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► **To cite this version:**

Cédric Sueur. Social Support Discrepancies in Adolescence: Dual Perspectives on Perception, Gender Dynamics, and Mental Health. Peer Community In Network Science, 2024, 10.24072/pci.networksci.100251 . hal-04787134

HAL Id: hal-04787134

<https://hal.science/hal-04787134v1>

Submitted on 16 Nov 2024

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

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8 Cite this recommendation as:

9 Sueur, C. (2024) Social Support Discrepancies in Adolescence: Dual Perspectives on Perception, Gender Dynamics, and Mental
10 Health. *Peer Community in Network Science*, 100251. [10.24072/pci.networksci.100251](https://doi.org/10.24072/pci.networksci.100251)

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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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