight the potential for more integrative, interdisciplinary approaches to youth mental-health assessment. Future research should prioritize the design of multi-agent psychological-support programs tailored to family contexts, educational settings, and digital communication environments.

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