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# 1 Social Support Discrepancies in Adolescence: Dual Perspectives on Perception, Gender 2 Dynamics, and Mental Health

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11

12 Social support encompasses various functions within social networks, facilitating emotional,  
13 instrumental, and informational exchanges that promote well-being (House et al. 1988; Thoits  
14 2011; Sueur et al. 2021). Emotional support, such as empathy and reassurance, directly  
15 contributes to psychological health and can buffer against stress. However, perceived social  
16 support often correlates more strongly with well-being than enacted support, which may  
17 sometimes yield contrary effects, as studies have shown (Haber et al. 2007; Chu et al. 2010).  
18 This discrepancy between perceived and provided support underscores the role of individual  
19 perception in social dynamics (Sueur et al. 2024).

20 The cognitive triad theory by Beck (1979) suggests that depressive thought patterns—  
21 negative views of self, environment, and future—distort perceptions, which may affect social  
22 support recognition. Individuals with depression often struggle to perceive or remember  
23 supportive behaviors accurately, filtering out positive feedback (Gotlib and Joormann 2010).  
24 These biases highlight the importance of subjective interpretation in social relationships, with  
25 social cognition research suggesting that social support exhibits trait-like stability and that  
26 pre-existing cognitive schemas shape support perception (Mankowski and Wyer 1997).

27 Gender differences in support perception have been widely documented, with young women  
28 generally perceiving and offering more social support than men (Rueger et al. 2016).  
29 Socialization influences may explain these discrepancies; for instance, girls often learn to  
30 express warmth and empathy more readily, enhancing both their recognition of and access to  
31 support (Brashears et al. 2016). Consequently, support dynamics are not only shaped by  
32 individual mental health and social network structure but also by sociocultural factors that  
33 influence emotional processing and relationship assessment.

34 Krüger et al. (2024) brings innovative elements to understanding social support discrepancies  
35 among adolescents by employing a dual-perspective network analysis. Unlike traditional  
36 studies that focus on either the support provider's or receiver's perspective, this research uses  
37 both perspectives within adolescent social networks to reveal the degree of mismatch in  
38 support perception. For example, "provided but not perceived" and "perceived but not  
39 provided" support discrepancies were identified, illuminating how gender influences support  
40 dynamics. Findings reveal that young men are more likely to experience unnoticed support

41 provision, suggesting that gender norms around emotional expression could hinder  
42 recognition of support in male-provided interactions.

43 Additionally, the study finds that discrepancies are more common in opposite-sex dyads than  
44 same-sex ones, highlighting how gender-based socialization impacts support perceptions.  
45 Adolescents, especially in cross-gender interactions, may face interpretative challenges in  
46 recognizing support, possibly due to gendered expectations around emotional engagement.  
47 This gender-focused insight into social support perception is unique, providing a new layer of  
48 understanding for support network dynamics in adolescence.

49 Another innovative aspect is the study's integration of mental health and loneliness as  
50 variables. Contrary to previous assumptions, these factors do not significantly impact support  
51 perception discrepancies, challenging the view that mental health primarily skews support  
52 perception. This finding suggests that social support recognition issues may be less about  
53 individual mental health status and more about relational dynamics and social norms.

54 In methodological terms, the use of multi-level modeling to account for school-level  
55 variations and individual differences further advances social support research by offering a  
56 more granular view of how environmental and personal factors intersect to shape support  
57 perceptions among adolescents. It would be particularly interesting to explore how this  
58 methodology could be applied to animal social network analyses (Sueur et al. 2012; Battesti et  
59 al. 2015; Borgeaud et al. 2017; Romano et al. 2018), especially given evidence that loneliness  
60 exists in monkeys (Capitanio et al. 2014, 2019). For example, studies could investigate  
61 whether similar discrepancies exist in animal groups, such as unrecognized affiliative  
62 behaviors or mismatches in perceived versus actual social bonds. By adapting this approach,  
63 researchers could examine how social perception and interaction influence group cohesion,  
64 stress buffering, and overall well-being in animal societies, potentially offering a deeper  
65 understanding of the evolutionary and ecological drivers of social support in non-human  
66 species.

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