

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of the Family Environment on the Formation of Learning Attitudes in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is not merely a stage of development, but also a journey toward adulthood, or a bridge between the certainty of childhood and the freedom of adulthood. During this period, the family plays a key role as the primary environment in which identity, motivation, and emotional understanding are formed. This synthesis combines eight empirical studies published between 2022 and 2025 in China, Canada, and Turkey to explore how family closeness, autonomy support, parental expectations, peer relationships, and family structure influence adolescents' motivation, emotional well-being, and academic competence. Findings indicate that adolescents thrive when love is expressed as trust, expectations are balanced with empathy, and autonomy is encouraged rather than controlled. Peer relationships extend the emotional language of the family to the wider social world. Despite differing cultural contexts, universal truths remain: the human need to feel accepted, to grow, and to be understood. This study proposes viewing adolescence as a relationship to be nurtured, not a problem to be solved.

Keywords: Adolescence, family, motivation.

ABSTRAK

Remaja bukanlah sekadar tahap perkembangan, tetapi juga perjalanan menuju kedewasaan, atau jembatan antara kepastian masa kanak-kanak dan kebebasan kedewasaan. Selama periode ini, keluarga berperan sebagai lingkungan utama di mana identitas, motivasi, dan pemahaman emosional terbentuk. Sintesis ini menggabungkan delapan studi empiris yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2022 dan 2025 di China, Kanada, dan Turki untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana kedekatan keluarga, dukungan otonomi, ekspektasi orang tua, hubungan teman sebaya, dan struktur keluarga mempengaruhi motivasi, kesejahteraan emosional, dan kompetensi akademik remaja. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa remaja berkembang optimal ketika cinta diwujudkan sebagai kepercayaan, ekspektasi diimbangi dengan empati, dan otonomi didorong rather than dikendalikan. Hubungan dengan teman sebaya memperluas bahasa emosional keluarga ke dunia sosial yang lebih luas. Meskipun konteks budaya berbeda, kebenaran universal tetap berlaku: kebutuhan manusia untuk merasa diterima, tumbuh, dan dipahami. Studi ini mengusulkan untuk memandang masa remaja sebagai hubungan yang perlu dirawat, bukan masalah yang perlu diselesaikan.

Kata kunci: Remaja, keluarga, motivasi.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a threshold, or a transitional space where the self begins to develop. It is a period filled

with contradictions: independence is sought yet guidance is desired, solitude is accepted yet connection is desired. Behind the turmoil lies a

profound human process: the effort to become whole while remaining part of others. At the center of this process is the family. More than just a biological or social unit, the family is the first school of emotions, where children learn not only how to think but also how to feel, how to interact, and how to see themselves reflected in the eyes of their loved ones.

Jones, Bosacki, and Talwar (2025) reveal this truth in their study of family attachment, preferences for solitude, Theory of Mind (ToM), and perceptions of competence. Their findings show that adolescents who feel emotionally close to their families are better able to experience solitude not as loneliness, but as reflection. They are also more likely to view themselves as academically and socially competent, suggesting that family warmth strengthens cognitive empathy and self-confidence. In families where listening and understanding are commonplace, adolescents not only learn to express their feelings but also to interpret the emotions of others. This capacity for empathy, in turn, becomes the foundation for academic and social success.

On the other hand, when communication breaks down or emotional distance dominates, adolescents often struggle to find harmony between who they really are and who others expect them to be. In societies undergoing rapid modernization such as China, the family becomes both a refuge and a source of pressure. Gu, Hassan, and Sulaiman (2024) found that adolescents' learning attitudes mediate the relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement. When expectations are conveyed with warmth and confidence, they act as catalysts for growth. When expressed as demands or disappointment, these expectations hinder motivation and create emotional tension. Zhao (2024) expands on this insight by revealing that peer interactions act as mediators in the relationship between parental involvement and behavioral outcomes. Adolescents who feel understood at home tend to emulate empathy in friendships, while those who experience control or criticism often seek a sense of belonging through unhealthy peer dynamics.

Family structure also shapes the rhythm of adolescent development. Tang et al. (2024) examined the impact of multigenerational cohabitation and found that adolescents in three-generation families often exhibit greater emotional stability, awareness, and friendliness. The daily presence of grandparents can provide emotional continuity and a moral foundation. However, when grandparents become sole caregivers in skip-generation families, emotional resilience tends to decline. The absence of parents leaves a void that even the love of the extended family cannot fill.

The voice of autonomy flows through these findings. Çelik (2024), in his study of Turkish adolescents, shows that parental support for autonomy increases the fulfillment of psychological needs, which in turn fosters self-control and intrinsic motivation. Adolescents who feel trusted to make choices view learning as meaningful and independent. Conversely, excessive control undermines self-autonomy and replaces curiosity with obedience. Autonomy, in this context, is not rebellion, but rather a form of mutual respect between parents and children, or the recognition that love does not require control to remain close.

Finally, adolescence develops within the social arena of peers. Zhao and Zhao (2022) observed that the quality of peer interactions mediates the impact of the family environment on academic success. Adolescents raised in open and emotionally available families develop stronger and more cooperative friendships. Those from rigid or conflict-ridden families often struggle with communication and feeling accepted. Therefore, the social world of adolescence does not replace the family, but it reflects it.

This synthesis aims to bring these insights together into a cohesive narrative. The goal is to understand how adolescents, through their relationships with family and peers, learn to balance dependence and independence, belonging and individuality. Through a humanistic lens, this paper views adolescence not as a period of deficiency or risk, but as a sacred journey of growth, or a time when understanding and love must work together to guide the developing self.

METHOD

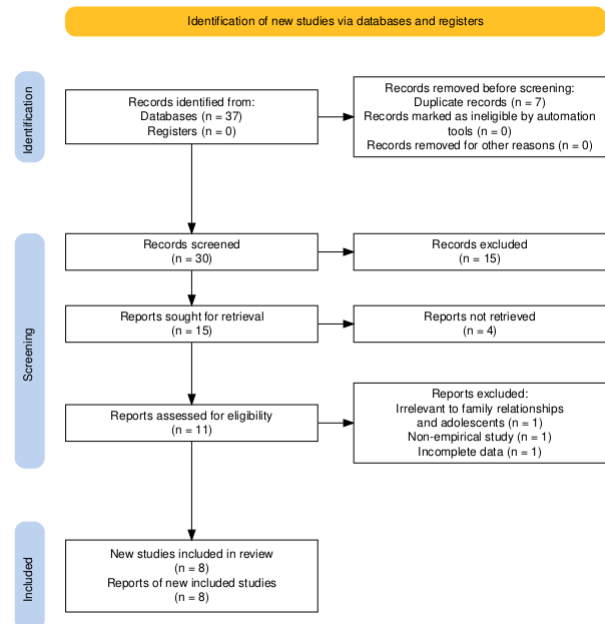
This synthesis uses a narrative interpretive approach, based on eight empirical studies published between 2022 and 2025. Each study explores different aspects of adolescent development, including family relationships, parental expectations, autonomy support, peer dynamics, and academic motivation in various cultural contexts in Canada, China, and Turkey. The selection of these studies was deliberate: each article provides a unique yet interconnected perspective on the moral and emotional architecture of adolescence.

Unlike meta-analyses, which combine statistical results, this synthesis integrates conceptual findings and experiences. Each study is read not only for its empirical conclusions, but also for its emotional and philosophical implications. The goal is to uncover patterns of meaning rather than simply patterns of data.

Four interrelated themes emerged:

1. Family Cohesion and Emotional Climate: the extent to which adolescents feel understood, supported, and valued within their families.
2. Parental Expectations and Support for Autonomy: how parents balance guidance with respect for adolescent autonomy.
3. Peer Interaction and Social Learning: how family dynamics are reflected in the adolescent's social world.
4. Cultural Context and Developmental Variation: how traditions, values, and educational systems shape these relationships.

This framework allows for a humanistic interpretation of adolescence that emphasizes not only what adolescents achieve, but also who they become through their relationships. This process of synthesis bridges empirical evidence with lived experience, seeking to honor the humanity behind the data.



RESULTS

This synthesis reveals a pattern of interrelationships: family emotional bonds not only predict academic outcomes, but also adolescents' overall orientation toward learning and life.

Jones et al. (2025) found that adolescents with strong family bonds reported higher academic and work competence and deeper social understanding. Family closeness strengthens empathy, allowing adolescents to see beyond themselves. Importantly, these adolescents approach solitude as something restorative rather than isolating, or a sign of secure attachment. Emotional security at home translates into emotional autonomy in life.

Gu et al. (2024) confirmed that the effect of parental expectations depends on how adolescents interpret them. When expectations feel like trust, they inspire effort; when they feel like pressure, they elicit resistance. Zhao (2024) further shows that the quality of peer relationships mediates this dynamic: supportive parental involvement predicts healthy peer interactions, which in turn support positive behavioral outcomes. Adolescents thus carry the emotional echoes of home into their friendships.

Çelik (2024) adds another dimension: parenting styles that support autonomy indirectly increase academic motivation through the fulfillment of psychological needs and self-control. When parents treat adolescents as partners in growth, or as capable of making decisions and worthy of trust, motivation becomes sustainable. Learning shifts from an external obligation to an internal goal.

Family structure also influences this psychological process. Tang et al. (2024) found that adolescents in three-generation families tend to be more emotionally stable and conscientious. Grandparent involvement fosters patience and perspective, developing non-cognitive skills essential for long-term well-being. However, in families that span generations, where parents are absent, adolescents often show emotional vulnerability. This study reminds us that although love can be abundant, its form cannot be substituted: the moral presence of parents remains irreplaceable.

Finally, Zhao and Zhao (2022) reaffirm that the quality of peer interactions mediates the influence of family on achievement. Adolescents from cohesive and communicative families develop peer relationships based on empathy and cooperation, while those from conflict-prone families experience alienation or maladaptive influences. Emotional scripts learned at home are repeated in social settings.

Overall, these findings suggest that family connections, autonomy support, and balanced expectations form the foundation upon which adolescents build self-motivation, emotional resilience, and social empathy. Adolescent psychology develops not in isolation, but in an atmosphere of trust and understanding.

DISCUSSION

These studies conclude a truth that psychology often overlooks: adolescence is not a problem to be managed, but a relationship to be nurtured. It is a dialogue between dependence and independence, between loving guidance and the courage to explore. When families nurture this balance, adolescents not only perform better, but they

become more whole and self-aware versions of themselves.

Emotional attachment is at the center of this transformation. As Jones et al. (2025) show, empathy and academic self-confidence grow from the same root: the feeling of being understood. When family members interact with genuine curiosity rather than control, adolescents develop social intelligence and cognitive strength. They learn that understanding others begins with being understood first.

In the context of East Asia, Gu et al. (2024) and Zhao (2024) highlight how educational expectations reflect both aspirations and anxieties. High expectations can motivate excellence when accompanied by emotional support, but they can also damage self-confidence when conveyed without empathy. Adolescents are sensitive interpreters of emotional tone. They listen not only to what parents say, but also to how it is said. One sentence of trust can be more meaningful than a hundred instructions.

Çelik's (2024) research deepens this idea through the lens of self-autonomy. Support for autonomy is not leniency; it is respect. It tells teens, "I trust your judgment, and I will walk alongside you." In such conditions, motivation becomes intrinsic, and learning becomes an act of self-expression rather than obedience. Conversely, coercion or manipulation only breeds obedience and hidden dissatisfaction.

Family structure, as revealed by Tang et al. (2024), has its own emotional logic. Multigenerational households can offer continuity, stability, and a moral foundation. However, even the warmth of grandparents cannot replace the daily emotional presence of parents. Adolescents need roots and wings, namely the wisdom of heritage and the warmth of parental care. Without one of these, the balance is disrupted.

Relationships with peers extend this dynamic outward. Zhao and Zhao (2022) found that family communication styles predict the emotional quality of friendships. Teenagers who learn empathy at home bring it into the peer world, forming relationships based on mutual respect. Conversely,

those who absorb criticism or neglect often repeat these patterns among peers, such as withdrawing, conforming, or seeking belonging in unhealthy ways.

Throughout the research, one theme stands out: autonomy and belonging are not opposites, but partners. True independence grows from connection, not separation. Young people who feel secure in love dare to be themselves. Those who must earn affection through achievement or obedience are often caught between longing and fear.

Humanistic psychology teaches that individuals are naturally motivated to grow when conditions of empathy, authenticity, and acceptance are present (Rogers, 1961). The studies synthesized here confirm that this principle applies strongly during adolescence. The task for families, educators, and society is to create an environment that supports this growth, a space where adolescents can fail without fear, succeed without arrogance, and explore without shame.

When viewed through the lens of developmental psychology, this synthesis calls for a redefinition of educational success. Achievement is no longer measured solely by test scores or external results, but by the extent to which learning contributes to emotional maturity, ethical awareness, and social empathy. Adolescents' learning attitudes reflect how they experience their humanity, such as curiosity rooted in a sense of security and efforts guided by meaning. Therefore, the family is not only a place of learning but also a place of initiation: a moral space where adolescents learn what it means to be seen, heard, and valued as developing individuals.

This perspective also challenges the disciplinary boundaries that have separated psychology from education. To understand learning attitudes, educators must think psychologically, and psychologists must think educationally. Families are at this intersection. Family dynamics show that cognition and emotion cannot be separated, that a student's motivation is often a reflection of the tone of their parents, the empathy of their teachers, or the kindness of their peers. By bridging these fields, researchers and practitioners can develop

integrated interventions that respect both the intellect and the heart, creating a learning ecosystem that supports the overall development of the individual rather than the fragmented performer.

Ultimately, these studies remind us that adolescence is not merely a transition to adulthood, but rather a sacred training ground for it. In guiding adolescents, society trains its own abilities in terms of care, dialogue, and renewal. Families that love wisely, schools that educate with humanity, and policies that protect emotional well-being together form an architecture of a loving future. When adolescents feel safe to ask questions, imagine, and feel like they are part of something, they not only become better students but also better citizens, capable of empathy, courage, and wisdom. This is the eternal promise of a family environment that not only teaches how to learn but also how to live.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Strengthening the Family as the First Learning Environment

The family represents the earliest and most enduring context in which learning attitudes take shape. The emotional tone of parental communication, the degree of autonomy granted, and the modeling of curiosity or perseverance all leave lasting psychological imprints on adolescents. Consequently, interventions to improve learning outcomes should begin not with tutoring or school reforms but with the emotional literacy of families.

First, parents should be supported to cultivate emotionally responsive communication. Training programs, often called parental dialogue workshops or emotional coaching sessions, can teach caregivers to listen actively, validate feelings, and replace controlling statements with open-ended questions. For instance, instead of asking "Did you get an A?" parents might ask "What part of the lesson felt most interesting or challenging today?" Such linguistic shifts signal trust and recognition, reinforcing the adolescent's sense of agency.

Second, families must balance expectations with empathy. As research by Gu et al. (2024) and Zhao (2024) indicated, expectations are powerful motivational tools when adolescents perceive them as expressions of faith rather than conditions of acceptance. Educational counselors can guide parents in setting goals that are specific, achievable, and collaboratively defined. This practice reduces the internalized pressure that often leads to academic anxiety and avoidance. Family goal-setting should become an interactive ritual, emphasizing mutual respect rather than performance surveillance.

Third, parents should be encouraged to create autonomy-supportive home environments. Autonomy does not imply permissiveness; rather, it involves offering meaningful choices and acknowledging adolescents' perspectives. Çelik (2024) demonstrated that autonomy-supportive parenting enhances psychological need satisfaction and self-control, both critical for sustained learning engagement. Simple acts, such as allowing adolescents to choose their study schedules or to design their own problem-solving approaches, communicate trust and respect. Over time, such gestures cultivate a growth-oriented mindset, where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for reflection rather than threats to self-worth.

Finally, families should integrate intergenerational strengths. Tang et al. (2024) revealed that three-generation households can serve as powerful developmental contexts when generational differences are managed through collaboration rather than conflict. Grandparents' experiences and stories often embody resilience, patience, and historical memory, which enrich adolescents' moral education. Schools and community organizations might consider developing family heritage projects where students, parents, and grandparents co-create narratives that connect personal learning with collective identity.

2. Reimagining the School and Family Partnership

Education cannot be understood solely through the lens of curriculum design; it must also account for the emotional ecology that supports learning. Schools and families operate as parallel systems

influencing adolescent motivation. For optimal outcomes, they must function as co-educators rather than isolated authorities.

Schools should prioritize systematic family engagement programs that extend beyond parent, teacher meetings. These initiatives can include collaborative workshops on motivation, adolescent psychology, and communication strategies. Teachers trained in developmental psychology can act as family liaisons, helping parents interpret behavioral signals, such as disengagement or perfectionism, not as defiance but as expressions of unmet emotional needs.

In addition, teachers should receive professional development on autonomy-supportive pedagogy. The classroom mirrors the family: students respond positively when educators balance guidance with choice. Project-based learning, inquiry-driven tasks, and reflective discussions allow adolescents to experience ownership of their education. When schools model the same autonomy and empathy expected from parents, adolescents encounter a coherent developmental message across both environments.

Furthermore, schools must create peer support systems that reinforce positive learning attitudes. Zhao and Zhao (2022) showed that peer interaction quality mediates the relationship between family environment and academic outcomes. Structured peer mentorship, cooperative learning groups, and social emotional learning curricula can transform classrooms into micro-communities of empathy and resilience. When adolescents observe peers valuing effort over competition, they internalize cooperative rather than comparative attitudes toward learning.

Finally, schools should establish regular reflective dialogue platforms for instance, student parent teacher conferences focused not only on grades but also on learning attitudes and emotional well-being. These triadic meetings encourage shared accountability and mutual empathy, ensuring that academic evaluation does not overshadow personal development.

3. Informing Policy Through a Developmental Lens

Policymakers play a critical role in shaping the structural conditions under which families and schools function. Educational reforms grounded in psychological understanding can create sustainable environments that support adolescents holistically.

At the national level, policies should integrate parental education programs into school systems. Many governments currently invest heavily in student performance assessments but underinvest in family education. Public campaigns, supported by developmental psychologists and educators, could disseminate accessible guidance on emotional communication, autonomy support, and constructive expectation-setting.

At the institutional level, policymakers should prioritize work–life balance initiatives that allow parents to participate more actively in their children’s education. Tang et al. (2024) noted that skip-generation families often result from economic migration, leading to emotional distance and reduced parental involvement. Family-friendly labor policies, such as flexible working hours and parental leave, are not merely social benefits; they are educational investments. When parents have time to engage emotionally with their children, learning attitudes improve naturally.

Additionally, policies should encourage school mental health integration. Adolescents facing pressure from misaligned expectations or family conflict require access to counseling services that bridge school and home contexts. Programs offering family-based cognitive-behavioral interventions or emotion regulation training can address early signs of academic burnout and social withdrawal.

At the community level, local governments and NGOs can support intergenerational mentorship programs. Bringing together elders, parents, and youth within educational spaces can foster empathy and cultural continuity. For example, community “learning circles” could combine storytelling traditions with academic reflection, helping adolescents connect personal history with intellectual curiosity.

4. Cultivating Cultural Sensitivity in Educational Practices

Cultural context profoundly shapes how families express care, authority, and motivation. Thus, recommendations must be adapted rather than universally applied. In collectivist societies such as China, academic success often symbolizes familial honor, while in Western contexts, it reflects individual self-realization. Effective interventions should recognize these differing motivational logics and seek balance.

Educators and counselors working in multicultural contexts should be trained to interpret cultural values empathetically rather than judgmentally. Instead of viewing parental control as inherently negative, professionals must understand its cultural meanings, protection, responsibility, or filial devotion, and guide families toward expressing these values through more autonomy-supportive methods. Similarly, programs promoting autonomy in collectivist cultures should emphasize relational autonomy: the capacity to make independent choices while honoring family bonds.

International collaboration between educational psychologists can enrich this dialogue. Comparative research such as that by McQuade et al. (2024) demonstrates how language systems, teaching styles, and parental beliefs intersect. Future policies might integrate these insights by developing culturally inclusive models of learning motivation that transcend the Western–Eastern dichotomy.

5. Directions for Future Research

To strengthen the psychological and developmental understanding of learning attitudes, future research should pursue longitudinal and interdisciplinary approaches. Long-term studies could trace how early family communication patterns predict academic resilience, emotional intelligence, and identity formation in later adolescence and early adulthood. Neurodevelopmental research might also explore how consistent parental autonomy support influences brain regions associated with self-regulation and reward processing.

Moreover, researchers should investigate digital family environments, how parental modeling of screen use, online communication, and digital learning spaces shape adolescents’ motivation. The

family's educational influence now extends beyond physical boundaries into virtual interactions, making this a vital frontier for developmental psychology.

Cross-cultural comparative studies should continue to explore how globalization and shifting family structures, such as single-parent or blended households, affect learning attitudes. By examining both universal and culture-specific mechanisms, scholars can design interventions that respect cultural integrity while promoting human flourishing.

6. A Humanistic Vision for Education

Ultimately, improving learning attitudes among adolescents requires a paradigm shift from performance-oriented education to relationship-centered education. Families, schools, and societies must recognize that adolescents are not merely future workers or achievers but evolving human beings with emotional depth and moral potential.

The synthesis of studies reviewed in this paper converges on a timeless truth: empathy, dialogue, and trust are the cornerstones of motivation. When families create environments where adolescents feel understood, respected, and free to explore, they awaken not only the intellect but also the heart. Educational systems that embed this humanism will cultivate generations of learners who approach knowledge not as competition but as connection, a means to understand themselves, others, and the world.

CONCLUSION

Adolescence is the core of human development, not merely a preparation for adulthood, but an important chapter in the process of becoming oneself. Eight studies synthesized here show that motivation, empathy, and resilience grow not from control or pressure, but from connection and trust. Family attachment, balanced expectations, and support for autonomy form the emotional architecture in which adolescents build their goals and identities. Interactions with peers reflect and reinforce this family foundation, transforming personal values into social behavior.

Education and policy must seriously consider this relational truth. Academic success cannot be separated from emotional well-being, and character development cannot be forced from the outside. Adolescents need space for dialogue, not monologue, such as families who listen, schools that care, and communities that believe in their potential.

In every culture studied, from the collectivist ethos of China to the relational individualism of Canada and Turkey, the same pattern emerges: adolescents thrive when their need to feel accepted is valued alongside their need to grow. They seek not perfection but presence, not instruction but understanding. When families instill empathy and schools nurture voices, adolescents not only achieve goals, but they also awaken.

Educating adolescents, therefore, is participating in the ongoing renewal of humanity. Every act of listening, every gesture of trust, every shared silence becomes part of a larger story, like the story of how love becomes learning, and learning becomes life.

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DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Belgies Anastasya Maulida, Luthfiyyah Zahroh, Moamar Satria Kuswandaru, Riyan Hidayat, and Ummi Masrufah Maulidiyah do not work for, consult, own shares in, or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from

this manuscript, and have disclosed no affiliations other than those noted above.

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