



Exploring the Influence of Social Environment on Mental Health, Behavioral Patterns, Leadership Development, and Interpersonal Relationships Among Youth in a Digitalized Society

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The study is devoted to the analysis of the influence of the social environment on the mental state, behavior, development of leadership qualities and formation of interpersonal interactions of the individual in the context of modern socio-cultural transformations. The key role of social support as a stress buffer and a factor of psycho-emotional stability, which directly affects cognitive and affective reactions, self-esteem and the ability to social adaptation, is established. The relationship between the perception of support, stress level and overall personality functioning in the youth environment, which is most vulnerable to the negative impact of social isolation, digital fragmentation and reduced intensity of interpersonal connections, is considered. The research methodology was based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches: content analysis, statistical interpretation of standard coefficients, use of the multiple growth formula, and secondary analysis of empirical data. Five main domains of influence of the social environment were identified: mental state, behavioral regulation, leadership potential, interpersonal interaction, and adaptability, which were analyzed in the context of psychological mechanisms – emotional stability, self-control, self-esteem, and the level of social involvement. The results indicate a deep psychosocial destabilization among young people, which is manifested in a decrease in cognitive functions, emotional instability and difficulties in building socially effective behavioral models. The practical significance of the work is to formulate recommendations for optimizing the social environment as a factor of mental health. The expediency of strengthening family support, creating structures of compensatory social interaction and adapting psychoprophylactic strategies to the needs of young people is substantiated. Further research should focus on the study of neuropsychological mechanisms that influence the social context of mental functions and the development of structural interventions aimed at strengthening social capital and resilience in the face of chronic stress.

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The phenomenon of social influence on personality formation is considered in modern humanitarian discourse as a complex interaction between an individual and the socio-cultural environment, within which behavioral patterns and cognitive and affective features of personality functioning are determined. In this context, society appears as an integrative factor that sets the parameters of identity development, social modeling, and adaptation strategies, providing regulation through institutional, normative, and communication channels. An individual is formed in the context of systemic social determination, which combines microsocial (family, reference groups) and macrosocial (state, educational structures) influences. Social dynamics act as a context and functional component of personal construction, determining the cognitive scheme of world perception, value orientations, level of social responsibility, and communicative effectiveness (Sharovatova, 2022).

Current empirical and analytical data confirm the existence of profound transformational processes in the system of social interaction, which lead to the erosion of traditional mechanisms of social influence. Modern youth cohorts are characterized by a high level of psycho-emotional variability, increased sensitivity to social frustration, and a tendency to alienation, which is explained by the fragmentation of social ties, digitalization of the communication space, and polarization of social identities (Slyzhuk, 2023). In such conditions, hybrid behavioral models are formed that combine adaptive resources and

maladaptive symptoms, such as emotional instability, lowered self-esteem, impaired self-regulation, and social disorientation. These trends are systemic and indicate micro-psychological destabilization and macro-social shifts in the structure of social integration. Society is losing its role as a stabilizer of social development, turning into a factor that generates additional stress, especially in vulnerable age groups.

Further scientific research should focus on the interdisciplinary operationalization of concepts related to critical thinking, social effectiveness, and psychological resilience, taking into account the changes caused by the informatization and virtualization of social space. The formation of reflective thinking and emotional self-regulation should be considered a key element of personal growth in a hyperinformative environment (Pochynkova & Bader, 2023). It involves the development of structured methods for assessing and developing psychosocial competencies. It is important to study cognitive and affective processes in the context of digital socialization, mechanisms of forming interpersonal relationships, trust and leadership qualities in an unstable and polarized information environment. Personal development in the twenty-first century requires the scientific community to rethink traditional models of upbringing and education in favor of conceptual approaches that integrate elements of critical pedagogy, digital ethics, and neuropsychology.

Literature Review

The study of the influence of the social environment on the formation of mental state, behavioral patterns, leadership characteristics and the quality of interpersonal interactions is being actively developed in the modern scientific literature. The relevance of the topic is due to the growing intensity of social change, digitalization, information overload, and global instability, which transform the mechanisms of socialization and self-realization of the individual. The view of a person as a product of the socio-cultural context opens up new opportunities for understanding their emotional functioning, and ability to adapt and manifest leadership qualities in a changing environment.

Particular attention in the literature is paid to the problem of personality formation in the context of social interactions. Kolodyazhna (2023) explores how personal and situational factors shape an individual's self-esteem and internal stability. Sharovatova (2022) analyzes the role of the state as a factor in the formation of a socially responsible personality in modern society. In turn, Slyzhuk (2023) examines the socio-emotional aspects of adolescent identity in a polarized environment. Pochynkova and Bader (2023) emphasize the importance of developing critical thinking as an element of self-reflection in the context of digital informatization.

A number of works reveal the influence of socio-cultural values and media on behavior and interpersonal relationships. Harahap and Setiawan (2022) present the prophetic social paradigm as a guide for the moral orientation of the individual in Muslim society. Song et al. (2024) analyze the impact of personality traits on the formation of “information bubbles” in social networks that lead to cognitive isolation and distorted social perception. Astuti et al. (2023) study the pedagogical heritage of Emile Durkheim as a basis for moral development of the individual. Silchenko and Murray (2023) demonstrate how climate change and migration affect the structure of social protection, which in turn affects the psycho-emotional stability of the population.

The issue of social protection as an institutional factor in the formation of individual resilience is considered in Cookson et al. (2024), Enworo (2023), Osabohien et al. (2023), and Costella et al. (2023). These studies analyze gender-sensitive social protection strategies, assess the reliability of qualitative research in this area, and explore the relationship between environmental security and social stability. Support systems are viewed not as compensation mechanisms, but as a means of restoring personal potential, aimed at minimizing stress and preventing social exclusion.

Behavioral orientations, values, and adaptive strategies are also studied in the context of the transformations of the modern consumer society. Langdon et al. (2024) analyze civic behavior in public organizations as a manifestation of social leadership. Subawa et al. (2020) consider hedonism as a dominant feature of modern consumer culture that changes patterns of social interaction. Westbrook and Harvey (2023) conduct a content analysis of public health textbooks, identifying the social and behavioral dominants of modern education. Khundi-Mkombe et al. (2023) analyze the effectiveness of social protection programs in Rwanda that reduce household energy burdens and improve well-being.

Aspects of social cohesion, individual responsibility, and the formation of self-preservation strategies are covered in Oteng et al. (2024), Rahayu et al. (2020), Kundo et al. (2023), and Burchi et al. (2022). The studies address the transition from collective to personal protection, the impact of consumer practices on social responsibility, and the integration of protection mechanisms in the context of climate and humanitarian crises. The concept of social capital, which determines the quality of interpersonal relationships and the ability to self-organize, is considered as the foundation for effective interaction between the individual and society.

The scientific literature on the influence of the social environment on the psycho-emotional state, behavioral patterns and social adaptation of an individual demonstrates a wide range of approaches - from socio-philosophical and cultural to empirical and interdisciplinary. The focus is on the multifactorial nature of the interaction between society and the individual, where the key determinants are social support, the information environment, political stability, and cultural dynamics. Further research should deepen the understanding of these processes, taking into account age, regional, and psychophysiological differences, which will allow for the development of effective strategies for promoting mental health in the face of social challenges.

The purpose of the article is to comprehensively study the impact of the social environment on the mental state, behavioral regulation, development of leadership skills and the quality of interpersonal relations of an individual in the context of modern social dynamics. The main task is to analyze how social factors, such as the level of perceived support, information overload, digital fragmentation, and social expectations, affect the psycho-emotional functioning of an individual, their adaptability, self-esteem, and ability to engage in constructive social interaction. The study examines the key psycho-functional characteristics determined by the social context and identifies mediating mechanisms of influence, such as perceived stress. The article is structured around the analysis of empirical data, the interpretation of the results of quantitative models, and the theoretical generalization of psychosocial effects inherent in modern youth. The practical significance of the work is to formulate conclusions for improving prevention strategies in the field of mental health, taking

into account social structure and interpersonal interaction as key resources for psychological stability.

Method

Research Procedure

The study was implemented in several successive stages. At the first stage, a theoretical analysis of scientific sources on the relationship between the social environment, perceived stress, mental state, and the development of interpersonal and leadership skills was carried out. At the second stage, two relevant sources were reasonably selected – an empirical study of social support (Acoba, 2024) and a global survey of the mental state of the population (Sapien Labs, 2025). Next, the secondary data were quantitatively analyzed, including the interpretation of the coefficients of the mediation model and the calculation of the relative increase in symptoms among young people. The final stage was the systematization of the findings with the subsequent construction of tables that reflect the meaningful relationships between social variables and psychofunctional indicators.

Sample and Data

Secondary data from analytical studies were used as empirical material. The first is the study by Acoba (2024), which analyzes the mediating effect of perceived stress in relation to social support. The second is the global report by Sapien Labs (2025) on the mental state of the world's population in 2024. The appropriate sample ensures the representativeness of the sample, which includes more than 1 million respondents from 76 countries. The use of secondary analysis avoids the limitations associated with the time and resource costs of primary research. At the same time, the specifics of the original data were taken into account: the analysis was conducted exclusively for the Internet-active part of the population, which partially limits the generalization of the results to the offline population. The findings cover key aspects: the mediating effect of social support on affective states and the prevalence of dysfunctions among young people.

Method

The methodological basis of the study included a combination of content analysis, statistical interpretation of standard β coefficients, and the use of fold change calculation to identify age differences. The formula for calculating the growth coefficient was used:

$$FC = \frac{P_{youth}}{P_{senior}} \Rightarrow P_{senior} = \frac{P_{youth}}{FC}$$

where P_{youth} — is the frequency of symptoms among young people, FC is the growth rate. It was used to determine the baseline level of symptoms among older respondents for comparative analysis. The research methods included a systematic analysis to establish links between social factors and psychoemotional characteristics. Inductive generalization was used to form a conceptual model of the influence of the social environment on behavioral and emotional aspects of the individual. Theoretical generalization was used to interpret the results in accordance with modern sociopsychological approaches.

The chosen methodology was able to combine a qualitative analysis of the content concepts with quantitative verification of empirical relationships. The use of secondary analysis of reputable sources made it possible to cover the global context and ensure a high level of reliability and comparability of data. The combination of the mediation model and the age comparison of psychofunctional difficulties allowed us to identify the structural mechanisms of the social environment's influence on behavioral regulation, interpersonal relationships, and the development of leadership characteristics. Thus, the study combines analytical depth with practical relevance, creating the basis for further applied developments in the field of social psychology and mental health.

Results

The socio-cultural environment is characterized by a high level of dynamics, digitalization and globalization. Its role in shaping the mental state, behavior and personal characteristics of an individual is growing as never before. A person does not exist as an isolated unit, but as a part of interconnected social structures, where the level of support, quality of interpersonal relationships, social expectations and cultural norms are factors that directly affect their psycho-emotional functioning.

One of the central mechanisms through which this influence is realized is stress - as a reaction to excessive demands or imbalance between personal resources and social challenges. The stress experienced in the absence of sufficient social support reduces the level of emotional stability and affects interpersonal behavior, trust, self-esteem, and leadership ability. The interaction of society with the individual is becoming key as a factor that determines adaptive capacities and forms stable personal traits related to leadership, self-regulation, and social effectiveness.

In the study of psychosocial factors that determine the state of mental health of an individual, social support is considered one of the leading variables that correlates with a decrease in anxiety and depressive symptoms and significantly affects the overall level of positive affect. The modern scientific tradition distinguishes several types of social support - emotional, informational, instrumental, and evaluative - which provide a resource basis for an individual's adaptation to stressful events to varying degrees. Of particular importance is perceived support, i.e., a person's subjective perception of the availability and accessibility of assistance, as it is a predictor of reducing psychoemotional stress.

Support changes the cognitive assessment of events, reducing their perception as threatening and thus reducing stress. Importantly, it is perceived stress that acts as a mediator that explains how social support affects affective states; namely, it increases positive affect and reduces the risk of anxiety and depression. This support is especially appropriate in times of pandemic or military instability when the level of chronic stress is elevated. The characteristics of the influence of the social environment on behavioral formation are shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1*Impact of the Social Environment on Key Psychosocial Domains*

Category	Social factor	Psychological mechanism
Mental state	Level of social support	Stress reduction, stabilization of affect
Behavioral regulation	Social expectations and norms	Formation of self-control, responsibility
Leadership potential	Social involvement and trust	Increase of self-esteem, development of initiative
Quality of interpersonal relationships	Intensity and stability of ties	Increasing the level of emotional connection
Adaptability of young people	Structure of social interaction, digital environment	Social fragmentation, decrease in the depth of contacts

Interpersonal relationships also play a role as a mirror of mental health: individuals with lower levels of emotional stability and higher levels of stress are more likely to have difficulty building long-term relationships, avoid deeper interactions, and exhibit impulsive behavior. Empirical evidence also shows that young people are more likely to experience social isolation and have lower levels of emotional connection with others, which negatively affects their overall functioning.

Given these aspects, the interaction of society with an individual appears not as a passive environment, but as an active determinant of the development of key psychosocial competencies. This influence is especially significant in the youth environment, where social ties are in the process of formation, and the risks of digital disintegration and information overload have long-term consequences for the formation of a stable psycho-emotional profile of the individual.

The data below demonstrates the results of a quantitative analysis of the links between sources of social support, the level of perceived stress, and psychological indicators (positive affect, anxiety, depression). All results are presented according to the mediation model described in Acoba (2024). Table 2 presents the standardized coefficients (β) for mediated effects through perceived stress levels of statistical significance.

Table 2*The Mediating Effect of Perceived Stress between Social Support and Mental States*

A source of support	Positive affect (β , p)	Anxiety (β , p)	Depression (β , p)	Statistical conclusion
Family	.02 ($p = .010$)	-.07 ($p < .001$)	-.08 ($p < .001$)	Significant indirect impact
A close person	.01 ($p = .009$)	-.05 ($p = .020$)	-.06 ($p = .020$)	Significant indirect effect
Friends	.01 ($p = .080$)	-.03 ($p = .070$)	-.04 ($p = .060$)	Not significant (perceived stress \neq mediator)

Source: compiled according to Acoba (2024)

As Table 2 shows, the most significant factor in reducing psychoemotional burden is family support. It has the strongest indirect effect on all the studied indicators, especially on depression ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .001$). Support from a partner or loved one also shows a positive effect, but with slightly lower coefficients. In contrast, support from friends did not show a statistically significant mediation effect on perceived stress, which is likely due to the limited opportunities for social interaction during the crisis.

The findings have significant practical implications for the development of psychoprophylactic programs. First of all, it is worth focusing on the involvement of the

family circle in psychological support processes, especially in conditions of prolonged uncertainty or social isolation. In cases where it is not possible to activate the internal circle of social ties, it is important to develop mechanisms of compensatory support from the professional environment, including psychotherapists, mentors and self-help groups.

It should also be noted that social support, as a multidimensional phenomenon, affects the subjective experience of stress and potentially changes affective regulation through mechanisms of neural system coactivation. In future research, it is advisable to study neurobiological markers of the impact of support on mental states in combination with cognitive and behavioral indicators of stress management.

The global dynamics recorded in *The Mental State of the World in 2024* (Sapien Labs, 2025) deserve special attention. The report shows a significant decline in overall mental health functioning (MHQ) among young people and a progressive widening of the gap between age groups. While the average MHQ for people aged 55+ is 101, for the 18–34-year-old generation, this figure drops to 38. This discrepancy demonstrates a crisis in the mental adaptability of young people and indicates structural changes in their ability to interact, self-regulate, and cognitively function (Table 3).

Particularly alarming is that the main symptoms that prevail among young people are directly related to the social and emotional dimension: obsessive thoughts, guilt, anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and a sense of alienation from reality. In addition, young people have significantly higher levels of such disorders as aggression, loss of impulse control, sleep disturbances, and difficulties with planning and concentration. This makes self-realization more difficult and directly affects the ability to form quality interpersonal relationships and demonstrate leadership skills.

Table 3

The Most Common Psycho-functional Difficulties Among Young People (18-34 Years Old) Compared to the 55+ Group

Symptom / Function	Frequency among young people (%)	Multiple growth in relation to 55+
Planning and organization	42%	×5.4
Speech and communication	39%	×5.2
Focus and concentration	45%	×5.1
Emotional stability	47%	×4.8
Impulsivity and self-control	40%	×4.7
Social interactions and cooperation	38%	×4.5
Self-esteem and confidence	46%	×4.3
Feeling of alienation from reality	34%	×4.2
Anxiety and fear	51%	×3.9
Fluctuating mood (emotional lability)	49%	×3.8

Source: compiled from Sapien Labs (2025)

These symptoms have a direct impact on the quality of communication, stress tolerance, emotional self-regulation, and motivation, which are critical factors for successful adaptation in educational, professional, and social environments. A deterioration in these characteristics

indicates a potential weakening of young people's ability to function in complex environments that place high demands on psychological mobility.

Modern social factors have a decisive impact on mental state, behavior, leadership development, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Society, as well as its social structures, level of support, degree of integration and expected norms of behavior, determines the basic mechanisms of adaptation of an individual in the social environment. This influence is realized both at the level of psycho-emotional background and within the framework of specific everyday decisions and actions of a person.

Social support serves as a key buffer against the effects of stress and emotional exhaustion. Decreased levels of support are associated with increased anxiety, depressive symptoms, decreased self-confidence, and unstable emotional reactivity. High levels of support from family, significant others, or communities are associated with increased positive affect, self-regulation, and stable social behavior. Interpersonal interactions based on mutual trust and acceptance create the basis for responsible behavior.

In addition, the development of leadership qualities largely depends on the social context. Stimulation of initiative, responsibility, and autonomy is possible only under conditions of emotional security and social recognition. Instead, in the absence of social support and under conditions of increased stress, a person demonstrates loss of control, passivity, avoidance of responsibility, and reduced confidence in their own abilities. Leadership development should be viewed as a derivative of quality social interaction, not solely as an individual ability.

The global data complement the model according to which a decline in perceived support and an increase in the stressfulness of the environment leads to a deterioration in mental health and a systemic loss of key functions necessary for the formation of a mature and socially active personality. This should be a signal to reorient modern mental health policies from purely therapeutic approaches to preventive and structural interventions that take into account generational specifics.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate the key role of the social environment in shaping the mental state, behavior, interpersonal interaction and development of leadership qualities of an individual. This conclusion is relevant in the context of global approaches to the analysis of social impact, within the framework of inclusive development models. According to de Mesa and Cecchini (2022), social security and the level of social inclusion determine an individual's ability to adapt to difficult socioeconomic conditions. This is also confirmed by Shadare (2022), who argues that without a proper social support system, society faces dysfunctions in the formation of sustainable behavioral patterns.

The development of social skills and interpersonal strategies in an unstable environment is especially critical for vulnerable groups, such as young people and representatives of the flexible labor market. Uchiyama et al. (2022) emphasize that insufficient access to social protection in the gig economy leads to a deterioration in psycho-emotional well-being and a weakening of collective interaction. In turn, Paras (2022) emphasizes the transformation of social perceptions of the role of women in society, which directly affects the expansion of leadership opportunities and the change of interpersonal roles. The study of behavioral patterns in Society 5.0 by Mertanti and Sanica (2022) shows that social trends of digitalization

lead to the fragmentation of ties and the formation of new patterns of personal behavior, which is consistent with our findings of a decrease in the depth of social interaction among young people.

In terms of building social protection systems in times of crisis, the work of Aurino and Giunti (2022) deserves special attention, which notes that access to structured support is an important factor in the development of psychosocial competence in children and adolescents. This conclusion has conceptual similarities with the results of our study on the mediating effect of the social environment on youth mental health. In addition, Zhang et al. (2022) demonstrate the link between the quality of the institutional environment and the effectiveness of government programs, which is directly reflected in the subjective perception of support from society. Additional evidence is provided by the analysis of Jahid et al. (2023), which indicates the importance of institutional trust for functioning mechanisms for citizens' self-realization.

Of particular interest are studies that analyze the impact of institutional factors on behavioral economics. Sendra-Pons et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of the institutional environment for the formation of initiative, entrepreneurship, and social activity. A similar position is supported by Pinho and de Lurdes Martins (2020), who point out the close relationship between social opportunities, system openness, and personal potential development. These provisions logically complement our findings on social support as a basis for leadership development. There is a general tendency in the literature to interpret the social environment not as a background but as an active agent of socialization, adaptation, and self-development.

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that the results confirm the key provisions of modern scientific theories and complement them with unique empirical material on age differences in the perception of support and its impact on psycho-emotional functioning. It is shown that the effective interaction between social factors, institutional support and internal resources of the individual is a prerequisite for the formation of emotional stability, social activity and the ability to behave constructively in conditions of high social turbulence. It opens up prospects for integrating the results of the study into models of psychosocial intervention and educational programs for the development of leadership, self-regulation and communication competence.

Conclusion

The study found that the social environment is a significant determinant of the mental state, behavioral strategies, and development of personal characteristics of an individual, leadership skills, and interpersonal effectiveness. Social support, especially from family and significant others, has an indirect effect on the psychoemotional state by reducing the level of perceived stress, which allows for an increase in positive affect and a decrease in anxiety and depressive symptoms. The results indicate a decline in the quality of social interaction among young people, accompanied by an increase in psychological and functional difficulties, including concentration, emotional stability, self-esteem, and communication skills. Thus, social fragmentation in the context of digital influence creates new challenges for maintaining the psychological stability of an individual.

It is proved that perceived stress is a key mediator between social factors and affective regulation, and the degree of influence depends on the quality and source of social support. The data also confirm that young people show a significant increase in symptoms associated with emotional exhaustion, impulsivity, loss of self-control, and reduced ability to lead. These aspects point to the need to develop socially oriented psychoprophylactic measures aimed at restoring social connection, strengthening supportive environments, and building psychological resilience. The results obtained are the basis for the development of interdisciplinary approaches to preserving the mental health of young people in the context of growing social challenges.

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