

A Review on the Impact of Family Factors on Adolescence's Anxiety

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Abstract: Teenagers are more likely to experience anxiety, which affects their general well-being, academic achievement, and social skills. Anxiety can be characterised by tension, uneasiness, and bodily manifestations like panic attacks and insomnia. This study investigates how parents' emotion stability, family economic position, and parenting methods affect teenage anxiety. According to research, understanding and supporting parents greatly lowers children's anxiety levels, whereas having strict or overly protective parents raises them. Furthermore, self-esteem and self-concept significantly influence social anxiety. Gender differences are evident, as females typically experience higher anxiety than males. The implication of the results is that there should be a focus on anxiety among adolescent females. The study suggests promoting positive parent-child communication, encouraging adolescents to develop hobbies and engage in social interactions, and ensuring parents maintain emotional stability. Although the study primarily uses self-reported data, highlighting the strong impact of family dynamics on adolescent anxiety, it suggests the necessity for more varied research methods and larger sample sizes in future research.

Keywords: Anxiety, Family factors, Parenting style

1. Introduction

The pressures of life have increasingly intensified along with society's continued development. Many teenagers are under increased psychological pressure to adjust to the rapid development and changes, with anxiety being a prominent worry that has attracted a lot of attention and research. Anxiety is a mental condition brought on by a person's perception of current challenges or impending dangers. Anxiety is typically accompanied by a range of physiological and behavioural reactions, including restlessness, tension, elevated alertness, avoidance, and dread; symptoms may also include nausea, sleeplessness, obsessive behaviours, and panic episodes [1]. Anxiety has a significant negative impact on adolescents' social skills, academic achievement, and general sense of well-being.

Family factors are closely tied to anxiety symptoms in adolescents. Since birth, the family environment has been the longest and most influential context for an adolescent's physical and psychological development [2]. Within the family, parenting styles, economic conditions, and the emotional stability of parents significantly affect adolescent anxiety. Research has shown that parenting styles play a critical role in the development and persistence of anxiety in adolescents [3]. Moreover, adolescents' perceptions of their family's economic status notably impact various aspects of their mental health, including somatization, anxiety, depression, and tendencies toward psychosis

[4]. Additionally, studies have found that parental violence and anxiety contribute to bullying and conflicts with elders, which can lead to adolescents becoming victims of bullying [5].

2. Family factors and anxiety

Drawing from the aforementioned data, this research delves into the family characteristics that influence teenage anxiety. Specifically, it examines the effects of parental emotional stability, family economic status, and upbringing methods on adolescent anxiety.

The elements influencing social anxiety from a self-perspective have been studied in earlier studies. The definitions of self-esteem, self-concept, and social anxiety are presented in Wang Haiping's study, which also examines the mediating function of self-concept in the link between social anxiety and self-esteem. The study focuses on the social anxiety problems of middle school children [6].

The research utilized self-esteem scales, self-concept scales, and adolescent social anxiety scales, with 409 middle school students from three schools in Hanzhong and Baoji participating as subjects. Data integration and analysis were performed using SPSS 25.0.

The findings are as follows:

For Self-Esteem Levels:

Middle school students generally display high levels of self-esteem. However, there is a notable gender difference, with boys having significantly higher self-esteem than girls.

Academic performance also significantly affects self-esteem levels. Students with better academic performance exhibit higher self-esteem compared to those with lower academic performance.

As for Self-Concept:

Junior high school students have higher scores in overall self-concept and in the dimensions of "physical, psychological, social self, and self-satisfaction" than high school students. High school students, on the other hand, score higher in the "self-criticism" dimension, likely due to their advanced cognitive development and more mature self-assessment.

Urban middle school students score higher in the negative self-concept dimension of "self-criticism" compared to their rural counterparts, which is linked to differences in parental education styles. Regarding social anxiety:

Middle school students' social anxiety levels are not high overall, with the highest scores in "fear of negative evaluation," related to the heightened sensitivity and self-focus of adolescents entering puberty.

Girls score significantly higher than boys in "fear of negative evaluation," likely due to different cultural expectations for boys and girls.

Anxiety levels in second-year high school students are significantly higher than those in junior high school, with first-year high school students showing significantly higher anxiety levels than second-year junior high students, related to the adaptation to new learning environments.

The following relationships were observed:

There is a negative correlation between self-concept and social anxiety levels in middle school students.

Self-esteem levels are negatively correlated with negative dimensions of self-concept and positively correlated with positive dimensions.

There is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety [6].

Regression analysis results show:

1. Self-concept can effectively predict social anxiety levels.
2. Self-esteem levels can effectively predict self-concept.
3. Self-esteem can predict social anxiety levels well.

Based on these results, certain educational strategies can be implemented to alleviate the issues:

To support the development of students' self-awareness, it is essential to enhance their self-recognition and self-esteem. Schools should strengthen mental health education and provide comprehensive psychological counseling. Additionally, educators should guide students to approach social interactions with a relaxed mindset to help them overcome anxiety [6].

Future research is necessary to overcome the study's weaknesses, which include a single research approach, an uneven distribution of survey respondents, and comparatively limited research material [6].

Furthermore, studies have examined how personality and familial variables contribute to anxiety [7]. One study reviewed anxiety theories from several psychology schools over the past century and focused on the association between personality factors and parental upbringing styles in high school students' exam anxiety. This study used literature review and measurement methods, testing students from three high schools in Henan Province using the Test Anxiety Scale (TAS), the Parental Upbringing Style Evaluation Scale (EMBU), and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Short Scale Chinese Version (EPQ-RSC), along with a general personal questionnaire. Data analysis and statistics were performed using SPSS (10.0) for Windows [7].

The study concluded:

There is a high detection rate of severe anxiety among students, with significant levels of test anxiety overall. Girls are more susceptible to anxiety and test anxiety compared to boys, which may be influenced by societal gender roles. Anxiety levels are closely linked to parental upbringing styles and personality traits. Girls often experience more parental favoritism, while boys are more likely to face over-interference, over-protection, and strictness from their fathers. Fathers in urban areas tend to be more over-interfering [7].

Higher academic performance is associated with lower levels of test anxiety. Warm and understanding parent-child relationships are effective in reducing anxiety and improving academic performance. Compared to those with moderate and severe anxiety, individuals with mild anxiety perceive greater parental emotional warmth and understanding. They tend to have extroverted, easygoing, optimistic, sociable, and emotionally stable personalities and receive sufficient respect from their parents. Conversely, individuals with severe anxiety perceive less parental emotional warmth and understanding and experience more punishment, denial, and over-protection.

Parents' respect for adolescents' independence supports the development of their personalities and effectively reduces anxiety in high school students [7].

Further research could investigate the relationship between women's psychological characteristics, societal roles, and anxiety, and the impact of family structure on personality.

Another study explored the relationship between parent-child communication, self-esteem, and social anxiety in left-behind adolescents through a tracking study. The research highlighted the phenomenon of left-behind adolescents, defining parent-child communication, self-esteem, and social anxiety, and measuring their interrelationships. Using parent-child communication scales, social anxiety scales, and self-esteem scales, the study surveyed first-year middle school students in nine schools in Hunan Province. Data were processed and analyzed using SPSS.20, leading to the following conclusions:

There are significant differences in parent-child communication, self-esteem, and social anxiety between left-behind and non-left-behind adolescents.

Left-behind adolescents exhibit higher levels of social anxiety and lower levels of parent-child communication and self-esteem compared to non-left-behind adolescents [8]. Over time, parent-child communication and self-esteem levels decrease while social anxiety levels increase, indicating the profound impact of being left behind on adolescents' current and future development.

There are significant gender differences in self-esteem, with boys having higher self-esteem than girls.

Self-esteem mediates the relationship between parent-child communication and social anxiety, with parent-child communication influencing social anxiety levels through its impact on self-esteem [8].

However, the study has several limitations, including the short duration of tracking (only one year), the subjective nature of questionnaire-based methods, and participant attrition. Future research should consider long-term tracking, use more objective investigation methods, and increase sample size to improve accuracy [8].

Additionally, a study on adolescents relocated due to poverty alleviation examined the effects of self-compassion and cognitive reappraisal on social anxiety [9]. This study, focusing on a relocation school in Guizhou Province, used self-compassion scales, interaction anxiety scales, and emotion regulation scales, with statistical analysis performed using SPSS23.0 and Mplus7.4. The conclusions were:

Significant gender differences in social anxiety, with higher levels in girls.

Lower self-compassion scores for second-year junior high students compared to other grades, but no significant grade differences in cognitive reappraisal and social anxiety [9].

Boarding students had higher self-compassion scores than day students.

Adolescents relocated due to poverty alleviation showed three potential social anxiety categories: "socially friendly group," "socially normal group," and "socially challenged group."

This study suggests that special attention should be given to the self-compassion of relocated adolescents, encouraging and supporting them to build confidence, providing a caring environment, and promoting communication and social interaction [9].

While the study provides valuable insights into adolescent anxiety, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations to interpret the findings judiciously. One notable constraint is the restricted range of the sample size, which could potentially limit the generalizability of the results. A larger and more diverse sample would provide a broader spectrum of perspectives and experiences, enhancing the robustness of the conclusions drawn.

Moreover, the study encountered challenges related to the instability of group counseling sessions, attributed to uncontrollable external factors. These unforeseen circumstances may have introduced variability in the intervention delivery and participant engagement, thus impacting the efficacy of the counseling approach. Addressing such unpredictabilities in future research endeavors is crucial for ensuring consistency and reliability in the intervention implementation process.

These studies delve into the intricate relationship dynamics between multiple factors and adolescent anxiety. They emphasize the profound influence of self-esteem on anxiety levels, with a notable gender discrepancy revealing that girls often grapple with higher levels of anxiety compared to boys, possibly stemming from entrenched societal gender norms. This underscores the imperative for educators to actively foster strategies that bolster self-esteem, self-concept, and self-compassion among adolescents, thus counteracting the detrimental effects of traditional gender roles on mental well-being [9].

Moreover, the research underscores the pivotal role of familial support in mitigating anxiety levels. Nurturing and empathetic parental relationships emerge as significant buffers against anxiety, correlating positively with enhanced academic performance. Hence, nurturing such supportive family environments becomes paramount in safeguarding adolescents' mental health. Educating parents about the profound benefits of fostering emotional warmth and respecting their children's autonomy emerges as a critical intervention strategy, fostering the development of resilient personality traits and reducing anxiety levels.

To bolster the credibility and applicability of these findings, future research endeavors should diversify methodological approaches. Employing a broader array of research methodologies will enhance objectivity and accuracy, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted

factors impacting adolescent anxiety. Furthermore, augmenting sample sizes will bolster the reliability and generalizability of research outcomes, affording a deeper insight into the intricate nuances of adolescent anxiety.

In essence, addressing the intricate interplay of factors shaping adolescent anxiety, including self-esteem and gender-specific pressures, is imperative. It calls for concerted efforts from educators and parents to cultivate supportive environments that nurture adolescent well-being. Concurrently, advancing research methodologies and expanding sample sizes remain pivotal in unraveling the complexities of adolescent anxiety and devising effective intervention strategies.

3. Conclusion

This study found that family factors significantly impact adolescent anxiety, with parental upbringing styles, family economic status, and parental emotional stability all being significantly correlated with adolescent anxiety. Unlike many contemporary social causes of adolescent anxiety, family factors are crucial due to the prolonged exposure to the family environment.

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