



Exploring Family Perceived Social Support in Shaping and Sustaining Academic Achievement among High-Achieving Students: A Phenomenological Study

Bentar Putra Anggara*, Ira Darmawanti

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Email : bentar.22054@mhs.unesa.ac.id

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v5i3.2125>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Perceived Social Support, Family Support, Academic Achievement

*Corresponding Author

This study aims to explore in depth how students perceive family social support in shaping and sustaining their academic achievement. Employing a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, the study involved five high-achieving senior high school students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted twice with each participant, supported by observation and documentation, and analyzed using phenomenological analysis, including data reduction, identification of significant statements, thematic clustering, and synthesis of essential meanings. The findings reveal that family social support is perceived as a critical psychological experience that contributes to the maintenance of academic achievement. Four major themes emerged: emotional support as a source of psychological safety, appraisal support as reinforcement of academic self-confidence, informational support as adaptive guidance fostering self-regulation, and instrumental support as a symbol of family commitment to education. These findings imply that family support functions as a protective and facilitative system that not only enhances students' academic performance but also sustains their motivation and psychological well-being.

Article History:

Received: January 2026; Revised: February 2026; Accepted: March 2026

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Anggara, B. P., & Darmawanti, I. (2026). Exploring Family Perceived Social Support in Shaping and Sustaining Academic Achievement among High-Achieving Students: A Phenomenological Study. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 5(3), 2590-2601.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human need that plays a crucial role in shaping individual development and societal progress. In contemporary society, academic achievement has become one of the primary indicators used to evaluate educational success and future opportunities. Students are increasingly expected not only to master cognitive competencies but also to demonstrate emotional and social adaptability within competitive academic environments. Schools function as an extension of the family environment, serving as a bridge between early socialization at home and broader societal engagement (Sindyani et al., 2025).

Therefore, the role of the family remains central in supporting students' educational journeys. Evidence suggests that students who receive consistent support from their families tend to exhibit higher motivation and better academic outcomes (Fredy et al., 2022). This indicates that academic success is not solely determined by individual ability, but also by the quality of social support systems surrounding the student. Thus, understanding the dynamics of family support becomes essential in improving educational outcomes.

Despite the recognized importance of education, not all students are able to achieve optimal academic performance. One of the major challenges faced by students is the lack of adequate support from their immediate social environment, particularly the family. Variations in parenting styles, communication patterns, economic conditions, and parental involvement often lead to differences in students' learning experiences and outcomes (Rushertanto et al., 2025). In some cases, students experience low motivation, academic stress, and poor self-regulation due to insufficient emotional and instrumental support. Additionally, family environments that are not conducive such as those characterized by conflict, lack of attention, or limited resources can negatively affect students' academic performance (Dewi et al., 2024). These conditions highlight a significant problem in the educational context, where disparities in family support contribute to unequal academic achievement among students. Therefore, examining how family support influences academic success is critical to addressing this issue.

Empirical observations in educational settings indicate that high-achieving students often come from family environments that provide consistent and meaningful support. Students frequently report that emotional stability at home, open communication with parents, and access to learning resources significantly influence their ability to maintain academic performance. A calm and supportive home environment has been shown to enhance concentration and reduce academic stress (Fitria & Homepage, 2025). Conversely, students who experience family tension or lack of parental involvement often struggle with focus and motivation. Furthermore, economic factors play a role in determining access to educational resources, such as books, technology, and private tutoring. However, it is not merely the availability of resources that matters, but how students perceive the support provided by their families. This phenomenon suggests that perceived social support may be a key factor influencing students' academic resilience and sustained achievement.

Previous studies have consistently emphasized the importance of family support in influencing students' academic achievement. Family support has been conceptualized as encompassing emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal dimensions, each contributing differently to students' learning processes (Elfida, 2025). Research indicates that emotional support helps reduce stress and enhances psychological well-being, while informational support

provides guidance in academic decision-making (Sari et al., 2025). Instrumental support, such as providing learning facilities, has also been linked to improved academic outcomes. Additionally, parental expectations and involvement have been identified as significant predictors of student achievement (Fredy et al., 2022). These findings suggest that family plays a multifaceted role in shaping students' academic success. However, most of these studies focus on the direct effects of family support, rather than how students subjectively interpret and internalize such support.

Although existing research has established a strong relationship between family support and academic achievement, there are notable limitations in the current literature. Many studies adopt quantitative approaches that measure support using standardized instruments, thereby overlooking the subjective experiences of students. This creates a gap in understanding how students perceive and assign meaning to the support they receive. Furthermore, limited research has specifically focused on high-achieving students and how they sustain their academic performance over time. The concept of perceived social support, which emphasizes individuals' perceptions of available support rather than objective measures, remains underexplored in the context of academic achievement (Febrian, 2023). This gap is significant because perception plays a critical role in shaping motivation, self-confidence, and self-regulation. Therefore, a qualitative exploration of students' lived experiences is necessary to provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

This study offers a novel contribution by adopting a phenomenological approach to explore students' lived experiences in perceiving family social support. Unlike previous studies that primarily rely on quantitative methods, this research focuses on the subjective meaning-making processes of high-achieving students. By examining how students interpret emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support, this study provides a more holistic understanding of the role of family in academic achievement. The integration of perceived social support theory with phenomenological analysis allows for a deeper exploration of psychological experiences that influence academic resilience. This approach not only highlights the complexity of family support but also emphasizes its role as a protective and facilitative system. Consequently, this study contributes to the advancement of educational psychology by bridging the gap between theoretical constructs and lived experiences.

Based on the identified gaps, this study seeks to answer the following research problem: how do high-achieving students perceive and interpret family social support in shaping and sustaining their academic achievement? It is argued that perceived social support from family functions as a critical psychological mechanism that influences students' motivation, self-confidence, and self-regulation. Students who perceive strong family support are more likely

to develop resilience and maintain consistent academic performance. Conversely, low perceived support may hinder students' ability to cope with academic challenges. By addressing this research problem, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of family support from the students' perspective. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective educational strategies that involve families as key partners in supporting students' academic success.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of high-achieving students in perceiving family social support in shaping and sustaining their academic achievement. The phenomenological approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of how individuals interpret and assign meaning to their direct experiences within everyday contexts (Sugiyono, 2021). This design is particularly suitable for examining perceived social support, as it focuses not only on the presence of support but also on how it is subjectively experienced by individuals. Through this approach, the study aims to capture the essence of students' experiences in interpreting emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support provided by their families, and how these dimensions influence their academic resilience and performance.

This research was conducted as a field study, where data were collected directly from participants through intensive and sustained interaction. The study took place in a senior high school context, chosen due to its relevance in representing students who are actively engaged in academic competition and performance demands. The participants consisted of high-achieving students selected through purposive sampling, with criteria including consistent academic performance and the ability to articulate their experiences regarding family support. The selection of this context and participants was based on the assumption that high-achieving students are more likely to provide rich and reflective insights into how family support contributes to the maintenance of academic success.

Data collection was carried out using in-depth interviews as the primary technique, supported by observation and documentation. Each participant was interviewed twice, with sessions lasting approximately 15–30 minutes on different days to ensure depth and consistency of responses. The interviews aimed to explore students' subjective experiences related to family support in dealing with academic demands, stress, challenges, and efforts to maintain achievement. Observations were conducted to understand participants' behavioral responses and contextual interactions during the interview process, while documentation such as academic records and personal notes—was used to

complement and validate the data. All collected data consisted of verbal narratives and written materials reflecting the participants' lived experiences.

Data analysis was conducted using phenomenological analysis, which involved several stages: repeatedly reading the data to gain a comprehensive understanding, identifying significant statements, clustering these statements into essential themes based on dimensions of perceived social support, and constructing an essential description of the participants' experiences. The aim of this process was to uncover the essence of the lived experiences shared by the participants. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement and repeated interviews to ensure consistency of meanings, while dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the research process. Confirmability was ensured through bracketing, where the researcher consciously set aside personal assumptions to allow interpretations to emerge directly from the participants' experiences. Through these procedures, the study ensures that the findings authentically represent the phenomenon under investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The phenomenological analysis of in-depth interviews with five participants (S1–S5) revealed that family perceived social support is understood as a subjective psychological experience that plays a significant role in shaping, maintaining, and sustaining academic achievement among high-achieving students. Family support is not merely perceived as tangible assistance, but as an emotional and psychological experience that influences how students perceive themselves, manage academic pressure, and sustain their motivation to learn.

The analysis identified four major themes that represent the essence of participants' lived experiences: (1) emotional support as a source of psychological safety, (2) appraisal support as validation of effort and reinforcement of academic self-confidence, (3) informational support as adaptive guidance fostering self-regulation, and (4) instrumental support as a symbol of family commitment to education.

Emotional Support: Psychological Safety in Academic Processes

All participants perceived emotional support as a critical source of psychological safety that enables them to cope with academic pressure without feeling isolated. This support is reflected through consistent attention, non-judgmental acceptance, and emotional availability from family members.

Participants emphasized that a positive home environment significantly influences their emotional stability and learning focus. For instance, S1 stated that a conducive home atmosphere enhances concentration, while S2 highlighted the importance of open communication without fear of judgment. Similarly, S3 expressed that the absence of excessive demands allows them to embrace failure as part of the learning process. Although S4 and S5 described more dynamic home environments, they still perceived their families as a source of emotional reassurance. Overall, emotional support is experienced not through direct solutions, but through empathy, presence, and active listening, forming a foundation for emotional stability in academic life.

Appraisal Support: Validation of Effort and Strengthening Self-Confidence

Appraisal support was consistently interpreted as recognition of students' efforts rather than solely their academic outcomes. Participants reported that families provide appreciation through simple affirmations, acceptance of failure, and acknowledgment of hard work. This form of support fosters a positive psychological experience, where students feel valued beyond their academic performance. As expressed by S2 and S3, family appreciation enhances their confidence and encourages persistence in learning. Moreover, appraisal support contributes to the development of academic self-confidence by creating a sense of psychological safety. Students become more willing to face challenges and view failure as part of the learning process rather than as a threat to self-worth. Thus, appraisal support functions as both emotional validation and a protective factor that sustains motivation and resilience in academic contexts.

Informational Support: Adaptive Guidance and Self-Regulation Development

Informational support was perceived as adaptive, dialogical guidance that respects students' autonomy. Rather than imposing strict control, families provide suggestions, engage in discussions, and offer perspectives that help students make informed academic decisions. Participants described how such guidance supports them in setting goals, managing time, and prioritizing tasks. For example, S1 and S2 emphasized that parental advice allows them to think more systematically while maintaining independence in decision-making. Additionally, informational support contributes to the development of self-regulation, as students internalize learning strategies and become more responsible for their academic progress. This support also includes guidance on maintaining emotional balance, as families encourage students to manage stress and avoid burnout. Consequently, informational support acts as psychological

scaffolding that enhances both clarity of direction and self-regulatory capacity.

Instrumental Support: Learning Facilities as a Symbol of Commitment

Instrumental support was interpreted as a tangible expression of family care and commitment to education. Participants viewed the provision of learning facilities such as study spaces, educational materials, and financial support not merely as material assistance, but as a symbolic investment in their future. S1 and S3 highlighted that a comfortable learning environment improves focus and reinforces the perception that education is a family priority. Meanwhile, S2 emphasized that even modest support is meaningful when it reflects consistent effort from the family. Importantly, several participants noted that the quality of the home environment, rather than the quantity of resources, plays a more significant role in supporting learning. A stable, supportive, and low-conflict atmosphere contributes to psychological comfort, which in turn enhances concentration and academic performance. Thus, instrumental support carries both practical and symbolic significance in students' academic experiences.

Overall, the findings indicate that family perceived social support operates as a holistic support system that strengthens academic resilience among high-achieving students. The four dimensions of support emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental interact dynamically to create a supportive environment that fosters psychological well-being, self-confidence, and self-regulation. Rather than being experienced as pressure, family support is perceived as a source of security, validation, and empowerment. These findings suggest that academic success is not solely an individual achievement, but is deeply rooted in meaningful and supportive family relationships.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that family perceived social support plays a fundamental role in shaping and sustaining academic achievement among high-achieving students. Family support is not merely understood as external assistance, but as a psychological experience that contributes to the development of emotional security, self-confidence, self-regulation, and academic responsibility. This suggests that academic success is constructed through a dynamic interaction between individual capabilities and the quality of family relationships. In this context, students who perceive strong support from their families are more likely to develop resilience and maintain consistent academic performance, indicating that relational factors are integral to academic success (Khofsah, 2025; Syafiih, 2025).

From a phenomenological perspective, emotional support emerges as the foundational element in students' academic experiences. Participants consistently described the presence of emotionally supportive family environments as a source of psychological safety that enables them to cope with academic pressures without significant emotional distress. This aligns with the concept of perceived social support, which emphasizes that individuals' perceptions of available emotional support significantly influence their psychological well-being and performance (Rahman, 2026; Shoha, 2026). The sense of security experienced by students functions as a protective buffer against academic stress, allowing them to maintain focus and emotional stability in demanding learning situations.

In addition to emotional support, appraisal support is interpreted as the validation of effort rather than the evaluation of outcomes. This finding supports the principles of self-determination theory, which posits that recognition of effort enhances intrinsic motivation and promotes sustained engagement in learning (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Holidi, 2025). When students feel that their efforts are acknowledged and appreciated, they are more likely to develop positive self-perceptions and long-term learning orientations. Moreover, appraisal support reduces the risk of maladaptive perfectionism, which is often associated with high academic expectations. By emphasizing process over results, families create a psychologically safe environment that encourages persistence and adaptive coping strategies.

The role of informational support further highlights the importance of adaptive guidance in fostering students' academic self-regulation. Participants described how family members provide advice, engage in discussions, and offer perspectives without imposing rigid control, thereby preserving students' autonomy. This type of support aligns with the notion that effective informational support enhances individuals' problem-solving capacities rather than dictating decisions (Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Manshur, 2026). As a result, students develop the ability to manage their time, set priorities, and regulate their learning behaviors independently. Informational support, therefore, acts as a form of cognitive scaffolding that strengthens both decision-making skills and self-regulatory competence.

Instrumental support, such as the provision of learning resources and a conducive study environment, is perceived as a symbolic representation of family commitment to education. Participants emphasized that the meaning of such support lies not in the quantity of resources, but in the intention and consistency behind them. This finding is consistent with previous research

suggesting that instrumental support contributes to academic success when it is perceived as an expression of care and encouragement rather than pressure (Kusumawati, 2025). In this sense, instrumental support reinforces students' motivation and sense of responsibility, as they interpret it as a form of trust and investment in their future.

Overall, the findings indicate that family perceived social support functions as a holistic support system that fosters academic resilience among high-achieving students. Emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental support operate in an integrated manner, creating a psychologically supportive environment that enhances well-being, motivation, and sustained academic performance. These results underscore that academic achievement is not solely determined by cognitive ability, but is deeply rooted in meaningful relational experiences within the family. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of involving families as active partners in education, emphasizing not only academic outcomes but also the psychological well-being and developmental processes of students (Rofiki & Badriyati, 2025; Tohet, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this phenomenological study highlight that family perceived social support plays a crucial role in shaping and sustaining the academic achievement of high-achieving students. The most important insight derived from this research is that family support is not merely experienced as tangible assistance, but as a meaningful psychological resource that fosters emotional security, validates effort, strengthens self-confidence, and guides academic behavior. Four key forms of support were identified—emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental—which collectively function as an integrated system that enhances students' academic resilience and long-term motivation. This study contributes to the field of educational psychology by providing a deeper understanding of how perceived social support operates at a subjective level, emphasizing that academic success is not solely driven by cognitive ability but is also rooted in relational and psychological experiences within the family context.

However, this study is not without limitations. The small number of participants and the focus on high-achieving students limit the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. Additionally, the phenomenological approach prioritizes depth over breadth, which may not capture the full diversity of family support experiences across different socio-cultural contexts. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, as well as to integrate mixed-method approaches to validate

and expand these findings. Further studies may also explore the role of other social support systems, such as peers and teachers, in complementing family support in shaping students' academic achievement.

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