

## **MENTAL HEALTH IN THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT: ADDRESSING THE CHANGES FACED BY ADOLESCENTS IN THE MODERN ERA**

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### **Abstract**

Adolescent mental health is a crucial aspect influenced by various psychosocial, emotional, and social factors. Changes in the lives of adolescents, such as the impact of social media, social pressure, and technological developments, can worsen their mental health conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated this situation, with many adolescents experiencing anxiety, depression, and stress due to social restrictions and school closures. In addition, social stigma and a lack of understanding about mental health often create barriers to seeking help. Studies show that factors like positive interactions with family and peers can help reduce psychological symptoms, while a family's socioeconomic status also plays a role in adolescent mental health. This article examines the various factors affecting adolescent mental health and highlights the importance of family involvement and evidence-based interventions to support their psychological well-being.

**Method** : This research employs a literature analysis approach by reviewing relevant theoretical and empirical sources, including Google Scholar, PubMed, and Science Direct.

**Conclusion** : Adolescent mental health is influenced by psychosocial, socio-economic, and technological factors, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anxiety, depression, and stress have increased, with stigma and a lack of mental health awareness exacerbating these conditions. Positive interactions with family and peers, as well as a family's socio-economic status, play a

crucial role in supporting adolescent mental health. Efforts to improve mental health literacy, reduce stigma, and strengthen social support are essential for prevention and intervention.

**Keywords :** Adolescent mental health, COVID-19 pandemic, social media, stigma, family, intervention.

## **Introduction**

Mental health is a critical aspect of overall well-being, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social states. It influences how individuals think, feel, and behave, and plays an essential role in how they cope with stress, interact with others, and make decisions in daily life. Among adolescents, who are going through a transition from childhood to adulthood, mental health becomes more complex and vulnerable to various internal and external factors.

Adolescents are particularly susceptible to mental health disorders, as they are in a stage of highly dynamic psychosocial development. Factors such as hormonal changes, identity formation, social pressures, and influences from family, school, and peer environments can significantly impact their psychological well-being. Moreover, in the modern era, filled with technological advancements and social media, adolescents face new challenges that worsen their mental health, such as stress from social comparisons, digital addiction, and cyberbullying.

Research indicates that mental health issues in adolescents, such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders, have increased over the past few decades<sup>1</sup>. While awareness of the importance of mental health has grown, the persistent social stigma surrounding mental health issues often prevents adolescents from seeking the help or support they need. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the factors influencing adolescent mental health, both from social and psychological perspectives, is crucial for designing more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

## **Discussion**

### **Adolescent Mental Health Concept**

Adolescent mental health is influenced by various factors, including emotional, psychological, and social aspects of the individual. Studies indicate that exploratory factor analysis identifies four key aspects that characterize poor mental health and risky behavior (PMH). The

first aspect is deviation, which reflects a tendency for adolescents to engage in substance use or delinquent behavior. The second is insecurity, which refers to feelings of being unsafe in different situations. The third aspect is gloom, encompassing a tendency to feel pessimistic and unhealthy. The fourth is pain, which involves a propensity to experience physical discomfort<sup>2</sup>.

These factors can significantly impact adolescent mental health, and in severe cases, may lead to mental disorders. A study conducted in Europe aimed to estimate the prevalence of mental health disorders such as anxiety disorders, depression, ADHD, conduct disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, autism, eating disorders, and substance use disorders (SUD) among children and adolescents. The findings revealed that nearly one in five children and adolescents in Europe experience a mental health disorder, with a combined prevalence rate of 15.5%. Anxiety disorders had the highest prevalence (7.9%), followed by ADHD (2.9%), oppositional defiant disorder (1.9%), depression (1.7%), conduct disorders (1.5%), and autism (1.4%). No studies were found on substance use disorders in this context<sup>3</sup>.

### **Psychosocial Changes in Adolescent in the Modern Era**

The significant changes adolescents experience today, such as advancements in technology, shifts in family dynamics, and evolving social roles, can also impact their mental health. In today's world, anxiety has become one of the most common mental health issues. People frequently engage with and comment on the photos and videos shared on social media. Many individuals, especially teenagers, are influenced by the context of social media. Some adolescents experience social media-related anxiety, driven by a fear of missing out, which leads them to feel the need to constantly check messages and notifications from their peers<sup>4</sup>.

Research on the relationship between time spent on social media and mental health issues has yielded varied results. O'Dea and Campbell (2011) in Australia found an inverse correlation with psychological stress, while Neira and Barber (2014) and Banjanin et al. (2015) found no link between social media use frequency and depressive mood. On the other hand, Sampasa-Kanyinga and Lewis (2015) in Canada discovered that spending more than two hours per day on social media was associated with psychological stress. A study by Tsitsika et al. (2014) across six European countries revealed a positive correlation between excessive social media use and depression and anxiety. Yan et al. (2017) also found a link between time spent on social media and anxiety among Chinese adolescents<sup>5</sup>.

### **The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic toward Adolescent Mental Health**

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a significant threat to global mental health. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to its mental health impacts due to their developmental stage, fears of infection, isolation at home, suspension of school and extracurricular activities, physical distancing measures, and broader threats such as the global economic recession and its effects.

A study reviewed 116 articles, incorporating data from 127,923 children and adolescents, as well as reports from parents and healthcare professionals. The findings revealed a high prevalence of COVID-19-related anxiety, along with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety compared to pre-pandemic levels. Adolescents, females, and children with neurodivergent or chronic physical conditions were found to be more susceptible to mental health issues. Many studies reported a decline in mental health as a result of pandemic control measures. Activities like exercise, entertainment, positive family relationships, and social support were found to be associated with better mental health outcomes<sup>6</sup>.

### **Social and Economic Challenges Faced by Adolescents**

In some cases, such as a study conducted in China, socio-economic status can also influence adolescent mental health. A study analyzing the impact of family socio-economic status on adolescent mental health, using data from the CEPS 2014-2015, found that factors such as family income, parental education level, and socio-economic status significantly affect adolescents' mental well-being. Adolescents who had exposure to health education were less influenced by their family's socio-economic status in terms of mental health. Additionally, parent-child interactions and peer relationships played a mediating role in this relationship. The study also revealed differences in the impact on adolescents from urban versus rural areas, with rural adolescents being more affected by their family's socio-economic status. However, the study was limited by its short-term data and did not account for dynamic effects or other influencing factors<sup>7</sup>.

Another study, conducted twice a year during the COVID-19 pandemic, involved 1,582 adolescents in China to examine the relationship between socio-economic status (SES), adolescent mental health issues, mindfulness awareness, and perceived stress using self-report measures. The instruments used included the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), Perceived Stress Scale (PPS), Self-rating Anxiety Scale (SAS), Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D),

and Conduct Problem Tendency Inventory (CPTDI). The findings indicated a significant correlation between SES, mindfulness, perceived stress, and adolescent mental health issues. Mediation analysis revealed that mindfulness and perceived stress acted as mediators in the relationship between SES and anxiety, depression, and externalizing problems. This study contributes to understanding the connection between socio-economic position and adolescent mental health problems, offering valuable insights for addressing adolescents' psychological challenges<sup>8</sup>.

### **Stigma Against Mental Disorders Among Adolescents**

Stigma and a lack of understanding about mental health have long been recognized as major barriers to seeking help for mental health issues. In response, there has been increased attention on understanding how stigma develops among adolescents, as well as evidence-based interventions to reduce this stigma<sup>9</sup>.

A study conducted in the United States involving 436 adolescents (286 from Montana and 150 from Texas) found significant improvements from before to after the intervention in three out of five help-seeking behaviors, along with an increase in mental health literacy and a reduction in mental health stigma. However, there was no change in the adolescents' intention to seek help<sup>10</sup>.

### **Family Role of the Family in Supporting Adolescent Mental Health**

The role of family is crucial in identifying, addressing, and reducing the risk of mental health disorders in adolescents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, with school closures as one of the consequences, approximately 87% of students worldwide were affected physically, socially, and psychologically.

The most common symptoms reported were anxiety (24.9%), depression (19.7%), and stress (15.2%). Overall, participants reported being satisfied with their lives, with 21.4% feeling more satisfied during the school closures. Higher-grade students showed a positive correlation with psychopathological symptoms and a negative correlation with life satisfaction. On the other hand, perceived benefits of quarantine at home and parent-child discussions about COVID-19 were negatively correlated with psychopathological symptoms and positively correlated with life satisfaction. Among participants who did not perceive benefits from home quarantine, those who

had discussions with their parents about COVID-19 experienced less depression, anxiety, and stress<sup>11</sup>.

## Conclusion

Adolescent mental health in the modern era is profoundly shaped by psychosocial, socioeconomic, and technological factors, with the COVID-19 pandemic significantly intensifying issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Social media use, family dynamics, socioeconomic status, and persistent stigma around mental health have all been identified as critical influences. Positive family interactions and peer support have been shown to mitigate psychological symptoms, emphasizing the need for strong social support systems. To address adolescent mental health challenges effectively, it is essential to promote mental health literacy, reduce stigma, and implement evidence-based interventions focused on prevention and early support.

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