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## Characteristics, Challenges, and Countermeasures of Adolescent Emotional Support

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### Abstract

Adolescent emotional support is a crucial aspect in promoting their mental health, social adaptability, and future life development. It possesses unique characteristics, faces significant challenges, and requires targeted coping strategies. This article explores two dimensions: characteristics and challenges, and proposes systematic coping strategies based on current situation analysis, aiming to provide reference for building a more comprehensive emotional support network for adolescents. The research results show that the core characteristics of adolescent emotional support include: strong and complex emotional needs, a desire for understanding, acceptance, and respect, significant emotional fluctuations, and susceptibility to external influences; diversified sources of support, with family, school, peers, and community all playing important roles, where family is the foundation, school is an extension, and peers are an important supplement. However, the current emotional support system for adolescents faces numerous challenges. Peer support has the greatest and growing influence, but its depth and effectiveness are highly limited; insufficient family support manifests as intergenerational communication barriers, improper parenting methods, or emotional neglect, leading to unmet emotional needs of adolescents; the school support system is imperfect, with lagging mental health education, lack of professional training for teachers, making it difficult to effectively identify and intervene in problems; the social support network is weak, community resources are scarce, and society's awareness and attention to adolescent psychological issues are insufficient; individual differences are significant, with different adolescents having varying needs and responses to support due to differences in personality, experiences, and environment. Conclusion: All sectors of society need to adopt diversified support methods based on the stage characteristics of adolescents' physical and psychological development, including emotional care, psychological counseling, behavioral guidance, and resource provision, to provide emotional support for adolescents, emphasizing personalization and flexibility.

**Keywords:** Adolescents; Emotional support; Peers; Intergenerational communication

## Introduction

Emotional support refers to the spirit support and encouragement individuals receive, such as understanding, care, and love [1]. Emotional support is closely related to social support and constitutes an important component of it [1], and can effectively reduce the occurrence of psychological disorders and behavioral issues, such as bullying behavior [2].

Adolescents have a strong need for emotional support. During their growth, they face various stress. If there are intimate relationships and groups that provide support and encouragement, they can confide and resolve their inner repressed emotions [3]. Emotional support from intimate relationships and groups makes adolescents feel cared for, valued, and loved, which not only alleviates their anxiety and stress during growth but also enhances their social adaptability [4]. The emotional support adolescents receive enables them to actively face the difficulties encountered in life and learning, learn effective communication and exchange, and thus promote mental health [5].

Due to the insufficient educational resources available to adolescents and the lack of emphasis on psychological education, coupled with the absence of family supervision, poor parenting practices, and intergenerational upbringing in many families, the possibility of conflicts between the external environment and individual needs of adolescents has greatly increased. Adolescents who cannot meet their emotional needs are more dissatisfied with the external environment, and when faced with difficulties and challenges, they are less likely to have confidence and a sense of security, which can easily lead to negative emotions such as anxiety, irritability, and depression [6]. Over time, this may result in a temperament that is irritable and impulsive [7], making them more prone to escalate conflicts when encountering interpersonal conflicts, thus leading to problematic behaviors such as bullying [8]. When adolescents are dissatisfied with the external environment, if they can feel sufficient emotional support, it can help alleviate the conflict between the environment and individual needs, reduce the likelihood of using negative coping strategies, and decrease the occurrence of problematic behaviors. However, the emotional support perceived by adolescents often does not equate to the emotional support provided by others. From the perspective of adolescents' psychological needs, providing emotional support that aligns with their physical and psychological development characteristics can effectively improve their ability to curb problematic behaviors.

## 1. Characteristics of emotional support for adolescents

### 1.1 Strong demand but concealed expression

#### 1.1.1 Representation

Adolescents are in a period of self-awareness awakening, and their emotional support needs are experiencing explosive growth. However, limited by their cognitive level and expressive ability, their needs are often presented indirectly, possibly through silence, rebellious behavior, or subtle expressions on social media to convey inner turmoil. Studies have shown that when faced with stress, only about 30% of adolescents choose to confide in their parents or teachers, while the rest deal with their emotions through concealed methods such as diaries, virtual socializing, or self-digestion [9]. More commonly, it manifests as self-concealment in various aspects such as emotions, identity, and experiences [9-10]. The first is emotional concealment. Adolescents may hide their

true emotions such as disappointment towards their parents and fear towards the future, maintaining a positive image on the surface, but bearing considerable internal stress. This concealment prevents them from receiving emotional support and exacerbates their sense of loneliness. The second is identity and experience concealment. Some adolescents suppress their true identity or experiences due to gender identity, sexual orientation, or family setbacks (such as academic failure, breakup of intimate relationships), fearing rejection or stigmatization. To fit in with peers or avoid being judged, adolescents may conceal their interests, hobbies, or lifestyle (such as not sharing their love for reading for fear of being labeled as "old-fashioned"). Under academic stress, they may hide their anxiety and maintain a calm appearance.

Long-term concealment may lead to anxiety, depression, or a reduced sense of self-worth. The third is social and stress concealment.

### 1.1.2 Underlying reasons: characteristics of psychological development stages

The first is the ambivalence of emotional needs. Adolescents are in the "identity vs role confusion" stage of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, and their emotional needs exhibit strong ambivalence: they crave independence yet rely on support, pursue recognition yet resist control. They aspire to control their own world like adults, yet crave parental assistance during setbacks; they wish to prove their independence through rebellion, yet doubt themselves due to loneliness [11]. This ambivalence stems from the immature development of the prefrontal lobe, which leads to insufficient decision-making ability, and the amygdala's sensitivity to emotional stimuli [10]. At the same time, the increased sensitivity of the dopamine system makes adolescents more inclined to pursue immediate gratification, but the lagging development of executive function leads to insufficient self-control. They have idealistic expectations for interpersonal relationships/the future, but their lack of practical abilities can easily lead to anxiety. For example, they long for perfect friendships but encounter conflicts due to insufficient communication skills [10].

The second reason is the fear of negative evaluation. Firstly, social media amplifies the need for "being noticed" and simultaneously creates unrealistic standards for social comparison, which are widely adopted by the adolescent population [12]. Secondly, adolescents establish their self-worth through peer evaluations, but excessive focus on external opinions can lead to "pseudo-maturity" (such as mimicking adult behaviors without corresponding psychological preparation) [12]. Neuroscience research shows that the activity of the brain's "social evaluation system" during this stage is 2-3 times higher than that of adults [12-13]. This self-identity mechanism makes adolescents generally have a high fear of negative evaluations, worrying that expressing their true opinions and emotions might lead to criticism or ridicule [11]. On the other hand, they are overly sensitive to negative evaluations from others, often accompanied by physiological reactions (such as accelerated heartbeat, sweating) and avoidance behaviors (such as refusing to participate in social activities) [13, 14]. The core characteristics of fear of negative evaluation include the following 3 aspects [13, 14]. The first aspect is cognitive distortion --- misinterpreting neutral evaluations as negative, for example, equating "suggestions" with "criticisms". The second aspect is emotional amplification --- catastrophizing potential negativity,

such as "if I perform poorly, everyone will hate me". The last aspect is behavioral suppression --- tending to conceal emotional issues as personal privacy rather than actively seeking help, or giving up trying new things due to fear of being evaluated, leading to missed opportunities. For example, some middle school student, experiencing anxiety due to academic stress, chooses to post a status on social media saying "I'm fine", while actually escaping reality by staying up late to binge-watch TV shows.

### **1.1.3 The influence of concealing expression of strong demands**

Covert communication methods, on one hand, give rise to rebellious behaviors among adolescents, as they may feel resentful due to a perceived lack of understanding or seek attention through such behaviors. On the other hand, these methods can lead to the long-term accumulation of emotional issues, potentially triggering mental disorders such as depression and anxiety [11]. According to a survey, the detection rate of depression among adolescents in China stands at 24.6%, yet only 12.5% of them actively seek professional help [14].

## **1.2 Peer influence is significant but susceptible to misguidance**

### **1.2.1 Manifestation and impact**

During adolescence, individuals' dependence on peers significantly increases. This dependence is not simply a matter of social preference but is deeply rooted in the psychological mechanisms of social comparison and the need for recognition [11]. It reflects the core contradiction in adolescents' self-cognitive construction process—they desire independence and need external feedback to confirm their self-worth [11]. Peer relationships are an important source of emotional support for adolescents, and their positive significance lies in promoting socialization [11, 15]. Through peer interaction, adolescents learn communication skills and conflict resolution, laying the foundation for adult relationships [15]. Especially in early adolescence, peer recognition is crucial for self-worth construction [11]. However, peer groups also present a "emotional support trap" [11, 15]: Firstly, due to lack of experience, peers often respond with "comforting comparisons" (such as "I'm worse off than you") or ineffective advice (such as "don't think too much"), which can exacerbate emotional stress [15]. Secondly, negative, competitive, or exclusive behaviors among peers may trigger negative emotions such as anxiety and low self-esteem [15]. For example, "cliques" in schools may lead to loneliness among some adolescents who cannot fit in. A survey of 500 adolescents showed that 65% had experienced self-doubt due to peer evaluation [9]. Thirdly, excessive dependence may lead to "groupthink," where individuals blindly follow peer decisions and ignore personal values, or it may trigger anxiety, such as suppressing one's true self for fear of being excluded [15].

### **1.2.2 Reasons**

This phenomenon can be understood from three dimensions: neurodevelopment, social cognition, and psychological needs.

The first reason is duality of psychological mechanisms.

Adolescents' dependence on peers stems from social comparison and the need for recognition [11]. On one hand, they adjust themselves by observing peer behavior, but their lack of cognitive ability can easily lead to judgment biases. Experiments have shown that middle school students in groups with lazy peers have significantly reduced learning enthusiasm, indicating that peer behavior may directly weaken individual motivation [12]. Since

the "social evaluation system" of the adolescent brain is highly sensitive to peer feedback, when faced with negative evaluations, the activation level of the amygdala is much higher than that of adults [10, 13], leading to increased anxiety or feelings of inferiority. This physiological mechanism makes peers a "reference" for adolescents' self-positioning, relying on peer recognition to alleviate uncertainty and reinforcing the priority of peer relationships - because peer feedback provides immediate and specific basis for self-adjustment, which is more "operational" compared to family support.

On the other hand, the need for identity serves as the emotional cornerstone of peer dependency [11]. Originating from the "identity vs. role confusion" stage in Erikson's theory of psychological development, adolescents explore different roles to answer the question "Who am I?" Peer groups, acting as a "social mirror," provide a diverse range of identity templates, aiding individuals in integrating their self-concept [11]. For instance, within social circles, adolescents might experiment with roles such as leaders or followers, validating the effectiveness of these roles through peer evaluations. This exploration is not only a psychological need but also a by-product of the development of the prefrontal cortex, a region responsible for decision-making and self-control. Its immaturity leads adolescents to rely more on external feedback to compensate for the lack of internal judgment [13]. In the absence of effective guidance and intervention from family and school, peer relationships might replace family support, but without mature emotional management skills [15]. Facts have proven that adolescents inherently have a high need for emotional support from peers. Coupled with the fact that parents and teachers primarily focus on their material needs and academic performance, rural adolescents place more emotional attachment on their peers [15].

The need for recognition has been amplified in the era of social media. Likes and comments on platforms have become tools for quantifying self-worth. Teenagers seek recognition through carefully curated online personas (such as perfect photos), but may feel lonely due to the gap between reality and virtuality. This contradiction reveals the double-edged sword of peer dependency: on one hand, peer support helps build self-confidence; on the other hand, excessive focus on external evaluations may weaken internal stability. For example, a teenager may feel confident in the classroom due to peer affirmation, but privately fall into self-denial after a failed exam, highlighting the instability of the need for recognition [14].

The second reason is the contradiction in behavioral characteristics

Popular adolescents typically possess social competencies (such as listening and cooperation), while rejected individuals may exhibit aggression or withdrawal. This difference leads to a polarized peer influence [15].

On one hand, positive groups provide emotional support and development platforms for adolescents through shared goals, positive interactions, and role modeling, fostering their social responsibility and promoting growth. Such groups typically exhibit the following characteristics [1, 8, 10, 16]. Firstly, they are **goal-oriented**: members form a cohesive unit around academic improvement, skill development, or public welfare undertakings. For instance, science and technology innovation clubs foster young people's logical thinking and practical abilities through project collaboration, while cultivating teamwork spirit. Secondly, they

constitute an emotional support network: in collective activities, adolescents gain a sense of belonging, alleviating loneliness during their growth. Members who participate in choirs or sports teams often exhibit higher emotional stability and self-confidence. Lastly, they demonstrate a role modeling effect: outstanding members within the group convey positive values through their words and deeds. For example, leaders in student self-governing organizations subtly influence other members with their sense of responsibility and leadership skills.

On the other hand, negative groups, bound by negative behaviors, induce adolescents to imitate such behaviors and deviate from the right path through peer pressure, subcultural dissemination, and instant reward mechanisms. Typical manifestations of such groups include the following three points [1, 8, 10, 16]: Firstly, the contagion of behavioral imitation. Individuals within the group are easily influenced by peer behavior, and may even rationalize deviant behaviors. For example, smoking or skipping classes may be labeled as "cool" within a small group, triggering a chain reaction. Secondly, the erosion of subculture. Certain groups disseminate extreme values such as violence worship or materialism through social media, distorting the cognitive framework of adolescents. Lastly, the trap of instant gratification. Negative groups often provide short-term pleasure (such as game addiction or consumption ostentation), weakening individuals' motivation to pursue long-term goals.

Under group pressure, adolescents are likely to choose compromise in order to fit in with the group, even if they know their behavior is inappropriate, such as following the trend of dating or participating in dangerous activities. This phenomenon of "group polarization" is particularly evident in highly closed circles, ultimately leading to a disconnect between individual behavior and mainstream values.

The last reason is complexity of social environment.

During the critical period of self-identity formation, the social environment of adolescents presents a multidimensional interweaving of contradictions. This complexity is both a necessary growing pains and a microcosm of sociocultural changes. The core contradiction lies in the tension between individuals' strong need for a sense of belonging and differentiated development, which is continuously amplified in the dual spaces of reality and virtuality. The complexity of the social environment of adolescents is mainly manifested in the following two aspects [16].

On one hand, there are multidimensional contradictions in real-life social interactions. Firstly, there is group pressure and exclusion: in schools, there are both instances of isolation due to being too showy and bullying due to being too low-key, and even differences in learning attitudes can become reasons for exclusion. Such exclusion often lacks a clear logic, such as being ridiculed for a minor mistake in class for a long time [1, 16]. This exclusion is contagious; once a core member of a group initiates exclusionary behavior, other members often participate due to conformity or to avoid becoming targets, forming a "tyranny of the majority" [1, 16]. Psychologically, those who are excluded often fall into a vicious cycle of "anticipatory anxiety": concerns about social failure lead to avoidance behavior, which in turn reinforces the state of isolation, ultimately forming a self-fulfilling prophecy [16]. Physiologically, this pressure can trigger excessive amygdala activity and elevated cortisol levels, and long-term stress may affect brain development. Secondly, there is a vicious cycle of social anxiety: social anxiety increases from childhood to

adolescence, closely related to the imbalance in adolescents' physical and mental development. Laboratory research further verifies that interpretative bias (interpreting ambiguous social cues as threats) is a core characteristic of social anxiety. 83% of adolescents with social anxiety disorders experience "anticipatory anxiety", and are prone to falling into a cycle of "self-denial-avoidance behavior-further isolation" after being isolated [1, 16]. Physiologically, this manifests as excessive amygdala activity, elevated cortisol levels, and other stress responses [13].

On the other hand, virtual socialization faces a dual alienation. Firstly, social media distortion. The "perfect relationships" displayed online exacerbate anxiety and comparison in real-life social interactions. The division between virtuality and reality: some teenagers are "social butterflies" online but "social phobics" offline. This contradiction stems from the sense of security brought by online anonymity and the information cocoon caused by algorithmic recommendations [16, 17]. About 53.1% of college students perceive limited information horizons, but only 19.5% actively break out of the comfort zone of the information cocoon [16, 17]. Secondly, the degradation of social skills: excessive reliance on online socialization may weaken empathy skills in reality, making it difficult for teenagers to adapt to face-to-face communication that requires immediate feedback and non-verbal communication. This degradation of skills is particularly evident in intimate relationships, potentially leading to emotional expression barriers and relationship fragility [16].

### **1.3 Family support is irreplaceable, but it requires a sense of boundaries**

The growth of adolescents is a process full of challenges and exploration, in which family support plays an irreplaceable role. However, cultivating a sense of boundaries is equally crucial. This balanced relationship is like building a bridge between a warm harbor and the vast ocean, providing both a sense of security and autonomy [11]. The following discusses this issue from three dimensions: the irreplaceability of family support, the necessity of a sense of boundaries, and how to achieve dynamic balance.

#### **1.3.1 The irreplaceability of family support: the foundation of emotions and values**

The family is the core domain for the psychological development of adolescents, where its

role in empathy and support manifests in emotional security and the shaping of values. A stable family environment can provide adolescents with an emotional haven, reducing the risk of anxiety and depression. Studies have shown that parental emotional support can significantly enhance children's psychological resilience [1]. For example, when children face academic pressure, their parents' listening and encouragement can alleviate their tension and help them establish positive coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the family serves as the primary classroom for moral values and social norms, with parents' words and deeds directly influencing the formation of children's behavioral patterns. Through daily interactions, children learn values such as respect, responsibility, and empathy, which will accompany them throughout their lives [1]. This dual nurturing of emotions and values is difficult to replicate in the external environment.

#### **1.3.2 The necessity of boundary perception: fostering autonomy and independence**

As the prefrontal cortex of adolescents develops, their need for autonomy becomes increasingly strong, and at this point, a sense of

boundaries becomes crucial. Excessive intervention can inhibit children's independence and lead to dependence, while moderate letting go can stimulate their sense of responsibility and decision-making ability. For example, in academic planning, if parents take care of everything, children may lose their self-management ability; On the contrary, if they are allowed to participate in developing learning plans, they can develop time management and problem-solving skills [11]. A sense of boundaries can also avoid the trap of "control oriented families". Studies have shown that children from high control oriented families have lower adaptability and are more prone to self doubt as adults. Therefore, clarifying the bottom line (such as safety and legal issues) and flexible space is an important step in promoting the psychological maturity of adolescents [15].

### **1.3.3 Dynamic equilibrium: The transition from "instruction" to "scaffolding support"**

Effective family support manifests as listening rather than lecturing, accepting emotions rather than denying feelings, and offering choices rather than imposing decisions. However, excessive intervention (such as "helicopter parenting") can undermine adolescents' autonomy, leading to dependency or rebellion. For instance, if parents project their own anxiety onto their children, it may trigger "emotional kidnapping," causing adolescents to choose to avoid communication under pressure [18].

Supportive families have the lowest incidence of "emotional blackmail," which can reduce the incidence of psychological issues in children by 40% [8]. This is because parents, through consultative communication methods such as "I've noticed you've been feeling down recently, would you like to talk?" are more likely to establish trust between parents and children, facilitating effective communication. On the other hand, controlling families have the highest incidence of "emotional blackmail," as parents adhere to the principle of "you must listen to me," leading to rebellious behavior in children and stifling effective parent-child communication.

To achieve a balance between family support and boundary awareness, it is necessary to start with educational methods. Parents should gradually shift from being "directors" to "supporters" and adopt a "scaffolding support" strategy. For example, in academic planning, parents can discuss goals together rather than imposing arrangements, allowing children to make their own decisions under guidance [9]. At the same time, boundary setting needs to be flexibly adjusted: for younger children, clear rules and consequences can be established; for adolescents, communication frequency needs to be increased, and the reasonableness of rules needs to be regularly evaluated. This adjustment allows children to feel respected and understand that the family is a "safe base" rather than a "control center". In addition, parents need to set an example and demonstrate the importance of healthy boundaries, such as respecting their children's privacy and not randomly checking their diaries or phones, thereby establishing a foundation of trust.

## **1.4 The double-edged sword effect of digital socialization**

### **1.4.1 Manifestation and Impact**

Social media features such as video calls and dynamic sharing have eliminated physical distance, creating a "virtual co-presence" experience. This facilitates the construction of a diverse social network across regions and cultures, broadens the knowledge horizon of adolescents, and cultivates their cultural inclusiveness and diverse thinking abilities [12]. Low-threshold participation

methods such as liking and sharing have expanded social coverage, democratized global interaction, and facilitated the sharing of resources and experiences, thereby enhancing adolescents' self-expression ability, creativity, and self-confidence [12]. The maintenance cost of weak connections (such as online friends) has been significantly reduced, achieving relational accessibility [12]. These functions provide adolescents with a vast social platform and a broad outlet for emotional expression. For introverted or psychologically stressed adolescents, this anonymous or semi-anonymous social interaction mode can offer viable psychological support [12]. On the other hand, the anonymity of online communication may lead to information fermentation on the internet, amplifying negative emotions, such as anxiety triggered by repeated dissemination of cyberbullying or false information [16]. Simultaneously, excessive reliance on virtual social interaction can weaken the ability to form emotional connections in reality. For instance, after adolescents present a "perfect life" on social media, they may experience self-doubt due to the gap between reality and their idealized portrayal [16]. A survey conducted by a certain platform revealed that 60% of adolescents have felt inferior due to the "perfect persona" presented on social media, with 30% attempting to conform to trends through cosmetic procedures and excessive consumption [16].

### **1.4.2 Structural roots of the double-edged sword effect**

The first is platform design logic

On one hand, there is the attention economy model: maximizing user engagement time through designs such as infinite scrolling and push notifications. On the other hand, it is due to algorithmic bias: prioritizing content that elicits emotional reactions, amplifying extreme viewpoints [12].

The second is sociocultural transformation.

On one hand, digital natives regard online interaction as a normal social practice, leading to a decline in their real-life social skills [17]. On the other hand, the "face project" under collectivist culture is further reinforced in virtual space [12].

The last is regulatory lag

On one hand, the anonymity of the internet reduces behavioral constraints, leading to an annual growth rate of 27% in cyber violence incidents [14]. On the other hand, there is a fundamental conflict between data privacy protection and commercial interests, causing internet operators to neglect user data privacy protection in pursuit of maximizing commercial benefits [17].

## **2. Major challenges in providing emotional support to adolescents**

### **2.1 Intergenerational communication barriers: The conflict between experientialism and resistance**

Parents often guide adolescents as "veterans," yet overlook the individual differences among them [19]. For instance, parents may impose their own growth experiences on their children, leading to ineffective communication; whereas adolescents, in turn, may reject suggestions due to their resistance to authority. This conflict is particularly prominent in issues such as academic pressure and career planning [20]. Surveys indicate that only 15% of adolescents believe that their parents can truly understand their emotional needs, while over 60% of parents express "not knowing how to communicate with their children" [19].

## **2.2 Difficulty in accessing professional resources: significant stigma but insufficient accessibility**

Psychological counseling still faces stigmatization among adolescents [21]. Some individuals believe that psychological counselors are proficient in "mind reading" and often analyze others' privacy. They associate seeking psychological counseling with "psychological vulnerability," "admission of failure," and "mental illness," leading to a low rate of active help-seeking. Meanwhile, professional service resources are unevenly distributed, making it difficult for adolescents in rural areas or low-income families to obtain timely support [22-23]. A survey in a certain province shows that only 20% of schools are equipped with full-time psychological teachers, and 60% of them have not received systematic training. The coverage rate of psychological counseling institutions in rural areas is less than 10% [23].

## **2.3 Fragmentation of social support: insufficient collaboration among family, school, and community**

The current emotional support system is characterized by a fragmented approach: families focus on individual growth, schools emphasize academic performance, and communities lack targeted services. School psychological counseling is often linked to academic performance, leading some students to conceal their problems for fear of affecting evaluations; community activities are primarily entertainment-oriented, lacking emotional education content [23]. Surveys show that 70% of school psychological counseling rooms have a utilization rate of less than 30%, with 50% of students expressing concern about being ridiculed by classmates [23].

## **2.4 Neglect of gender and age differences**

There are significant differences in emotional needs among adolescents of different genders and age groups. For example, girls tend to express their emotions through verbal communication, while boys may deal with emotions through behavior or silence; junior high school students face the reconstruction of peer relationships, while senior high school students need to cope with the pressure of further education. However, the existing support system often adopts a "one-size-fits-all" approach, resulting in the neglect of the needs of some groups [21, 23]. Surveys show that girls' active seeking of emotional support is 30% higher than boys', but a higher proportion of boys conceal their problems for fear of being ridiculed [23].

# **3. Coping strategies and practical suggestions for adolescent emotional support issues**

## **3.1 Creating a non-judgmental listening environment**

At the family level, parents need to abandon the "educator" posture and listen with an equal footing. For instance, adopting non-judgmental listening and empathetic communication. For example, "I noticed that you've been feeling down recently, would you like to talk about it?" instead of "Why are you like this again?". When a child expresses stress, respond with "It sounds like you've been tired today, do you need to take a break?" [24]. At the school level, teachers should understand students' emotional states through classroom activities or anonymous questionnaires, avoiding public criticism [23]. For instance, a certain middle school has set up an "emotional tree hole" mailbox where students can pour out their hearts anonymously, and psychological teachers respond regularly. At the societal level, the media needs to reduce stigmatizing

reports on teenagers' emotional issues and advocate the value of "seeking help is courage" [21].

## **3.2 Strengthening the cultivation of peer support ability**

Firstly, emotional education courses should be introduced. Schools can organize "peer support workshops" to teach listening skills and methods of emotion recognition. For instance, primary and secondary school students can engage in role-playing games to simulate "how to comfort a friend," thereby enhancing their empathy skills. Secondly, peer support groups should be established. Students are encouraged to spontaneously form interest groups, and trust can be built through joint activities. For example, a "Soul Station" club can be established, which regularly organizes sharing sessions and allows students to plan activities independently [23].

## **3.3 Promoting the inclusive access to professional services**

Firstly, eliminate the stigma surrounding psychological counseling [21]. Actively promote mental health education in schools and communities, disseminate knowledge about mental hygiene, correct the public's perception of individuals with psychological distress, and encourage close contact between the public and those with psychological distress to alleviate their fear. On the other hand, through mental health education, change the self-doubt and concerns of individuals with psychological distress, encouraging them to seek help from professional counselors in a timely manner. Secondly, lower the threshold for seeking help [21, 23]. Schools can set up "psychological counseling corners" equipped with simple psychological assessment tools, where students can make appointments independently. Additionally, "mood detectors" can be installed in sports fields, allowing students to obtain preliminary psychological assessments by scanning a QR code. Furthermore, develop digital tools [21-23]. Utilize AI technology to provide 24-hour emotional support. For example, a certain app has launched a "emotional tree hole" function, where users can anonymously pour out their hearts, and AI provides suggestions based on keywords and directs them to professional institutions.

## **3.4 Pay attention to the needs of special groups**

Firstly, activities are tailored to address gender differences. For girls, "emotional expression workshops" are designed to facilitate the release of emotions through writing, art, and other means; for boys, "emotional management courses" are offered to teach stress regulation through sports, music, and other avenues. Secondly, activities are conducted to cater to age differences [23]. In junior high schools, emphasis is placed on peer relationship counseling, while in high schools, support for career planning is strengthened. For example, a certain middle school offers "career planning classes" for high school students, combining psychological assessment tools to help students clarify their direction [22,23]. Thirdly, work is done for adolescents with special experiences. For left-behind adolescents and those from single-parent families, they may harbor wariness and avoidance towards others due to family upheavals, social barriers, or past negative experiences. Counselors can develop personalized counseling plans for them, through regular home visits, caring and equal dialogue, non-judgmental listening, and helping them participate in school activities, so that they feel valued and cared for, thus willing to open up and share their inner troubles [23].

## **3.5 Integrating family-school-community resources**

To enhance the emotional support level of adolescents, it is crucial to establish a collaborative educational system involving families, schools, and communities. This system requires clarifying the

responsibilities of each party, integrating resource advantages, and forming a joint force of emotional support [21-23].

### **3.5.1 Family: Building a Strong Foundation of Emotional Support**

The family is the primary environment for the emotional development of adolescents. It is crucial to emphasize the establishment of high-quality parent-child interactions, which can effectively foster emotional connections. Joint participation in household chores, outdoor exploration, or creative craft activities can help harmonize parent-child relationships through practical interactions. Parents need to strengthen their sense of responsibility, focus on their children's efforts rather than solely on results, and provide basic support for emotional health by ensuring healthy habits such as adequate sleep and balanced nutrition.

### **3.5.2 School: playing a collaborative and leading role**

As a specialized educational institution, the school should bear the primary responsibility for collaborative education. It is necessary to systematically integrate mental health education into the curriculum system and design teaching content according to the characteristics of different educational stages: focusing on emotional cognition in primary school, and introducing stress management and interpersonal communication skills in middle school. Establish a dynamic monitoring mechanism of "one student, one file" to regularly screen and promptly identify psychological crisis signals. At the same time, the school should coordinate social resources, develop thematic practical courses, regularly hold parent training sessions, and teach communication skills. For example, through mechanisms such as parent schools, "parent classes," and open days, parents are guided on how to interact with their children through picture books, media, and games.

### **3.5.3 Community: Building a professional support network**

Community organizations can provide precise and specialized emotional support services. They can organize contextualized activities such as parent-child workshops and stress management salons, promoting family communication through crafts, painting, and games, and building emotional communication bridges under professional guidance. Special attention should be paid to special youth groups, with targeted interventions in the form of individual assistance and group activities. Community psychological service stations can be equipped with full-time counselors, and professional forces such as universities can be collaborated with to develop systematic psychological courses, enhancing the social-emotional abilities of young people from multiple dimensions such as self-awareness and interpersonal relationships. The community can collaborate with primary and secondary schools to organize "Emotional Support Day" activities, inviting psychological counselors and social workers to provide free services.

### **3.5.4 Collaborative mechanism: achieving effective integration of resources**

Establish a joint conference mechanism led by schools, clarify the division of responsibilities among the three parties, and form a normalized linkage system. Build a platform for the aggregation and sharing of social resources, transform community cultural venues, practice bases, etc. into educational fronts, and expand the space for extracurricular activities for young people. At the same time, form a professional guidance team, including family education instructors, parent volunteers, and community lecturer groups, to jointly build an inclusive public service network.

Through the emotional nurturing provided by families, professional guidance from schools, and supportive services from communities, a support system that covers the entire process of adolescent growth can be established. This "family-school-community" trinity collaboration model can create a more favorable ecological environment for the healthy growth of adolescents.

## **4. Future Prospects**

Adolescence is a critical stage in an individual's transition from childhood to adulthood, characterized by rapid physical and psychological development, as well as complex and fluctuating emotional needs. During this period, the quality of emotional support directly impacts adolescents' mental health, social adaptability, and future life trajectory. However, the current emotional support system for adolescents faces numerous challenges, such as intergenerational communication barriers, limitations in peer support, and insufficient professional resources.

To address these challenges, a multidimensional strategy is required. At the family level, parents should enhance their emotional literacy, adopt active listening, encourage expression, and empathize with emotions, thereby establishing an equal and trusting parent-child relationship. At the school level, it is imperative to strengthen mental health education, establish professional support teams, and provide psychological counseling and guidance services. At the societal level, community support networks should be improved to promote social attention and resource investment towards adolescent mental health issues. At the individual level, attention should be paid to the individual differences of adolescents, providing personalized support plans to cultivate their emotional regulation abilities and psychological resilience. Through the collaborative efforts of families, schools, society, and individuals, a comprehensive and multi-layered emotional support system can be established to promote the healthy growth of adolescents.

In summary, emotional support for adolescents needs to shift from a "problem-oriented" approach to a "development-oriented" one, focusing on the comprehensive improvement of their emotional abilities. Specifically, at the policy level: incorporate emotional education into the compulsory education system and clarify the division of responsibilities among schools, families, and communities; at the technical level: utilize big data to analyze the trends of adolescents' emotional needs and provide a basis for policy formulation; at the cultural level: advocate the concept of "emotional health" and attach equal importance to it as physical health and academic performance.

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