**THE ROLE OF FAMILY SUPPORT IN THE MENTAL HEALTH OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

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| ABSTRACT **Introduction:** Adolescence is a stage marked by intense biopsychosocial changes, making young people vulnerable to the development of mental disorders. In this context, family support emerges as a crucial factor for students' mental health and academic performance. The absence of secure emotional bonds can impair emotional and social development, especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged settings. **Objective:** To analyze the influence of family support on the mental health of high school students, considering its impact on emotional well-being and academic performance. **Methodology:** This is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach, based on a bibliographic review of scientific works published between 2020 and 2025. The search was conducted in the PubMed database using descriptors related to students, mental health, and family support. Inclusion criteria focused on full-text publications directly aligned with the topic. **Results and Discussion:** The analysis revealed that active parental presence, open dialogue, and emotional support are fundamental elements for adolescent mental health. Dysfunctional family environments, with histories of violence, neglect, or parental absence, were associated with higher levels of emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. In contrast, structured and affective family contexts promoted secure bonds, emotional regulation, and improved academic performance, as well as greater motivation and self-esteem. **Conclusion:** Family support is a determining factor for the psychological and academic well-being of adolescents. Public policies and school practices should integrate the family as a central axis in promoting mental health and preventing disorders among young people.  . |

**Keywords:** Mental Health; Family Support; Adolescence.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Mental health is a public health issue with particular relevance during adolescence, with the prevalence of mental disorders ranging from 10% to 20% according to the WHO. This is a period of major transformations, with a high susceptibility to the development of mental disorders influenced by biological, economic, and social factors. This complexity can potentially become a source of stress and lead to the formation of distorted bonds that impact identity formation (Escobar et al., 2020). Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) highlights the effects of emotional bond deprivation on the mental health of children and adolescents, emphasizing the role of family relationships in shaping the child’s subjectivity and emotional development.

Thus, the impacts of a disruptive bond range from changes in gross and fine motor skills, language, social and cognitive abilities, to antisocial behavior and relational issues (Silva Filho et al., 2023). However, there is a noticeable lack of national-level research on the subject and its relationship with academic performance, which affects the collection of necessary data for mitigating the issue. Constantly under investigation in the global scientific community, mental health can directly impact quality of life, and the statistics regarding mental disorders are alarming. Epidemiological data indicate that 75% of adult mental disorders begin in childhood and adolescence, 50% of which before the age of 14 (Silva Filho et al., 2023). In Brazil, an epidemiological survey found that 14.3% of school-aged adolescents in a municipality in Rio de Janeiro had considered taking their own lives (Antunes et al., 2022a).

On the other side of the world, a study involving 9,398 students from 30 high schools in Shandong Province, China, found that 27% of these students had mental disorders, highlighting the need for early diagnosis and intervention (J. Eviron et al., 2022b). Parental absence is a factor that affects the mental health of adolescents, especially those living in socioeconomically vulnerable contexts. The study by Hussaini et al. (2021a) points out that low-income students face difficulties in accessing mental health services. This finding is reinforced by Dupuis, Bourque, and El Adlouni (2021b), who highlight that, in addition to financial barriers, fragile family relationships—such as in cases of divorced or absent parents—can lead young people to develop feelings of abandonment, which compromises their quality of life. This situation is further aggravated by the lack of adequate access to psychological support. Similarly, in England, students who are closer to their parents are associated with a lower risk of emotional problems (Escobar et al., 2020).

Although public policies have sought to strengthen family bonds and expand psychosocial support, previous studies show failures in the implementation of these measures, especially in underprivileged communities where social inequality is more evident. Thus, Escobar et al. (2020) emphasize that educational programs aimed at social awareness can help mitigate these problems through new studies focused on formulating policies that integrate the relationship between mental health, family structure, and economic inequality (Ren et al., 2025).

In this context, the research project aims to analyze the influence of family support on the mental health of high school students in a public school, investigating the relationship between the family environment, emotional well-being, and academic performance, justified by the lack of studies on the topic in the literature reviewed so far. This study reinforces the relevance of mental health issues in connection with family involvement and school performance in adolescents. From a social perspective, the results may contribute to improvements in identifying and preventing mental disorders and in recognizing the importance of family in the educational lives of these adolescents. From a scientific standpoint, the topic and its findings are expected to spark interest in developing further studies. Therefore, this study is intended to serve as an incentive for research exploring the interconnection between mental health, adolescents, family, and academic performance, thereby establishing its importance both in academia and society.

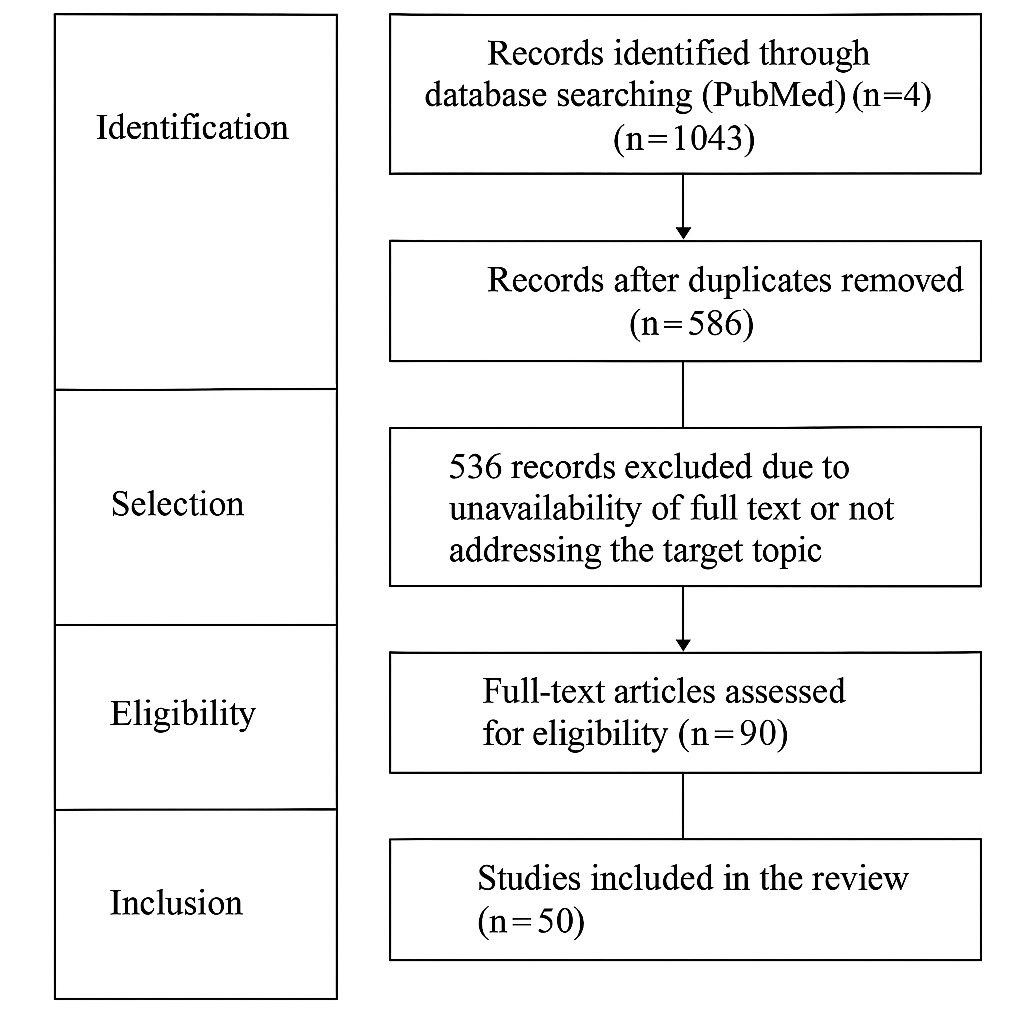
**2. METHODOLOGY**

This was a descriptive bibliographic study with a qualitative approach, and the data collected were used for the preparation of the scientific article. Data collection was carried out through a literature review of scientific works on the proposed theme, covering the period from 2020 to 2025. The inclusion criteria for content selection were: full-text publications aligned with the theme of the role of family support in the mental health of high school students, including documents, regulations, health entity guidelines, scientific articles, and institutional directives, published in Portuguese and English. The exclusion criteria included: articles not directly related to the theme, duplicate materials, incomplete documents, reviews, abstracts, debates, and unavailable full texts.

The literature search was conducted using the PubMed database. The search used Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) from the Regional Library of Medicine (BIREME): “Estudante” / “Students” / “Estudiantes” AND “Saúde Mental” / “Higiene Mental” / “Mental Health” / “Salud Mental” AND “Apoio Familiar” / “Assistência Familiar” / “Encorajamento Familiar” / “Incentivo Familiar” / “Family Support” / “Apoyo Familiar” NOT Covid-19, using the Boolean operators “AND” and “OR.”

The methodology adopted in this study began with the careful selection of descriptors in DeCS, followed by research in indexed databases. Using the main terms and their equivalents, tables were created listing the articles found in each database. Duplicate articles were removed, and a relevance screening was performed based on the titles. After this stage, abstracts were read, followed by a full reading of the articles that met the established criteria, as illustrated in the search and selection flowchart (FIGURE 1).

**Figure 1 – Flowchart of Article Search and Selection**

**** *Source: Authors' own.*

For data analysis, three thematic axes were defined, constructed based on the specific objectives and guided by the following key questions:

1. What are the main family support factors perceived by students?
2. What are the impacts of family relationships on adolescents' mental health?
3. How does family support affect school performance and academic motivation?

These questions guided the reading and critical analysis of the selected articles, forming the conceptual foundation for the discussion and interpretation of the data. The answers obtained provided the theoretical basis for constructing the results and reflections proposed in this study.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION** **Main family support factors perceived by students**

An important family support factor is the constant presence of parents, whether during meals or in daily conversations, providing an environment of trust and support that prevents psychological problems in adolescents, ensuring emotional support is available when needed (Antunes et al., 2015). This active presence contributes to a secure emotional attachment between youth and caregivers, which serves as a solid emotional foundation and prevents disruptive affective bonds (Filho et al., 2023). Furthermore, guidance, care, and ongoing support are crucial, as their absence results in feelings of loneliness and can trigger trauma in young people (Ren et al., 2025).

Aspects such as family cohesion, emotional expressiveness, and clear rules of conduct are fundamental to ensuring appropriate adolescent behavior and promoting a healthy family environment (Fauzi et al., 2023). Conversely, hostile and dysfunctional environments hinder the formation of secure bonds and the social development of young people, increasing the risks of self-harm, suicidal ideation, and depression (Forster et al., 2020). Problematic family conditions, including domestic violence and adverse socioeconomic issues, have a direct and negative impact on adolescents’ mental health, worsening depressive symptoms and hindering healthy and adaptive development (Chi et al., 2020; Addy et al., 2021).

Direct parental involvement in their children’s education promotes better academic performance and skill development when anchored in psychological support and encouragement of academic autonomy, although it tends to decrease as young people progress through educational levels (Xu et al., 2020). In single-parent contexts, active parental collaboration with the school strengthens family bonds and fosters resilience, contributing to adolescents’ adaptation to daily challenges (Dai et al., 2025). Dimensions such as adaptation, partnership, growth, affection, and conflict resolution are protective elements of family functioning, associated with lower levels of suicide risk and better psychological conditions (Chen et al., 2023).

Italian studies indicate that family social support significantly impacts adolescents’ psychological and somatic health, where a low perception of such support is directly related to worse well-being indicators (Bersia et al., 2022). Family support also acts as a moderator in coping with bullying and aggressive behavior, showing that emotionally available families contribute to better behavioral outcomes in adolescents (Ho et al., 2021). Positive family relationships, open communication, and encouragement in personal decision-making are fundamental to adolescents’ emotional well-being and mental health (Biber & Brandenburg, 2024; Chen et al., 2021).

Finally, emotional regulation promoted by the family, financial stability, and parents’ emotional understanding are essential for adolescents’ psychological protection and adaptive development (Aune et al., 2023; Da Silva et al., 2024; Dupuis et al., 2021). During stressful events such as the pandemic, family support through organized routines, active listening, and encouragement of self-care was essential in facing emotional challenges (Kunczicky et al., 2023). The absence of understanding and family support significantly worsens the emotional and psychological suffering of young people, reinforcing the importance of a caring and empathetic family environment as a protective factor (Okada et al., 2023).

**Impacts of Family Relationships on Adolescents' Mental Health**

The relationship between parents and children significantly influences adolescents' mental health. Harmonious and understanding relationships, in which problems are faced together, help prevent feelings of loneliness and disorders such as anxiety and depression (Antunes et al., 2015). In contrast, children who experience childhood trauma, including abuse, suffer impaired mental development, which increases the risk of self-harm and suicidal behavior, and makes it harder to form secure bonds and trust (Filho et al., 2023). Similarly, divorce and parental absence negatively affect young people’s emotional health, leading to long-lasting anxiety and depression (Ren et al., 2025).

Dysfunctional family environments and low income levels foster the development of aggressive behaviors among adolescents (Fauzi et al., 2023). Youth exposed to abuse and family dysfunction are two to four times more likely to engage in self-harming or suicidal behaviors (Forster et al., 2020). Conflict-ridden families with low support are directly associated with depression in adolescents, whereas healthy family environments show fewer psychological problems (Chi et al., 2020). Situations such as parental neglect, child abuse, and poverty intensify the risk of mental health issues among low-income youth (Addy et al., 2021).

In single-parent contexts, collaborative support between family and school can mitigate the negative effects of parental absence, fostering emotional and academic resilience (Dai et al., 2025). However, rigid or controlling parenting styles are associated with a significant increase in anxiety among adolescents (Seemi et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2022). Additionally, low family functionality, especially among youth with a history of self-harm, is linked to an increased risk of suicide, depression, and reduced subjective well-being (Chen et al., 2023).

The lack of consistent family support has been associated with worsening psychological complaints, particularly among adolescent girls (Bersia et al., 2022). On the other hand, appropriate family support can act as a moderator, reducing the negative impacts of bullying and promoting greater emotional stability in young people (Ho et al., 2021). Parenting style—whether positive or negative—directly influences adolescents' psychological behavior, with positive parenting being crucial for developing trust and problem-solving skills (Purva, 2022; Biber & Brandenburg, 2024). A welcoming and structured family environment is also important for preventing depression and strengthening adolescents’ emotional identity (Chen et al., 2021).

Emotional regulation facilitated by strong family relationships protects adolescents against depressive symptoms triggered by stressful events (Aune et al., 2023). Conversely, conflictual and violent family relationships significantly increase mental distress and self-destructive behaviors (Da Silva et al., 2024; Dupuis et al., 2021). Young people who experience constant family conflict show higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, while stable family relationships contribute to emotional strength and a lower incidence of psychological disorders (Kunczicky et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2022; Okada et al., 2023).

**Family Support Impacts Academic Performance and Motivation**

Family support plays a significant role in promoting students' mental health, directly influencing their ability to resolve conflicts and avoid both domestic and school-related problems (Antunes et al., 2015). However, situations such as divorce and family instability negatively affect academic performance, leading to learning difficulties related to compromised emotional health (Ren et al., 2025). Moreover, family pressure for academic results, particularly regarding higher education aspirations, can negatively impact performance, as observed in Ghanaian students (Addy et al., 2021).

In China, education is regarded as a family duty and a key factor for future success, with greater parental involvement being associated with better academic performance among girls and children whose parents have higher education levels (Xu et al., 2020). Families that provide emotional support and security contribute to resilient cognitive and emotional development, especially in single-parent contexts, by actively collaborating with schools to enhance students’ cognitive skills and emotional management (Dai et al., 2025). Programs with strong family support show higher student engagement and motivation, boosting self-esteem and a sense of academic purpose (Biber & Brandenburg, 2024).

Family stability, although not directly linked to academic achievement in some studies, encourages self-control and motivation, thereby contributing indirectly to better school outcomes (Chen et al., 2021). School interventions targeting mental health are more effective when there is family collaboration, promoting higher motivation and academic performance among students (Arnold et al., 2020). Children with adequate family support show better academic results, while a lack of support generates anxiety, depression, and learning difficulties (Dupuis; Bourque; El Adlouni, 2021).

During the pandemic, family support was essential to maintaining motivation, discipline, and good academic performance in remote learning contexts (Kunczicky; Ann-Christin Jahnke-Majorkovits; Sevecke, 2023). While some studies do not directly link family support to academic performance, they highlight school engagement and the indirect impact of academic motivation and mental health on academic outcomes, emphasizing that the absence of family support can hinder concentration and motivation (Murphy; Kim, 2023; Yang et al., 2022; Skoric et al., 2023). In addition, parents' education level may indirectly influence their children's mental health and academic performance, with higher parental education being associated with a lower prevalence of psychological issues in adolescents (Xiu et al., 2022).

Functional families foster emotional health, which is essential for academic performance, school adaptation, and healthy interpersonal relationships, reducing risks such as social anxiety and emotional exhaustion (Chu et al., 2022). On the other hand, adolescents with limited family support tend to rely excessively on the internet, impairing concentration and academic results (Fan, 2022). Finally, stable and engaged family contexts generate motivation and emotional stability—both essential for good academic performance—whereas neglectful environments increase demotivation and academic risk (Sabramani et al., 2021; Hao et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Guthold et al., 2023; Rodriguez-Rivas et al., 2022; Jenkins et al., 2018).

**4. CONCLUSION**

This study highlighted that family support plays a fundamental role in the mental health and academic performance of high school students. Data analysis revealed that factors such as active parental presence, open communication, emotional expressiveness, and psychological support are perceived by adolescents as essential elements of a healthy family environment. These characteristics help prevent disorders such as anxiety, depression, and stress, and promote the development of secure bonds and resilience in the face of adversity.

The correlation between family support and mental health indicators proved to be strong, especially in contexts of socioeconomic vulnerability and fragile family structures. Dysfunctional families with histories of violence, neglect, or parental absence were associated with higher levels of emotional distress and self-harming behaviors. In contrast, the presence of affective support and emotional family stability was shown to be an important protective factor for students' psychological well-being.

Additionally, it was observed that family support directly impacts academic performance and motivation. Students from structured and emotionally supportive households demonstrated greater engagement, discipline, and self-esteem in school settings. Those with limited support showed cognitive difficulties, lack of motivation, and greater susceptibility to emotional issues that compromise their academic success.

Therefore, it is concluded that promoting intersectoral actions that strengthen family bonds and encourage active family participation in school life is essential for the holistic development of adolescents. It is also recommended that schools and public policies incorporate mental health strategies that consider the family as a central element of support and prevention.

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