

Research about the Interaction and Interplay Between Parental Psychological Control and the Comorbidity of Depression and PTSD

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Abstract: Different from parental behavioral control, parental psychological control is mostly identified as a bad thing to children. Parental psychological control may make children have some internalizing problems, like depressive symptoms. In psychiatry, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is probably comorbid with depression. This essay will use literature review to study if parental psychological control itself is a kind of PTSD, how the comorbidity of depression and PTSD interact and interplay with parental psychological control, and what can people do to help parents reduce psychological control. Mother's psychological control often stronger than father's. Psychological control is also associated with some unhealth developmental problems. Parent and children's characteristics and children's behavior are probable sources of parental psychological control's happening. This essay will show two ways which children respond to parental psychological control. Their also have some advice to reduce parental psychological control.

Keywords: parental psychological control, depression, PTSD, comorbidity, developmental elements

1. Introduction

Children's growth needs parent's guidance and specification. It is necessary for parent to constraint and control their children to a certain degree. Most researches show that parental behavioral control has advantages for children's development. However, parental psychological control is proved to be bad for children's physical and psychological health. Parental psychological control refers to manipulating the psychological world of adolescents through guilt induction, love withdrawal, and other strategies, forcing adolescents to feel, think and act in a way consistent with their parents' own feelings, thoughts and behaviors [1]. Serious parental psychological control will hurt children so much inside. It may become post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to children and result in depressive symptoms. Sometimes, PTSD is comorbid with depression. However, Depression and PTSD have some symptoms in common, and many doctors fail to be diagnosed with the comorbidity of depression and PTSD. There has a report said that depression maybe a kind of consequence of PTSD, and PTSD often happens earlier than depression [2]. This essay's point is that parental psychological control is a kind of PTSD for children and study how it is comorbid with depression, and their

interaction and interplay. The essay counts five parts. In the first part, it will compare mother and father's psychological control, and study the effects' differences between boys and girls. Then, it studies some possible sources of parental psychological control. In the third part, it lists some developmental field elements which cause unhealth consequence on children, and finds their relationships with parental psychological control. In the fourth part, the essay lists two ways which children respond to psychological control. At last, it will make conclusions and give some suggestions.

2. Parental Psychological Control's Gender Differences

Most children live with their parents, so they are easy to be influenced by their parents. It should be known that if children live in a controlling family, they are more likely to have psychological and psychopathic problems if their parents impose excessive psychological control on them. Some researches show differences of mother and father's psychological control. In general, mother uses psychological control to children is more and stronger than father [3]. One of the reasons is that in modern society, mothers are still the children's main caregivers. They spend more time with children than fathers, which makes bigger influence on children, and they have more chance to conduct psychological controlling practices to children [3,4]. Parental psychological control may cause unhealth mental problems, especially depressive symptoms. Both mother and father's psychological control are associated with children's internalization, typically depressive symptoms [5], but mother's is stronger than father's [3,6]. Research shows that father and mother use more psychological control on boy rather than girl [5]. Boys also feel more parental psychological control than girls [4]. Most people's social common understanding on men is that men should have higher social status and more achievements. Maybe because of this, fathers always have higher expectations to boys, and their psychological control is more connected to achievement orientation [4]. An important point is that psychological control which parents use on boys and girls are similar, and have few differences [5].

3. Possible Sources of Parental Psychological Control

To study how parental psychological control associate with children's comorbidity of depression and PTSD, it is important to find possible resources which parental psychological control comes from. Here are some of them.

3.1. Children's Behavior

Children's problem behaviors make parental psychological control become stronger, and stronger psychological control may also let children have more problem behaviors than before. It is an increasing circulation. Researchers have found that parental psychological control may make children have more dangerous cyber behaviors [1]. Depressive symptoms is an intermediary factor between parental psychological control and children's problem behaviors. Parental psychological control gives children a kind of pressure and sense of bondage, which increase their depressive symptoms. The depressive symptoms may make children have higher level of illicit substance usage [1], such as substance abuse [7]. Because of repressed emotions, children need a way out to relieve their feelings, so over-eating behaviors and under-eating behaviors are used [1]. They are also ways for children to paralysis of their own from parental psychological control. Children who have higher aggressivity than peers will get their parent's more attention. In order to suppress or correct their children's aggressivity, parents may use more psychological control on them. But higher psychological control level increase children's depressive symptoms, and they may do more aggressive behaviors and criminal acts on the contrary [8]. Children's unhealth emotional problems also makes them drinking more and smoking more [1].

3.2. Parents and Children's Temperaments

3.2.1. Children's Temperaments

It should be known that children's own temperaments cannot be ignored. Temperaments are risk factors for children to face parental psychological control [6]. Parents use different rearing methods to children whose temperaments are different. Differential Susceptibility model shows that people who are more vulnerable will be affected by environment easier than common people, whether positive or negative [6]. Some children are vulnerable may because of their special genes, but some children are "trained" by the environment where they live, like high controlling family environment. Vulnerable children are more likely to suffer from parental psychological control and raise depressive symptoms. With children growing up, they want to be more independent. Their sense to parental psychological control is more sensitive. If parents want to strengthen their psychological control, children will feel more intolerant and gradually revolt their parents [9]. But parents with strong desire for control do not want their children out of their control, so they will put higher level of psychological control to their children than before. This measure aggravates children's depressive symptoms in the process of growth.

3.2.2. Parents' Temperaments

Parents and children interact each other. The using of high level parental psychological control is not only because of children's temperaments. It also due to some parents' own temperaments and development process [10]. Parents with depressive disposition are more likely to use psychological control [9, 11]. Their repressive emotions and irritability make them transfer a sense of control to their children [11]. They care less about their children, giving children more nitpick in their life. When the children are still young, they are tractable and obedient to listen to their parents. But with children's development, they show independent process and removed tendency [10, 11]. Parents who have high separation anxiety afraid their children separate from their control, which will use higher level of psychological control to avoid children leaving them and maintain their absolute status [11].

3.3. Parents' Internalization

Parents' internalization aggravates their depressive symptoms and raise their vulnerability [11]. Maybe because of their earlier experiences, parents have low self-esteem. They think they do not have enough qualification and achievements to be models to their children and educate them [11]. Their inferiority gives them a kind of panic that children may look down upon them or disobey them, so parents put psychological control on children to consolidate their authority. If parents are serious about children's academic achievement, they have perfectionism. Achievement orientation makes parents focus most on children's academic score, which lets parents use psychological control to children [10, 11]. These parents consider children's achievement as their "report card", which can show their favorable educational ability. Some parents have high self-request on themselves, which means they have more self-flagellation and self-criticism [4]. They want children as excellent as themselves, which makes them treat children more strict and use psychological control to children.

3.4. Parents' Earlier Experiences

Post traumatic experiences may cause parental psychological control [11]. These traumatic experiences, like psychological control, will potentially influence parents. Whether deliberate or not, parents "inherit" their parents' parenting style and use psychological control to discipline their children. Some parents use psychological control to children because of overprotective parenting.

They do not want their children suffer losses or have a rough time, so using parental psychological control to pave the way for children's future [11]. This damages children's exploring ability and creation.

4. Comorbidity of Depression and PTSD, Parental Psychological Control and Children's Developmental Field Elements

In this part, author studies how parental psychological control associates with PTSD and depression's comorbidity, and what it shows up in children's developmental fields. Here are some developmental elements.

4.1. Achievement Orientation

Social competition makes parents take more attention to children's academic achievement. Also, there have parents who seen children's academic achievement as their own honor, which can show their favorable parenting style. They take children's achievement as orientation, even using psychological control to force their children to study. Parents give children stressful environment, which give children much more pressure than other peers. If children do not achieve their parents' high standard, they may be punished, like being yelled, rebuked or corporal punishment. These make children scared and sad, which may gradually become PTSD for children. This invasive parental psychological control makes children take their parents' high academic standard as their own standard. If children fail to achieve the standard, they produce self-criticism [4]. It lets children feel apologetic about their parents, and this sense of guilt raise sorrowful feeling, which triggers depressive symptoms. As time passes, when parents use psychological control to children, their PTSD is aroused and may cause depression, which is comorbid with PTSD. Researches show that parental psychological control is bad for children's academic achievement [3,4,12]. Children's academic score will go down. It raises higher level of their parents' psychological control, which may cause learning helplessness [3] and more serious depressive symptoms.

4.2. Social Abilities

Some parents have separation anxiety to their children's independence or leaving. It makes them feel out of control. Children are important "things" for parents to make sure that their life is still in the right way, so some parents use psychological control to keep children close to them, especially on the psychological level. This damages children's social abilities, particularly in interpersonal relationship part. Psychological control affects relation between children and parents. It hampers children's independent development and the ability to solve problems independently, giving children an illusion that they cannot leave parents' helping, which lets children produce dependency to their parents [4, 9]. Children feel the psychological control and want to independent from their parents, but dependency gives them a chain in psychological sense, which makes them more difficult separate from their parents [4]. Parental psychological control makes children have to obey parents' requirements and achieve their standard. These conditions give children a feel that they have distances to parents, which will cause children's parent-related loneliness [13]. Parent-related loneliness and dependency are confirmed that they are associated with depressive symptoms [13]. These may be a potential PTSD hides in children's heart. Children's unhealth relationship with their parents can influence interpersonal relationship. They are easier to be thwarted, even suffer from interpersonal violence [14]. Traumatic events in interpersonal relationship raise PTSD, which caused by parental psychological control. PTSD aggravates depressive symptoms. It even develops into depression [14], and comorbid with PTSD.

4.3. Internalization and Externalization

4.3.1. Internalization

Internalization takes a large part consequence of parental psychological control. Internalization always shows depressive symptoms or depression, which has huge bad influence on children's psychological health. During adolescence, children gradually develop independent consciousness. However, parental psychological control hinders it, which makes internalized pain stronger [9]. Some parents are anxious about their children's internalized state, which let them use more psychological control to children [10]. It becomes a vicious circle, which makes children's depressive symptom level even higher. At this time, parental psychological is associated with depression as a kind of PTSD. Depression's pathological features may magnify the level of psychological control, which makes children more insupportable [1]. Dysfunctional emotion regulation will cause depression [1]. When having high depressive level, if parental psychological control as PTSD provokes children, their depression will much worse. Children who have low trait emotional intelligence do bad in adjusting emotions. Their internalized level is also higher. When they face parental psychological control, they are easier to raise depressive symptoms [15].

4.3.2. Externalization

Except for internalization, externalization is also a common parental psychological control's consequence. It has been shown that children's externalized problems and parental psychological control are mutually reinforcing. Children who have externalized problems show more problem behaviors and higher aggressivity [9]. These manifestations raise parents' anxiety and dissatisfaction, which let parents use more psychological control on children to suppress children [9]. This makes children's depressive symptoms stronger. Children who show obvious externalized behaviors badly adjust their anger [1]. Parental psychological control is like a "lead", which becomes a potential PTSD that can easily trigger children's anger and aggressive behaviors [16]. Parental psychological control will give children a sense of bondage, which causes more depressive symptoms [15].

4.4. Maladaptive Perfectionism

Parents who have achievement orientation are strict about their children and attach great importance to children's academic score. They set high standard of children's study, and in order to let children achieve the standard, parents use psychological control to their children. Psychological control, such as guilt induction and love withdrawal, makes children think that parents' love is conditional [1]. Children may construct maladaptive perfectionism to urge themselves achieve parents' expectation, by which they can obtain parents' love [1]. But researches show that parental psychological control level is inversely proportional to grades [12]. Parental psychological control and declining academic score raise children's depressive symptoms. Parental psychological control is a potential PTSD, stimulating children when they fail exams. It strengthens children's depressive level, which deepens their internalization.

5. Two Ways of Children's Response to Parental Psychological Control

Although influence factors are all parental psychological control, depression and PTSD, their conductive processes and children's responses to them are different. The author sums up two patterns.

The first pattern is that depression's relevant pathological symptoms make children more sensitive to percept their parents' psychological control. When parental psychological control as PTSD

comorbid with depression and stimulates children or become stronger, their internalized level will deepen [1,9,10], or they may be more irritable [17] and angrier [16].

The second pattern's basic condition is that parental psychological control's intensity does not change. However, depressive symptoms let children have more vigilance to their parents, that is, they may think their parents' psychological control becomes stronger than before [10]. Children will have more bias on their parents. Next time when parental psychological control raises their PTSD, the relationship between parents and children will become worse than before.

6. Conclusion

This essay studies the interaction and interplay between parental psychological control and the comorbidity of depression and PTSD. In general, parental psychological control is harmful to children's physical and psychological health. Author first explores gender differences of parental psychological control. Then, author lists four possible resources that parental psychological control may come from, which are children's behavior, parents and children's temperaments, parents' internalization and parents' earlier experiences. Next, internalization and externalization, achievement orientation, social abilities and maladaptive perfectionism are used to study how parental psychological control associates with PTSD and depression's comorbidity, and its manifestation in children's developmental fields. After that, author makes two possible patterns to show children who have comorbidity of depression and PTSD respond to parental psychological control.

In order to help children get rid of parental psychological control's negative effects, it is highly recommend for children to seek professional psychological consultants for help. Also, psychological consultants should truly guide parents to establish their ability of supporting children. This essay has some limitations. Points in essay are all universal ultimateness, which lack national characters and cultural characters. It is not appropriate for all countries and areas. Future researches should look for more suitable methods in specific areas.

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