

## Family and Friends: Key Influences on Teenage Traits and Behaviors

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### Abstract:

The teenage years are a critical period of development, characterized by significant physical, emotional, and psychological changes. During this time, adolescents are particularly impressionable, with their traits and behaviors heavily shaped by the relationships they maintain. Among these relationships, the influences of family and friends are paramount, serving as the primary socializing agents that guide decision-making, value formation, and identity development. The study examines how family dynamics, including parental affection, communication, and behavioral control, influence adolescent development. The study also examines the influence of peer relationships, highlighting how friendships can reduce or exacerbate behavioral problems. By analyzing both direct and indirect effects, the study found that positive family interactions and supportive friendships are important for healthy adolescent development. Conversely, negative influences from any context can lead to increased risk-taking behavior and emotional challenges. The findings highlight the importance of fostering strong, positive relationships within both the family and peer groups to support adolescent development and well-being. The research is conducted by survey with 466 teenagers to find out the influence of family and friends on their adolescence development. The research aims to identify the roles that family and peers play during this crucial period and to provide recommendations for enhancing their positive impact on adolescents.

**Keywords:** Family, Friends, Influences, Teenage, Traits, Behaviors

### 1. Introduction

Young people in their teens constitute the largest age group in the world, in a special stage recognized across the globe as the link in the life cycle between childhood and adulthood. The physical and psychosocial changes that occur during puberty make manifest generational and early-childhood risks to development, in the form of individual differences in aspects such as growth, educational attainment, self-esteem, peer influences, and closeness to family (Richter, L.

M.,2006). Adolescence is the phase of life stretching between childhood and adulthood, which encompasses elements of biological growth and major social role transitions (Sawyer, S. M. et al, 2018). In this period, children will experience many changes in their bodies and brains. These changes include physical, intellectual, psychological, and social challenges, as well as the development of their own moral compass. These changes occur at different rates and are very rapid.

Adolescence is an exciting but also challenging phase in a teenager's life. It is the time when children become independent and begin exploring their own identity. The purpose of adolescence is for a child to psychologically and socially transform into a young adult. Family and friends play pivotal roles in the development of adolescents, shaping their social, emotional, and cognitive growth during this critical stage of life.

Adolescence is a significant period in each individual development. The most obvious changes are physical changes, including growth spurts and puberty. These changes are essential for the transition from childhood to adulthood. During adolescence, the brain undergoes substantial development, in particular, areas related to decision-making, problem solving, and critical thinking. This is a period that is crucial for developing cognitive skills that will be used throughout life. Adolescence is also a duration with great emotional and psychological growth. Teenagers have to go through a wide range of emotions and start to understand others and themselves on a deeper level. During this time, individuals begin to investigate their own identities, becoming self-sufficient and forging a sense of self, identity, and place in the wide world. Adolescence is a good time to start forming and navigating social relationships. Activities like interacting with their peers become increasingly important, and adolescents learn to manage social dynamics, develop empathy, and build their communication skills. As critical thinking and cognitive abilities develop overall, adolescents start to form their own values and beliefs, often questioning and refining the morals that they were taught as children, helping them see the world in more meaningful, abstract ways. They start to form their own opinions on what's right and what's wrong. The skills and experiences gained during adolescence lay a person's foundation for adult life. This period helps individuals prepare for future roles in society, including careers, relationships and civic responsibilities. Having a good understanding of adolescence's importance can help you support young people in this

transformative period, ensuring they can successfully navigate these unique changes.

Family help adolescence to have a sense of stability and security at the moment of emotional turbulence due to physical changes, identity formation, and peer pressure. At the young age, children often want independence but still need parental guidance. A good family environment with balance in autonomy and rules can support young people learn responsibility with necessary limitation. Families can also develop adolescence's problem-solving skills and emotional regulation, key aspects for their growth.

At the same time, friend relationships have a great important during adolescence, which help them to develop social skills, practice empathy, and learn cooperation and conflict resolution. Peers can influence interests, behaviors, and even personal values on each other, some even being affected by friends more than parents. Friends provide adolescents with a sense of belonging and acceptance outside the family, self-esteem and social confidence in the period that they often face social pressures and self-doubt. Hence, both family and friends serve as key pillars in adolescence, offering different but complementary forms of guidance and support.

## **2. Main content**

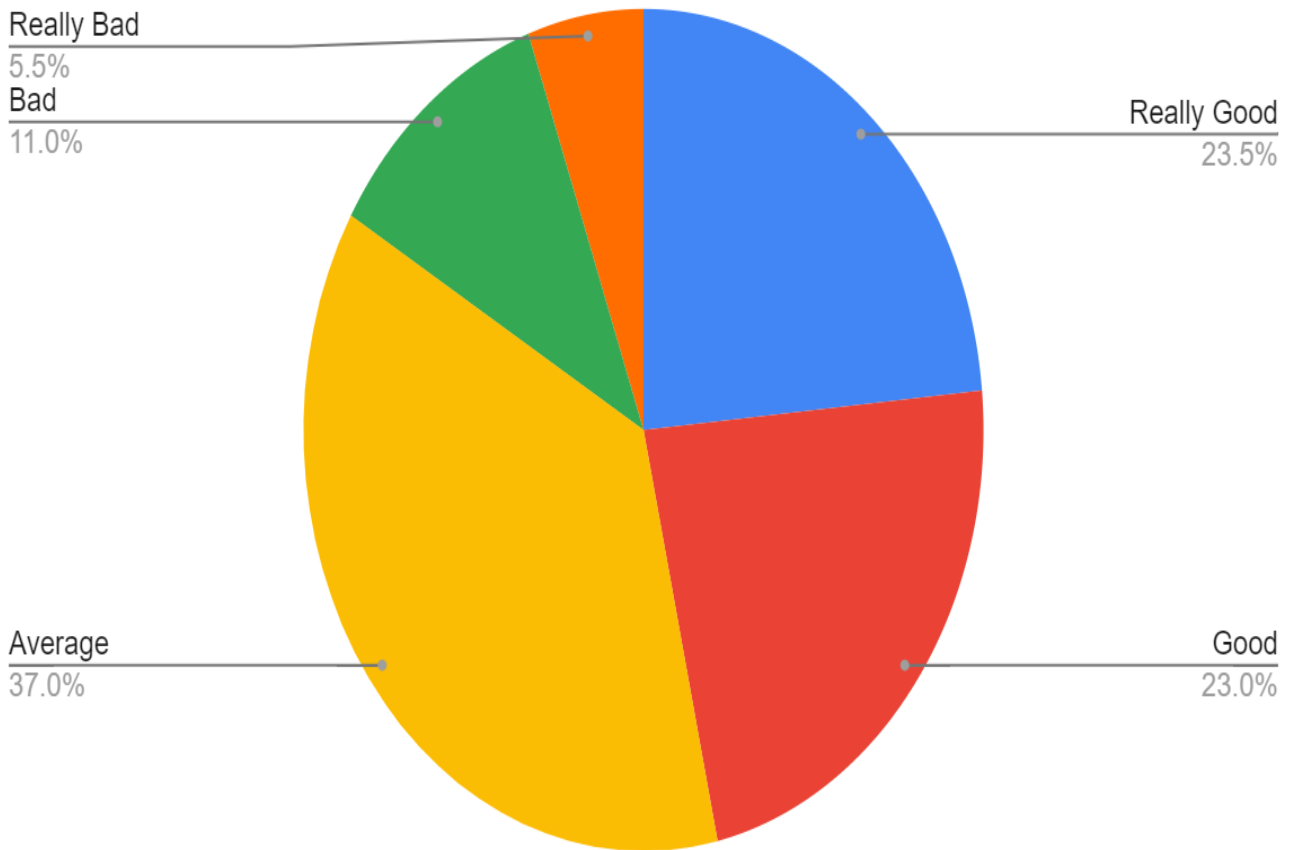
### **2.1. Positive impacts of family and friends on adolescence**

Family has a profound and multifaceted impact on a teenager's life, as it provides the primary environment for their growth and development. Parents often give children the first and most consistent influence on their beliefs, values, and attitudes. Family can have positive impact on teenagers such as emotional support, academic success and develop communication skills. This survey was carried out mainly in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and gained more than 450 responses. After reviewing inconsistencies and the validity of each answer, the official sample size of this study is 466 respondents currently studying in junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities. After conducting the survey, we can

see that most participants reported feeling average (37%) or good (23%), even really good (23%) about their relationship with family members, while a minority report feeling bad (11%) or really bad (5.5%) about said topic. Most adolescents feel like they have a positive or neutral relationship

with their family members. However, the fact that a minority of the respondents have reported feeling bad or really bad about their family relationships is a significant issue that should be examined, and is something that shouldn't be overlooked.

**Figure 1. The respondents' relationship with their family**

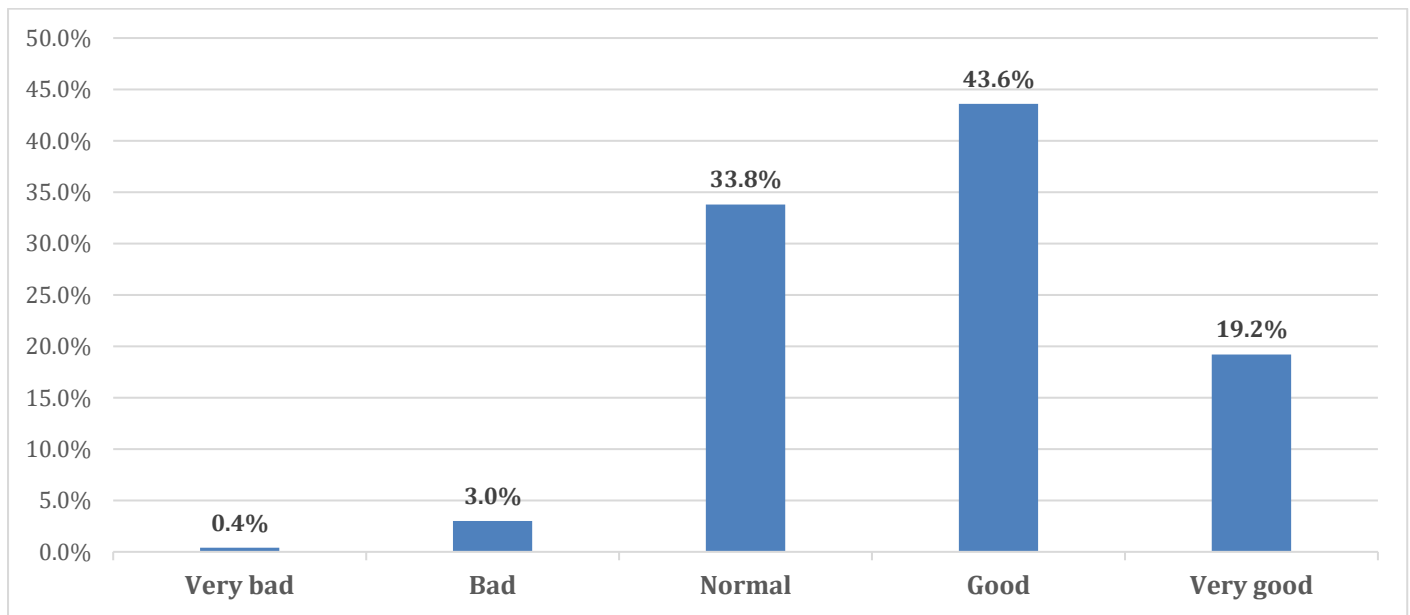


*Source: Author's survey*

Friendship is another important factor during the challenging adolescent years. Friendships can offer teens the emotional support they need to get through life's ups and downs. In addition, socialization and peer acceptance teach them how to form and sustain relationships, giving them a feeling of identity that they won't be able to replicate later in life. They can learn more about self-expression and explore their own identities in this safe space. A possible positive impact that friendships can provide is the positive peer influence and role modeling that encourage healthy behaviors and academic engagement, while also providing examples on how to handle the various

new life situations around them. Somewhat similar to this is the way that friendships can help teenagers develop coping and resilience skills by offering support and company during challenging times. Last but not least, a healthy friendship can promote healthy-risk taking and effective pressure management, some unspoken important skills that guide teens towards the right path in their career later in life and just resist negative influences. According to the survey, more than 90% of teenagers have normal to good relationships with their peers, which is really encouraging the importance of social connections during adolescence.

**Figure 2. Relationship with friends**



*Source: Author's survey*

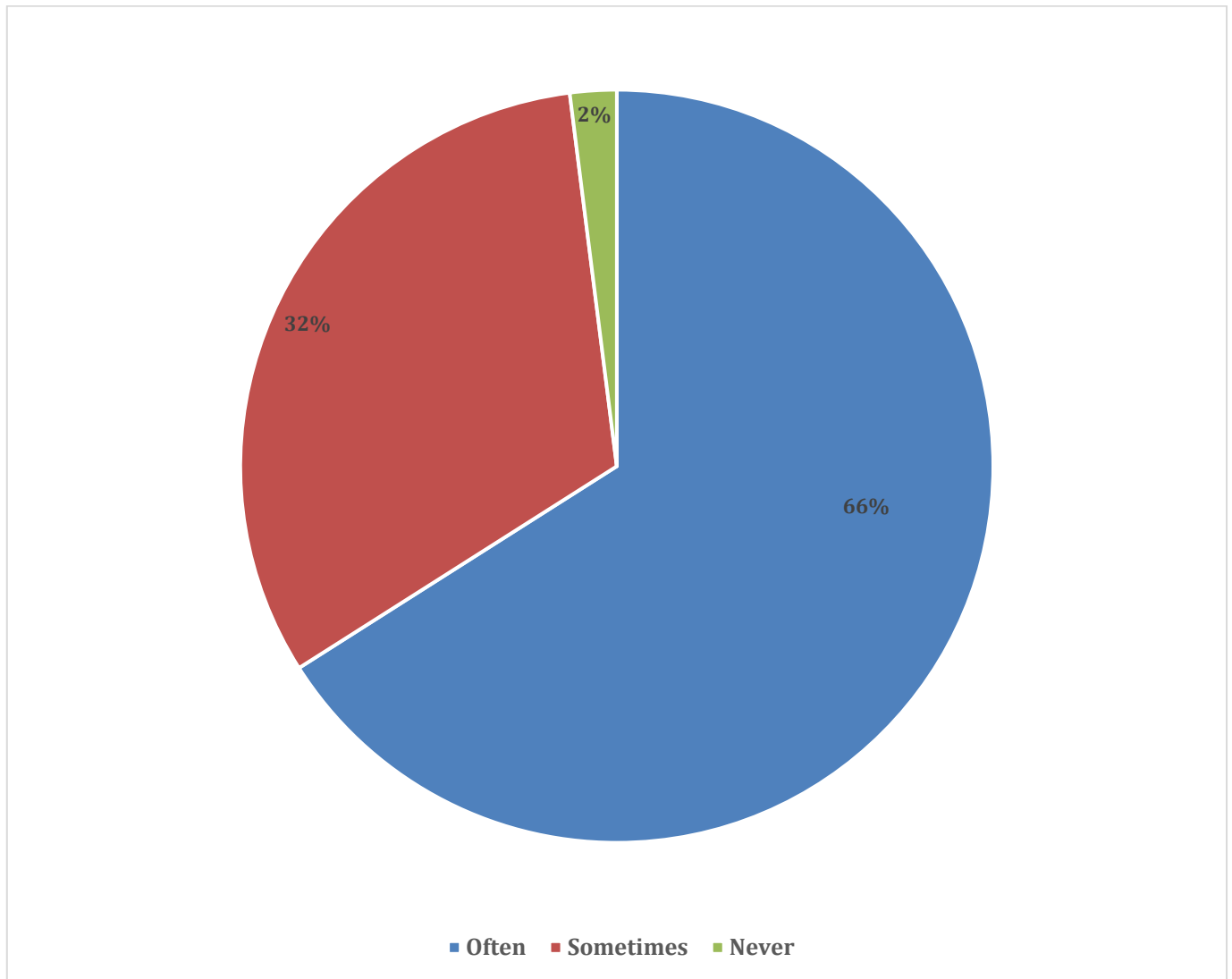
**Emotional Support**

Expressing love and affection through action and words can create a loving and nurturing environment for adolescents' development, which is essential for healthy development during this crucial phase. Validating an adolescent's feelings, even when they are negative, can help them feel more accepted and understood. This validation in turn helps them feel more confident about themselves and can lead to better emotional regulation. Even with simple actions like having someone listen to their concerns after a long day, family members can help adolescents feel much more understood and valued, by listening and showing empathy, something that will lead to healthier behaviors and reduce loneliness and social isolation, things that are unfortunately growing among adolescents and young adults in modern society. Families provide reassurance and encouragement, boosting adolescents' confidence and helping them cope with challenges. This unique support helps them feel much more capable and hopeful. Adolescents who frequently receive reassurance and encouragement from their families have better resilience and are better at handling stress and recovering from setbacks. Consistency is an understated aspect of emotional support and is a vital aspect of the turbulent years of adolescence. Always being emotionally available and supportive

helps adolescents feel more secure and builds an unbreakable bond. Just simply checking in with your loved ones and showing that you care can make others feel loved and important. Emotional support by family members provides a plethora of benefits for adolescents' development and future, a universal finding that has been supported by research from multiple countries in the world.

According to the survey, up to 66% of correspondents receive family's care and emotional support during their growth. This is an impressive figure showing that family really play an important role in teenagers' life, providing not only a foundation of love and security but also a key source of emotional stability. This care fosters self-confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging—essential elements for healthy psychological development. The emotional support from families also helps reducing mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem for teenagers. The high percentage of respondents who receive emotional support from their families underscores the importance of fostering strong family connections. The survey's findings reinforce the idea that family involvement is a key factor in positive adolescent growth and development, shaping teenagers into more well-rounded and resilient individuals.

**Figure 3. How often do parents talk and listen to you?**

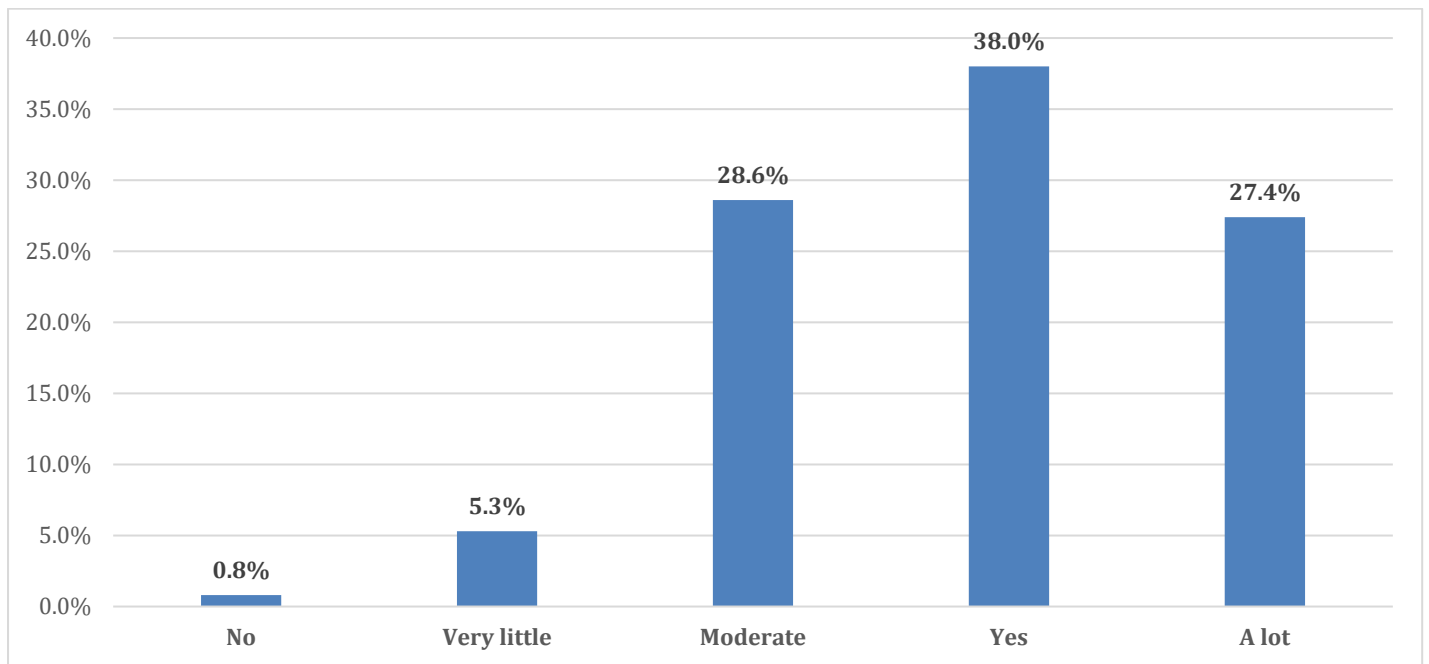


*Source: Author's survey*

Most of the respondents (96.6%) report having a positive relationship with their friends. This information suggests that friendship provides significant benefits during the teenage years. According to, teenage relationships tend to be much more diverse and complex than relationships formed during earlier years of life (De Guzman, M. R. 2012). In addition, this change also means that adolescents are receiving crucial emotional support from their friends, which helps them manage stress and navigate the complexities of growing up. The strong bonds formed through friendship also indicate successful socialization and peer acceptance, fostering a sense of belonging and community. The majority 94.6% of respondents said they often or very often open up and receive support from their friends. This really highlights how crucial these friendships are. Friend groups are

a safe space for teenagers to grow their personality, find out who they are, what are their values in life and what they want to care about in life. At the same time, having good friends means that they have real and intimate role models that they can look up to, as a result they themselves will feel more inclined to make healthy and smart choices, like for example, stay in school or even engage and excel in it. Supportive friends help them build resilience and cope better with challenges by being there with them and keeping them company during hard times and good times. Friends help a teenager develop empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Hanging out with friends is an important aspect for developing good social skills for teens. Friends can also offer a sense of belonging and support that sometimes can feel more personal and intimate than family support.

**Figure 4. Supports from friends**



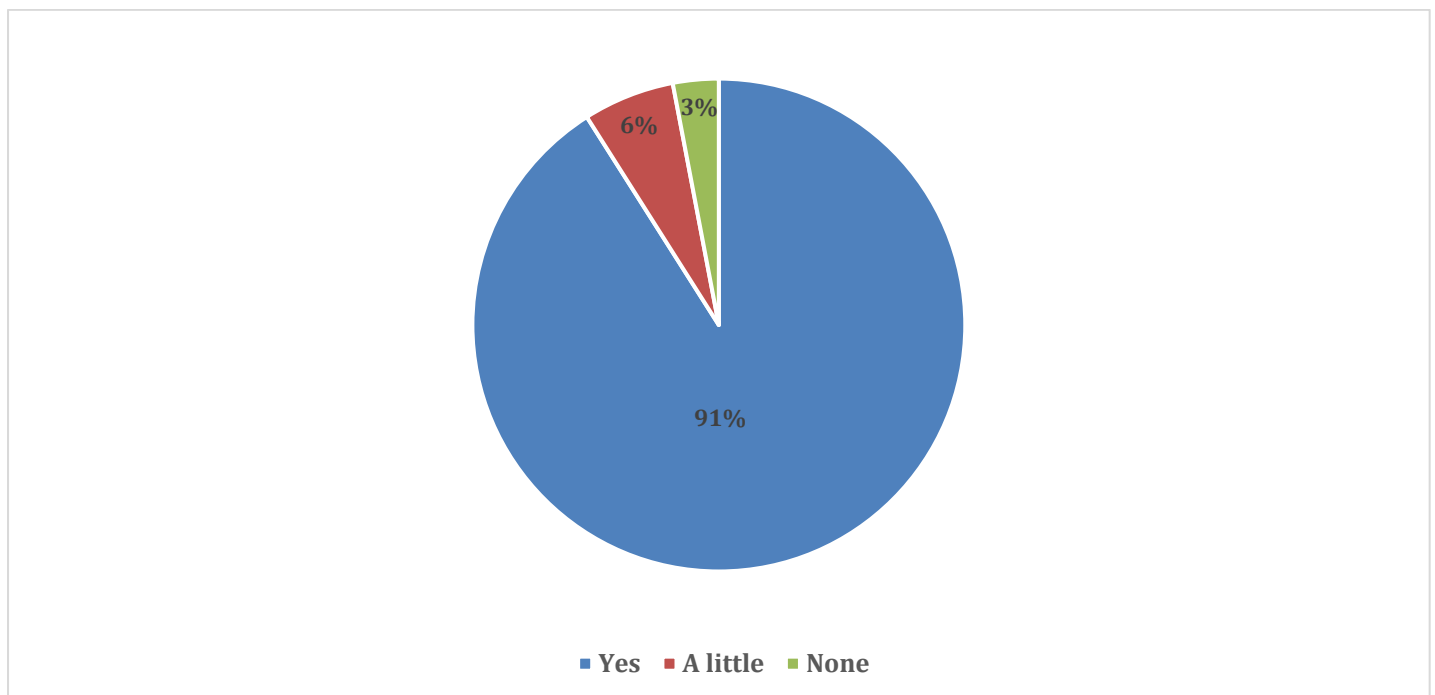
Source: Author's survey

**Academic Success**

Academic achievement, in a narrow sense, pertains to students' performance and course acceptance in school. In today's society, academic success is highly emphasized as a pivotal factor in a child's future academic career and job opportunities. One crucial determinant of a child's academic success is

parental support. Parental involvement in a child's education, such as attending school events, assisting with homework, and establishing high expectations, has been associated with improved academic performance. Moreover, parents who value education and exhibit positive attitudes towards learning can influence their children to adopt similar attitudes.

**Figure 5. Cares and support from family in studying**



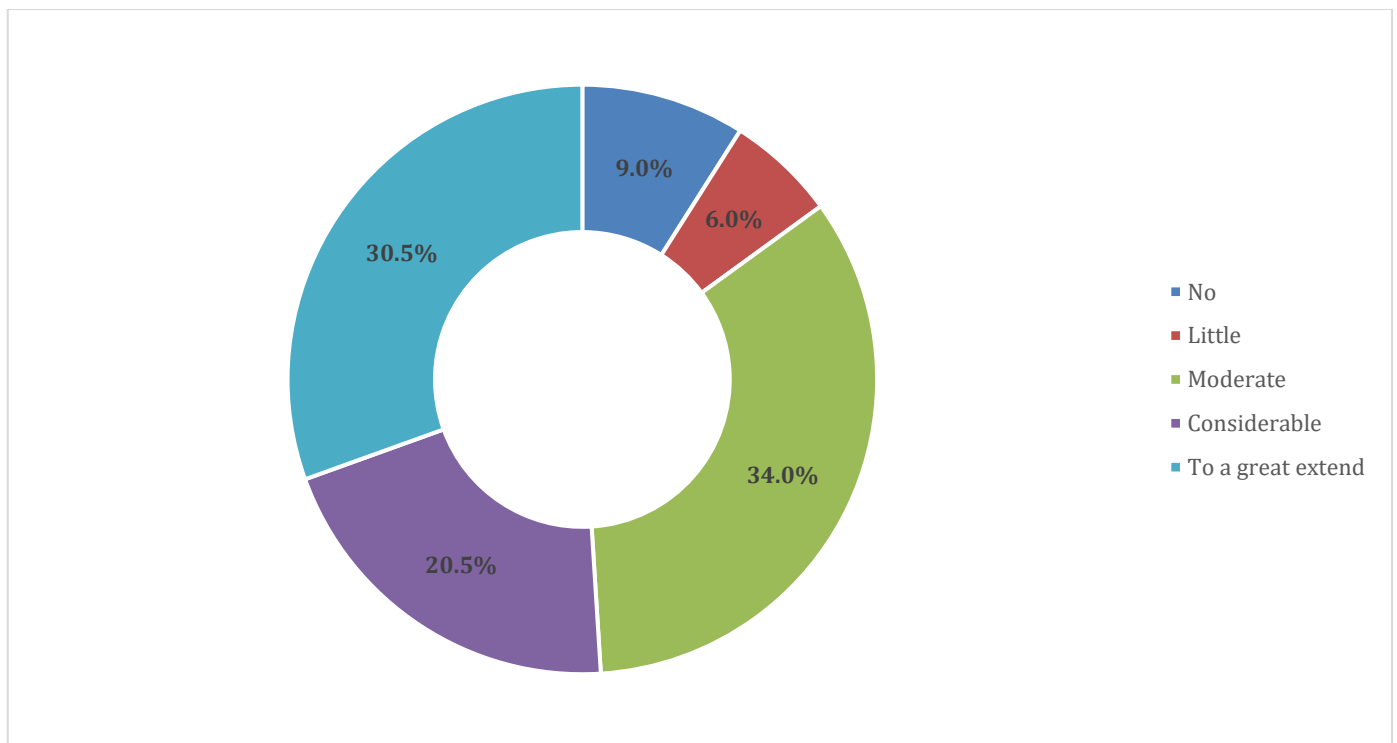
Source: Author's survey

Most correspondents from the survey confirmed that they received care and support from their family in academic achievement (91%). Parents play a significant role in children's academic success through various forms of involvement, support, and encouragement. Their thinking and education can shape a teenager's attitude toward learning, motivation, and overall performance in school. Parents are the ones provide a supportive and comfortable learning environment, which facilitate teenagers to focus on studying and develop good study habits. Parents can also encourage their children when they struggle or fail, help them develop resilience, which is critical for maintaining motivation, reducing stress, and fostering a positive attitude toward education. Most importantly, parents can inspire teenagers to develop the enthusiasm and motivation for learning, which is the key requirement for long term success.

Friendship is another important factor during the challenging adolescent years. Friendships can offer

teens the emotional support they need to get through life's ups and downs. In addition, socialization and peer acceptance teach them how to form and sustain relationships, giving them a feeling of identity that they won't be able to replicate later in life. They can learn more about self-expression and explore their own identities in this safe space. Good friendships can provide positive peer influence and role modeling that encourage healthy behaviors and academic engagement, while also providing examples on how to handle the various new life situations around them. Somewhat similar to this is the way that friendships can help teenagers develop coping and resilience skills by offering support and company during challenging times. Last but not least, a healthy friendship can promote healthy-risk taking and effective pressure management, some important skills that guide teens towards the right path in their career later in life and just resist negative influences.

**Figure 6. Friends' Influence on Mood and Behavior**



Source: Author's survey

The majority of respondent to our survey report feeling moderately or to a great extent the influence of their friends on their mood and behavior, to be

precise: 34% said friends influence them moderately. 20.5% said friends influence them considerably. 30.5% said friends influence them to

a great extent. This again underscores the impact that friends have on an adolescent's life, by the fact that peers are a major factor in shaping each other's emotions and actions. However, this can be both a negative or positive influence, depending on a set of circumstances. Nevertheless, given the overall positive relationships reported in prior questions, it is safe to assume the friendship of these adolescents are largely beneficial.

Researchers at the University of Virginia found that strong friendships in adolescence may lead to better mental health in the long run. High school students who have forged strong bonds with their peers tend to improve in several aspects of mental health over time, whereas teens who used to be popular among a large group of people may be more susceptible to having feelings of social anxiety and exhibit more symptoms of depression as adults. In the survey, 64.7% of correspondents said they are asking the help from family and friends before taking any decision.

## **2.2. Negative impacts of family and friends on adolescence**

Beside positive impacts on children, parents and friends sometimes have negative impacts on adolescents.

Firstly, we should talk about aggressive communication, some prime examples being yelling, blaming, or using harsh words. These behaviors can lead to increased anxiety and low self-esteem. It's important to consider different communication styles within the family. Aggressive communication, such as yelling or using harsh words, can lead to increased anxiety and low self-esteem in adolescents. This behavior may also cause adolescents to become aggressive themselves or withdraw from family interactions. Conversely, passive communication, where parents avoid expressing their true feelings, can also have negative impacts. It can lead to misunderstandings and unresolved conflicts, making adolescents feel neglected or unimportant. This can result in feelings of isolation and frustration. Additionally, passive-aggressive communication, such as sarcasm or silent treatment, can confuse

adolescents and make them feel insecure about their family relationships. The lack of effective communication within the family can lead to unresolved issues and make adolescents feel unsupported, potentially leading to difficulties with emotional regulation and healthy relationships outside the family a tendency for adolescents to either become aggressive themselves or withdraw from family interactions. Passive communication can create misunderstandings and unresolved conflicts. Adolescents may feel neglected or unimportant, leading to feelings of isolation and frustration. Even worse than that, passive aggressive communication, which involves indirect expressions of anger or resentment, such as sarcasm or silent treatment can confuse adolescents and make them feel insecure about their relationships within the family. No effective communication within the family can cause many unresolved issues in the long run, and may lead to important issues becoming ignored, making adolescents feel unsupported. Problems like these can lead to adolescents having difficulty with emotional regulation, in turn causing difficulty in forming healthy relationships outside the family too.

Secondly, family conflict can take a toll on adolescents, affecting their growth and development in several ways. When there's constant tension at home, it can lead to increased anxiety and depression, making it hard for teens to focus on anything else. This emotional stress often spills over into their behavior, causing issues like aggression or withdrawal, which can disrupt their social lives and school performance. The stress from family arguments can also make it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies, leading to lower grades. Additionally, dealing with ongoing conflict can mess with their ability to manage emotions, resulting in mood swings and difficulty handling anger. Over time, these experiences can chip away at their self-esteem, leaving them feeling less confident and more insecure. Plus, they might struggle to form healthy relationships outside the family, as trust and communication become challenging. Addressing these conflicts is crucial to



helping adolescents build a strong foundation for their future.

Thirdly, adolescent development and well-being can be deeply influenced by the lack of stability at home. A situation where the home atmosphere is always changing whether because of a breakdown in marriage, moving frequently or due to inconsistent parental control thus creates a sense of insecurity and fear. This constant uncertainty can pose challenges in focusing on their studies, hence leading to poor school performance. Emotionally, they may experience feelings of fear and helplessness which might result in mood swings or withdrawal from people around them. They may not form healthy relationships because they cannot trust others or communicate with them effectively as they do not have reliable persons they can turn to for comfort. In the end, this instability will eat into their self-esteem making them feel less confident and more susceptible to harm. To build a strong future for adolescents going forward, these problems must be addressed through creating an environment that is more stable.

Fourthly, neglect and lack of supervision both negatively impact adolescent development, but they differ in scope. Neglect is broader and includes a lack of supervision as one of its components. Neglect involves failing to meet a child's basic needs, leading to long-term emotional and psychological issues. Lack of supervision specifically refers to inadequate monitoring, resulting in immediate risks and potential engagement in risky behaviors. Addressing both problems is crucial for ensuring the safety and healthy development of adolescents. Over time, chronic neglect can result in long-term psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and attachment disorders. Adolescents who experience neglect often struggle academically and socially, as they lack the necessary support and guidance to navigate these critical areas of their lives. Addressing neglect is essential to ensure that adolescents receive the care and support they need to thrive and develop into healthy, well-adjusted adults. Psychologically, neglected adolescents are at a higher risk of developing mental health issues

such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, which can persist into adulthood. Behaviorally, they may exhibit aggression, delinquency, and substance abuse due to the lack of guidance and emotional support. Cognitive impairments are also common, as chronic neglect can hinder brain development, resulting in difficulties with learning, memory, and problem-solving. Socially, these individuals often struggle to form and maintain healthy relationships, facing trust issues and emotional disconnection. Additionally, neglect can lead to long-term physical health problems, including malnutrition and untreated medical conditions, further affecting their overall well-being.

Fifthly, authoritarian parenting, where parents are very strict and demanding but not very responsive, can have some tough long-term effects on adolescents. Kids raised in this kind of environment often feel a lot of pressure to meet high expectations without much emotional support, which can lead to low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. They might struggle with anxiety and depression because they're constantly trying to live up to rigid standards. Behaviorally, these teens might either become aggressive or overly submissive, finding it hard to assert themselves in social situations. The lack of open communication and emotional warmth can also make it difficult for them to form healthy relationships, leading to trust issues and trouble expressing their emotions. Over time, these challenges can impact their academic performance and overall well-being. It's important for parents to find a balance between setting rules and providing the emotional support and understanding that adolescents need to thrive. Cultural perspectives on authoritarian parenting can be really diverse. Take many Asian cultures, for example, where strict parenting is often seen as a way to teach discipline and respect. For Asian parents, it is just a harsh but necessary way to prepare kids for the future and ensure they understand the importance of family and societal harmony. On the flip side, in many Western cultures, this style of parenting might be viewed more critically. In western societies, the focus is

often on encouraging independence and self-expression, so strict rules can sometimes be seen as too restrictive. We could say that what one culture sees as necessary and loving, another might view as overly harsh. These differences really highlight how deeply our parenting styles are influenced by the values and beliefs of our culture.

Lastly, the main issues of family dysfunction have all been expanded upon in the previous paragraphs, but here are some additional angles that can be talked about, for instance, intergenerational patterns often play a significant role, where behaviors and traumas are passed down, affecting how current family members interact. Children in such environments might struggle with emotional and social development, impacting their future relationships and self-esteem. Coping mechanisms vary widely, from denial to overachievement, each with its own set of challenges. External factors like socioeconomic status and community support can either exacerbate or alleviate these issues. Long-term consequences of unresolved dysfunction can lead to chronic mental health problems and unstable employment.

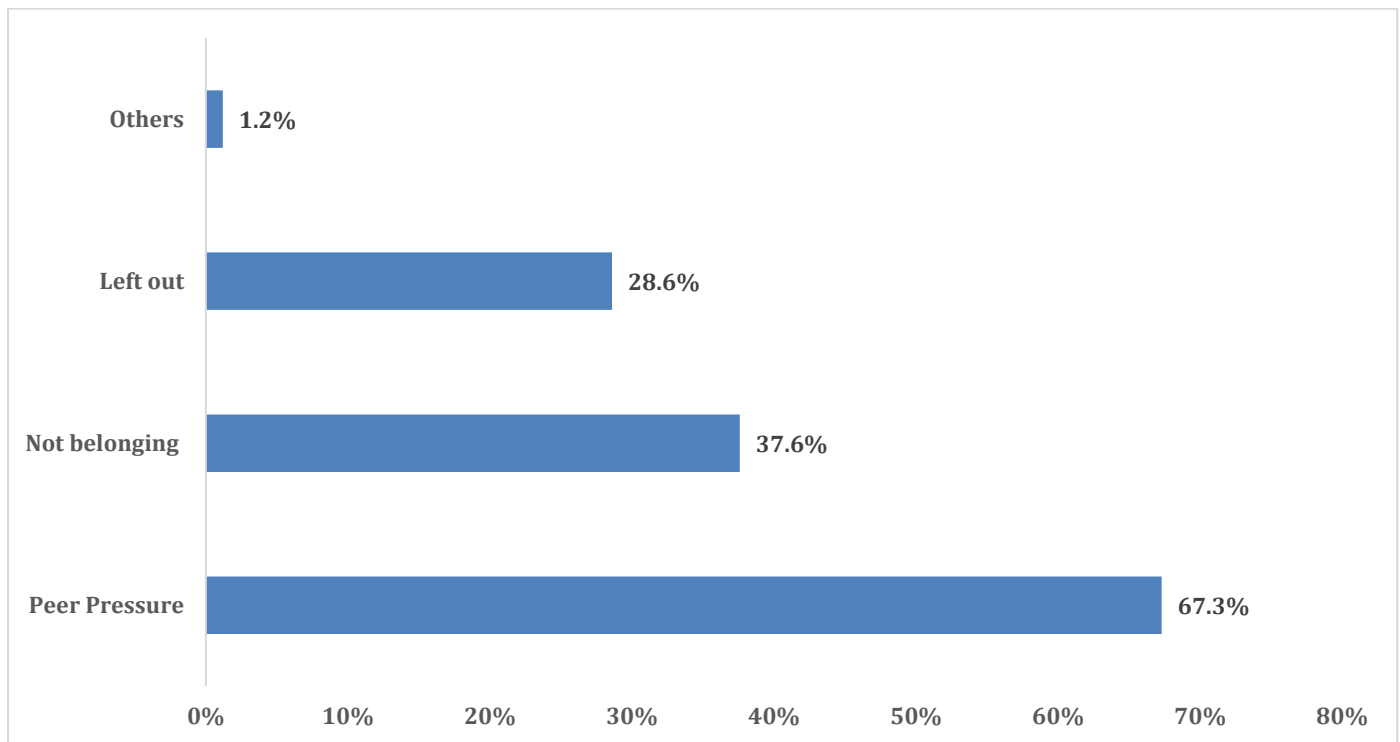
Intergenerational patterns in family dysfunction often start with unresolved trauma or unhealthy behaviors that get passed down through the family. Imagine a parent who grew up in an abusive household; they might struggle with forming healthy relationships and, without realizing it, pass on similar behaviors to their kids. This creates a cycle where each generation inherits and continues the dysfunction. It's not just about copying behaviors, though. Emotional scars and psychological impacts from past generations can shape how people react to stress and form relationships. For example, someone who grew up in a chaotic environment might always be on edge or find it hard to trust others. However, it's important to note that resilience and recovery are possible, with many families finding ways to heal and build healthier relationships through therapy and support systems. This multifaceted view helps us understand the depth and breadth of family dysfunction and its far-reaching effects.

To start off, the overall positive trend of adolescents feeling average or good about their relationships with family members is a good sign for their mental health, from that we could safely assume they are being provided with a safe and nurturing environment. However, the 16.5% who feel bad or really bad about their family relationships indicate that 1,5 out of every 10 students have bad or really bad relationships with their family.

Friends can also have a great impact on the teenagers because they often affected by comments and thought of their peers. If the perspective and lifestyle of the friends are not good, they are easily influenced and follow this behavior. Negative behaviors such as engaging in risky activities, conforming to unhealthy habits or worse, engaging in substance abuse could risk these adolescents to consequences that could affect them for life. We should pay attention to these underlying problems and find ways to improve the situations. Nevertheless, stress is an issue that shouldn't be overlooked, as it can affect the wellbeing of teens' emotional health, in particular causing irritability, anxiety, and sadness. It should be noted that regardless of the type of influence friend groups are having on teens, adolescents have a deep desire for social desire, to fit in, but constantly feeling the need to fit in or meet the expectation of peers can lead to increased stress and anxiety, teens will constantly be worrying about their appearance, behavior or social status because of their self-imposed unrealistic expectations and standards. Parents and friends can help avoid this by enforcing a sense of self-confidence, encouraging and nurturing their individuality so that teens can feel confident about themselves and believe in their own morals and values.

A significant portion (67.3%) of teens experience considerable or great peer pressure from friends around them. This could be a positive or negative fact, depending on the type of influence that friends are having on these teens. Ideally, the peer pressure in question should be motivating productive behaviors like studying harder, or participating in healthy activities, adopting wholesome habits in their daily routine, etc...

**Figure 7. Most frequent issues in relationship with friends**



*Source: Author's survey*

### 3. Conclusion:

Based on the survey, around 90% of respondents report feeling happy or ecstatic regularly, which is a very positive insight, while a notable 9.6% of teens actually feel sad, lonely or depressed frequently. This highlights the wide range of emotions among teens and reminds us about why we should create a strong support system for teens to grow up and develop into happy and successful adults. Up to 94.6% of respondents often or very often open up to their friends for support, this suggests that peer relationships are a primary support system for many teens. Equally important are other support systems, such as family support, a sense of community, having support on teens' hobbies and passions, connecting teens to other adults that can support and guide them. On the other hand, we can help improve the situation of 9.6% of teens feeling sad, lonely or stressed daily by figuring out the problems they often encounter. There are several factors that can contribute to some teens regularly feeling negative emotions. One of the most common key contributors to stress among teens is academic pressure. High expectations from parents and teachers can create significant stress, especially if

teens feel they can't meet these expectations. Things like poor organization and poor time management can worsen the situation, considering teens need more sleep and rest for better brain development and also effectiveness in learning and remembering. Although an adequate amount of pressure could be beneficial for students to work hard and focus, excessive levels of academic pressure on students can lead to issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, and physical conditions like fatigue to say the least. Family and friends can create a positive environment for teenagers to overcome difficulties and have a healthy attitude in life.

### 4. Methodologies:

- Survey method: To investigate the influence of family and friends on teenage traits and behaviors, a standardized survey including validated questions to measure the mental well-being of teenagers and collect information on participants' environmental conditions, such as stress levels, home stability, and living conditions. Questions related to peer relationships and parental involvement were included to capture the social context surrounding the teenagers.

- Data Collection Methods: Data collection methods were used to systematically gather information from participants, enabling the study to analyze the relationship between family and friends' influence on teenagers. These methods ensured the accurate and reliable collection of data, providing a solid foundation for understanding the co-relationship.

- Data Analysis: data was conducted to identify predictive relationships, helping to determine the extent to which family and peer influences on teenagers' behaviors. Moderation and mediation analysis were used to explore how certain variables (e.g., family support, peer pressure) interact with mental health and behavior outcomes.

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