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Role of family dynamics in shaping adolescent social behavior and mental health: A health sociology perspective

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping adolescent social behavior and psychological health. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. During this period, family communication, emotional support, and parental involvement significantly influence the formation of social values and mental well-being.

Methods: This study employed an analytical survey design using a cross-sectional approach to examine the role of family dynamics in shaping social behavior and psychological health among students of SMA Negeri 15 Wajo. A total of 65 adolescents were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and analyzed using Chi-Square tests with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results: The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between family dynamics and both behavioral problems and psychological health ($p = 0.002$). Adolescents from families with positive dynamics exhibited better social behavior and mental health outcomes compared to those from families with poor communication and emotional conflict. The univariate analysis also showed that most respondents experienced supportive family environments (83.1%) and good psychological health (73.8%).

Conclusion: Healthy family dynamics contribute positively to adolescents' behavioural development and psychological stability. Effective communication, emotional warmth, and balanced parental involvement serve as protective factors against deviant behaviors and mental health disorders. Future research should further explore sociocultural aspects influencing these relationships to support interventions promoting adolescent well-being.

Keywords: Adolescents, Family Dynamics, Psychological Health.

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INTRODUCTION

The family is the primary environment where most human interactions occur and represents the fundamental social unit influencing an individual's behavior and development (Rotinsulu and Ati, 2025). Within the family, communication plays a crucial role in shaping relationships, values, and emotional well-being. Effective communication defined as the openness to discuss both positive and negative issues that arise within the household fosters honesty, empathy, and patience among family members (Marbun *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, a lack of effective and intensive communication can lead to misunderstandings, emotional distance, and disharmony, ultimately disrupting the family dynamic. When this happens, the expression of opinions, emotions, and experiences within the family becomes inhibited, potentially resulting in maladaptive behaviors, particularly among adolescents (Wijayanti *et al.*, 2025).

In the context of adolescence, family dynamics play a vital role in shaping both social behavior and psychological health (Suprapto, Lalla and Arda, 2023). Adolescence represents a critical phase of human development marked by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. During this period, individuals undergo identity formation, the internalization of values, and adaptation to social norms within their families, schools, and communities (Stepanous *et al.*, 2025). The complexity of adolescent behavior emerges from various interacting factors, such as parenting styles, peer influence, and technological exposure. The family is the first social system influencing human development. It provides the foundational experiences through which adolescents learn social roles, emotional regulation, and moral reasoning (Shahidi *et al.*, 2025). Family dynamics, therefore, not only concern the relationships among family members but also encompass the communication patterns, emotional support, and moral guidance that shape adolescent behavior (Jiang *et al.*, 2025).

Emotional support from parents can significantly reduce the risk of mental health problems among adolescents, including depression and anxiety (Yıldırım *et al.*, 2025). In Indonesia, this issue has become increasingly pressing. Approximately 30% of Indonesian adolescents experience mental health problems, many of which are linked to unhealthy family dynamics such as prolonged conflicts, neglect, or lack of communication (Wang *et al.*, 2025). Adolescents who grow up in families characterized by open communication and strong emotional support tend to have better psychological well-being. In contrast, those from families with high conflict levels and poor emotional support are at greater risk of developing negative behaviors such as substance abuse, delinquency, or social withdrawal (Morgan *et al.*, 2025).

Understanding how family dynamics contribute to adolescent behavior and mental health is thus essential, not only for identifying risk factors but also for developing effective interventions (Chen *et al.*, 2025). This research aims to explore the role of family dynamics in shaping adolescents' social behavior and psychological health within the sociological framework of health. It seeks to provide empirical insights into how family structures and interactions influence behavioral outcomes among students at SMA Negeri 15 Wajo, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on adolescent well-being in Indonesia.

The family's role becomes even more critical as adolescents begin to shift their emotional focus from parents to peers. This developmental shift often leads to tension and disagreements between parents and adolescents (Lim, 2025). Families with adolescents face the challenge of maintaining open communication, providing appropriate autonomy, and guiding decision-making related to education and social activities. The family's responsibility at this stage is to remain an anchor of emotional stability and moral values, ensuring that adolescents' increasing independence does not lead to social or psychological maladjustment (Candipan, Hair and

Walsemann, 2024). Effective families provide balanced freedom encouraging responsibility and self-expression while maintaining mutual respect and shared decision-making (Cánepa and Berardino, 2024).

This notion aligns with Islamic perspectives on family integrity. In Surah Al-Anfal (8:27), Allah commands believers not to betray their trust to God, the Messenger, or one another. This verse underscores the importance of honesty, responsibility, and mutual trust as foundations for strong family relationships. Within such a framework, family dynamics are not merely functional but also moral and spiritual, guiding behavior toward harmony and emotional health.

The increasing prevalence of adolescent behavioral issues in Indonesia ranging from truancy and delinquency to substance abuse and violence highlights the urgency of addressing family-related factors. Mass media frequently report cases involving youth misconduct, which reflect deeper issues of moral disorientation and emotional distress rooted in family environments. Families that fail to provide emotional stability, affection, and clear boundaries leave adolescents vulnerable to external negative influences. Conversely, nurturing families characterized by mutual respect, shared values, and open dialogue foster self-confidence, empathy, and resilience in adolescents. From a sociological health perspective, the family can be viewed as both a social determinant and a preventive factor for mental health issues. Family support systems influence the development of coping mechanisms, self-esteem, and interpersonal competence in adolescents. When these systems are disrupted by divorce, conflict, or parental absence adolescents' psychosocial development is likely to suffer. Thus, strengthening family relationships through communication, emotional awareness, and mutual understanding can significantly improve both behavioral and psychological outcomes.

Adolescence represents a period of vulnerability and opportunity. The quality of family dynamics determines whether this period leads to positive growth or behavioral and mental health challenges. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between family dynamics and adolescent social behavior and psychological well-being through a sociological lens. By understanding the intricate connections between family interactions, social behavior, and mental health, this research aims to provide insights that can guide parents, educators, and policymakers in promoting healthier family environments for Indonesia's youth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed an analytical survey design with a cross-sectional approach. The purpose of this study was to examine The Role of Family Dynamics in the Formation of Social Behavior and Mental Health among Adolescents: A Health Sociology Perspective at SMA Negeri 15 Wajo.

Research Design

The cross-sectional approach was chosen to observe and analyze the relationships between variables at a single point in time. This method allows researchers to describe existing conditions and test the associations between family dynamics and adolescents' social and psychological well-being.

Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of all adolescents enrolled at SMA Negeri 15 Wajo. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, a non-probability method where samples are selected based on specific criteria determined by the researcher. A total of 65 adolescent respondents were included in the study based on their relevance to the research objectives.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire created by the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of structured questions designed to measure: Family dynamics (communication, emotional support, and interaction patterns), Adolescent social behavior, and Adolescent mental health conditions. The instrument was tested for clarity and consistency to ensure that all items were comprehensible to respondents and relevant to the study objectives.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted directly at the research site by distributing questionnaires to the selected respondents. Respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Completed questionnaires were collected and checked for completeness before data entry and analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were processed and analyzed using univariate and bivariate analyses:

Univariate analysis was used to describe each variable, such as the demographic characteristics of respondents, parental occupation, family dynamics, social behavior, and mental health status. Bivariate analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between family dynamics and adolescent social behavior, as well as between family dynamics and adolescent mental health. The statistical test used was the Chi-Square test (χ^2) with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. A p-value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant, indicating a meaningful relationship between the studied variables.

RESULT

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents' Characteristics and Research Variables

Variable / Indicator	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	45	69.2
	Female	20	30.8
	Total	65	100.0
Parents' Occupation	Laborer	23	35.4
	Farmer	38	58.5
	Civil Servant (PNS)	4	6.2
	Total	65	100.0
Family Dynamics Role	Good	54	83.1
	Poor	11	16.9
	Total	65	100.0
Adolescent Behavior	Good	48	73.8
	Poor	17	26.2
	Total	65	100.0
Psychological Health	Good	48	73.8
	Poor	17	26.2

The results of the univariate analysis show that most respondents were male (69.2%), and the majority came from farming families (58.5%). In terms of family dynamics, 83.1% of respondents reported having good family interactions, indicating effective communication and supportive relationships within the household. Furthermore, the behavioral assessment revealed that 73.8% of adolescents exhibited good social behavior, while the remaining 26.2% demonstrated poor or problematic behavior. Similarly, the psychological health evaluation showed that 73.8% of respondents had good mental health, and 26.2% experienced some level of psychological difficulty. These findings suggest that the majority of students live in supportive family environments, which contribute positively to their social behavior and psychological well-being. However, a minority group (about one-fourth) still faces behavioral and mental health

challenges, which may be linked to less optimal family dynamics and communication patterns.

Table 2. Relationship Between Family Dynamics, Adolescent Behavior, and Psychological Health

Family Dynamics	Adolescent Behavior – Good n (%)	Adolescent Behavior – Poor n (%)	Psychological Health – Good n (%)	Psychological Health – Poor n (%)	Total n (%)	p-value
Good	44 (81.5%)	10 (18.5%)	44 (81.5%)	10 (18.5%)	54 (100.0%)	
Poor	4 (36.4%)	7 (63.6%)	4 (36.4%)	7 (63.6%)	11 (100.0%)	**0.002**
Total	**48 (73.8%)**	**17 (26.2%)**	**48 (73.8%)**	**17 (26.2%)**	**65 (100.0%)**	

The bivariate analysis shows a significant relationship (p = 0.002) between family dynamics and both adolescent behavior and psychological health. Adolescents who come from families with good dynamics (81.5%) are more likely to exhibit positive behavior and better psychological well-being, compared to those from families with poor dynamics (36.4%), who are more prone to behavioral issues and psychological distress. These findings indicate that family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' mental and behavioral development. Healthy family relationships characterized by open communication, emotional warmth, and consistent support can protect adolescents from social and psychological problems. Conversely, dysfunctional family interactions marked by conflict or lack of communication tend to increase the risk of behavioral deviations and mental health challenges among adolescents. In short, strengthening family cohesion and communication is essential in promoting positive behavior and mental stability in adolescents.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate a strong and statistically significant relationship between family dynamics and both adolescent behavior and psychological health among students at SMA Negeri 15 Wajo. The results revealed that adolescents from families with good dynamics were more likely to exhibit positive social behavior and maintain better mental health compared to those from families with poor dynamics (p = 0.002). This confirms that family functioning plays a vital role in shaping the psychosocial development of adolescents and aligns with the sociological perspective that health and behavior are products of social interaction and environmental structure rather than solely biological or individual factors (Anshida *et al.*, 2025).

Family as a primary social system, family serves as the first and most influential social system in an individual's life (Katague *et al.*, 2025). It is within the family context that adolescents learn social norms, values, and coping mechanisms that later determine their behavior and emotional resilience. Adolescence is a crucial period marked by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes (Wu and Kong, 2025). During this stage, parental interaction becomes central in guiding adolescents' identity formation and emotional regulation. The present study supports this view showing that more than 80% of adolescents from families with healthy dynamics demonstrated good behavior and psychological stability (Fullilove *et al.*, 2024).

In families characterized by open communication and mutual understanding, adolescents tend to internalize positive social values, fostering empathy, responsibility, and self-control (Letina *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, conflictual or emotionally distant families create an environment of uncertainty and emotional insecurity, which often manifests as behavioral issues such as defiance, withdrawal, or aggression (Papathanasiou *et al.*, 2025). Emotional tension in one part of the family system inevitably affects the entire structure. When parents experience unresolved stress or poor communication, it can trigger psychological distress and maladaptive behaviors in children (Jiang *et al.*, 2026).

The role of communication and emotional support, communication is one of the most critical components of healthy family dynamics (Herd, 2025). Open and empathetic communication allows adolescents to express their thoughts and emotions freely, reducing the risk of internal conflict and psychological strain. Families that practice active listening, emotional validation, and consistent involvement contribute significantly to adolescents' sense of belonging and emotional security (Haines-Saah *et al.*, 2025).

This study's finding that 83.1% of respondents reported good family dynamics indicates that most families engage in supportive interactions. Such relationships serve as a protective factor against mental health issues. Emotional support within family networks acts as a buffer against psychological stress, helping adolescents develop resilience when facing external challenges such as peer pressure or academic stress. However, approximately 17% of respondents reported poor family dynamics, corresponding closely to the 26% who experienced poor behavior and psychological health. This overlap suggests that inadequate family functioning directly contributes to both emotional and behavioral disturbances. In families where communication is limited or dominated by authoritarian patterns, adolescents may suppress emotions or seek validation from peers or external environments, sometimes leading to negative behavioral expressions such as delinquency, substance use, or social withdrawal (Dumaresq and McFerran, 2025).

Socioeconomic context and family stability, the socioeconomic profile of respondents also sheds light on the broader context of these dynamics (Jang, Song and Kim, 2025). A majority of parents were farmers (58.5%) and laborers (35.4%), occupations often associated with economic instability and long working hours. Limited parental presence due to economic demands can reduce opportunities for meaningful family interaction, thereby weakening emotional bonds. Parental busyness negatively influences adolescents' emotional needs and behavior, as children may perceive such absence as neglect or lack of care (Delaruelle *et al.*, 2025).

Nevertheless, some families within these socioeconomic groups still managed to maintain positive dynamics. This suggests that economic limitations do not necessarily equate to poor family relationships; rather, the quality of communication and emotional engagement plays a more decisive role. Families that emphasize cooperation, mutual respect, and religious or cultural values can preserve emotional harmony even under financial strain (Do, Paolizzi and Hallquist, 2024).

Family dynamics and psychological health, from a sociological health perspective, mental health is shaped not only by biological factors but also by social determinants such as family relationships, economic conditions, and community support (Bhugra *et al.*, 2024). The current study confirms this view, showing that adolescents' psychological health is significantly associated with their family's emotional climate. When families provide consistent emotional support and maintain a balanced relational structure, adolescents develop a stable sense of self-worth and emotional control. On the contrary, chronic family conflicts, neglect, or inconsistent parenting styles can generate long-term psychological distress. The phenomenon of "social contagion of stress," where emotional tension spreads within a family system, may explain why adolescents internalize parental conflicts and exhibit anxiety or depression-like symptoms (Pineault *et al.*, 2025).

Moreover, the results highlight that healthy family environments not only prevent psychological disorders but also enhance social competence and academic motivation. Adolescents who feel emotionally secure tend to perform better academically and socially, as they possess greater self-efficacy and interpersonal trust. These outcomes align with global findings by Twenge et al. (2019), which associate strong family cohesion with lower rates of depression and social maladjustment among youth. The implications of this study extend beyond family counseling into the fields of health sociology and education. Schools and health practitioners should collaborate with parents to design programs that promote family engagement, communication skills, and emotional literacy. Family-based interventions focusing on conflict resolution, shared decision-making, and stress management can significantly reduce behavioral and psychological problems among adolescents.

From a sociological standpoint, improving family dynamics contributes to strengthening social capital the network of trust and cooperation that supports individual and collective well-being. In rural communities like Wajo, where socioeconomic challenges persist, fostering supportive family systems can be a cost-effective and culturally compatible approach to enhancing adolescent health outcomes. This study reinforces that family dynamics are a central determinant of adolescent behavior and psychological well-being. Families with open communication, emotional warmth, and strong cohesion produce adolescents who are socially adjusted and mentally healthy. Conversely, dysfunctional family patterns increase the likelihood of behavioral and psychological difficulties. The results call for integrated efforts among families, schools, and community institutions to strengthen family functioning as a foundation for youth development and mental health promotion.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that family dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping both the social behavior and psychological health of adolescents. The findings reveal a statistically significant association ($p = 0.002$) between healthy family interactions and positive behavioral as well as mental health outcomes among students of SMA Negeri 15 Wajo. Adolescents who live in families characterized by open communication, emotional warmth, and mutual respect tend to develop responsible social behavior and emotional stability. Conversely, poor family dynamics marked by conflict, lack of communication, or emotional neglect correlate with increased behavioral problems and psychological distress. Thus, the family serves not only as a social unit for upbringing but also as a crucial determinant of mental well-being during adolescence. Strengthening family cohesion, communication, and supportive parenting is essential to prevent emotional and behavioral maladjustment among young people.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that parents, educators, and policymakers collaborate to promote family-based interventions aimed at enhancing adolescents' mental and social development. Parents should prioritize quality interaction and emotional engagement despite economic or occupational constraints, as these factors directly influence adolescents' psychological resilience. Schools and community health institutions are encouraged to provide family education programs, counseling sessions, and workshops that foster healthy communication patterns and parental awareness of adolescent needs. Furthermore, future research should explore longitudinal and cross-cultural perspectives to better understand how evolving social and technological changes affect family dynamics and adolescent well-being. Strengthening family systems through educational and sociological approaches can become a sustainable strategy for building emotionally healthy, socially responsible, and resilient youth.

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Conflict of Interest

There are no potential conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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