

The Relationship Between Parenting Style and Adolescent's Depression

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Abstract: Adolescence is a critical period of an individual's development. The family factor has a profound and far-reaching influence on adolescents. The present study investigates the relationship between parental practices and adolescent depression during the crucial adolescent transitional period. The four parenting philosophies of authoritarian, permissive, authoritative, and neglectful are identified. Due to a lack of research, the neglectful parenting style is not summarized in this work. A protective factor against adolescent depression occurs in the authoritative style, which is high in control and acceptance. The authoritarian style, which values control over acceptance, on the other hand, has a negative effect on the course of depression. The permissive style produces inconsistent results in different research in different cultural backgrounds. Overall, this study highlights the important role that parenting practices have in teenage mental health and recommends specific interventions to promote well-being. Some limitations of prior research and future research directions are also discussed.

Keywords: parenting style, adolescence depression, authoritarian parenting style, permissive parenting style, authoritative parenting style

1. Introduction

Depressive disorder (Depression in short) is a common mental disease that includes not only a persistently downcast attitude, loss of enjoyment or enthusiasm in activities, and poor concentration. The WHO estimated 3.8% of the population experience depression which contributes to more than 700,000 people's death by suicide [1]. Adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood (roughly from 2 to 10 years old) to adulthood (roughly beginning from 20 years old to death) [2]. It starts with puberty and ends with physiological and neurobiological maturity [2]. Also, in this phase, people acquire mental growth, and social acceptance and seek more independence from their parents, which is a process of self-identifying. In this process, depression occurs commonly for various reasons like ignorance from parents, inharmonious relationships with friends, poor learning achievement, etc.

The aspects that determine mental resilience, based on the mental resilience model, can be separated into external and internal variables [3]. Genetics and self-esteem are examples of internal components. External impacts include both internal and external factors such as social support and parenting style. Parenting style refers to the attitudes, goals, and emotional environment in which parents raise and discipline their children. This pattern remains largely similar across settings.

Parenting style has a tremendous impact on one's current and future emotional health because parents are the primary caregivers.

Parenting styles are classified into four types: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful [4,5]. Diana Baumrind proposed the first three styles, which were based on the qualities of demandingness (control) and responsiveness (acceptance/care/warmth) [4]. Lamborn and his colleagues presented a fourth style based on the same dimension [6]. The authoritative has a high level of control and responsiveness; the authoritarian has a high level of control with a low level of responsiveness; the permissive has a low level of control with a high level of responsiveness; and the Neglectful has a low level of control with a high level of responsiveness [4,6]. Authoritative parents control their children's activities in a reasonable manner, do not restrict children, explain the reasoning behind their decisions, and value their children's opinions and desires. Authoritarian parents prioritize obedience and regulate their children's actions and attitudes in accordance with predetermined behavioral standards by punishment. They believe children should take their parents' words as truth. The permissive parents view themselves as a resource for granting all desires of their children. They affirm the wishes and behaviors of children and make minimal demands on the standards of behavior at home. The Neglectful parents are unresponsive, show no interest in their children's lives, and are emotionally distant from their children.

2. Method

The paper includes a literature review on the focus of academic research on parenting style and depression in adolescence relationship. The papers of academic research included in the literature review were selected from PubMed by searching "parenting style" AND "depression" AND "Adolescence" in the title and abstract which generates 48 results. The search was confirmed to be published between 1994 and 2023, and the language considered were Chinese and English. Due to the insufficiency of studies on the influence of neglectful parenting style on adolescent depression, this paper only reviews the effect of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles on depression.

3. Literature Review

Numerous studies have stated there is a significant correlation between those four distinct parental styles and adolescent depression.

3.1. Authoritative Parenting Style

A number of investigations found that authoritative parenting styles were connected with decreased levels of teens' depression. A cross-sectional study investigated 150 adolescences age 11-18 years old who has been diagnosed with depression [7]. The result revealed that the authoritative parenting style led to the least severity of depression. 80% of adolescents experiencing an authoritative parenting style are mild depression, 20% are moderate depression, and none of them are experiencing severe depression. While the other two types of parenting styles have led to around 40% severe depression. However, since there are only 15 subjects in the authoritative group, 75 subjects in the authoritarian group, and 50 subjects in the permissive group, the result might be biased. Another study with a larger sample size supports a similar result [8]. A study on 555 students at public high schools from grades 10 to 12 in Bekasi City shows authoritative parenting style has no effect on depression ($\beta = -0.257$, $p < 0.01$). This study also examines the impact of self-esteem as moderate and found that self-esteem has an impact on authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles which indirectly influenced the relationship with depression. In addition, a longitudinal study examining over 900 students in grades 9 to 12 with different levels of depression shows a significant correlation between

negative maternal behavior like less support and less response and depression [9]. This indicates that high control and high acceptance parenting style would result in less adolescent depression. Thus, multiple studies provide consistent evidence supporting the significant relationship of the authoritative parenting style on adolescent depression.

3.2. Authoritarian Parenting Style

A Study was conducted on 2,936 Chinese Middle school students aged around 16.7 years with 2,879 valid participants [10]. The result shows the positive parenting style with low paternal and maternal warmth and high parenteral and maternal punishment has a significant association with adolescent depression (OR=1.78, 95%CI). Since the low warmness and high control are key factors of the authoritarian parenting style, the findings suggest that the authoritarian parental style would lead to a high degree of depression. Another study on US adolescents further reinforces these findings. Similarly, the study investigated 6,483 US adolescents with a full range of psychological illness [11]. This study shows a strong correlation between maternal control (OR=2.80, CI = 95%), parental control (OR= 0.83, CI = 95%), and depression. The findings show that excessive maternal control is connected with higher levels of melancholy, anxiety, eating disorders, and behavioral disorders. Another study investigated 272 students in grades 9 and 11 in the U.S. It shows a similar result as the relationship between depression and authoritarian parental style (OR=1.91, $P<0.05$), authoritarian maternal style (OR=1.97, $P<0.05$) [12]. Apart from that, the study specifies the impact of ethnicity/race on the relationship. The ethical difference brings up the cultural difference which leads to internal differences like cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values, and external differences like poverty, prejudice, and neighborhood context, which might impact the parenting style indirectly. Nevertheless, another study conducted on adolescents aged from 12 to 17 years old has shown a similar correlation [5]. The sample was collected in US national wide and five or more depressive symptoms were detected in 80.6% of participants. This suggests that the authoritarian ways of parenting is related to depression. These consistent findings across different studies and diverse populations provide robust evidence for the detrimental impact of authoritarian parenting style and its negative influence on adolescent mental health especially when the adolescent experiences strong maternal control.

3.3. Permissive Parenting Style

One Malaysian study indicates that a permissive parenting style has a significant relationship with depression ($r=0.413$, $k<0.05$) [13]. The study examined 158 students who are between 13 and 15 years old. The results suggest parents who adopt a permissive parenting style would lead to children's depression. With too much acceptance, children might not get good guidance and advice. Furthermore, Radziszewska and his college have confirmed the result by investigating the relationship and examining the demographic variables like ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status's effect [14]. The study hired 3993 ninth-grade students in California. The permissive parenting style shows a strong relationship with depression. However, another study on 6194 Chinese students age from 11 to 20 years old suggests that maternal control has a positive correlation with depression and maternal care has a negative correlation with depression, which means low control and high care will lead to a lower level of depression [15]. In other words, A reduced incidence of depression is linked to permissive parenting style, which is different from other studies. This might be because of the difference between how parents perceive themselves to be caring for their children and how children perceive their parents to be caring. In some cases, parents control their children in the name of love, which increases the levels of depression and aggression in children. The control generates the situation that their children cannot express anger and the trait anger ultimately leads to adolescents' negative cognitive schemata that reject self and cannot express self, which reveals depression. Thus,

with different perceptions, those parents might regard their parenting style as permissive parenting style which leads to the opposite results.

4. Influencing Mechanism

Apart from the direct impact of parenting style on adolescents' depression, the parenting style might serve as a mediator which strengthens or weakens the depression symptoms. A study conducted in the U.S. on 272 grade 9 and 11 high school students has suggested that self-esteem and life satisfaction were related to different parenting styles which indirectly leads to changes in the level of depression in adolescence [12]. Among all those parenting styles, self-esteem and life satisfaction scores highest in the authoritarian parenting style which is linked with lower depression. The results are shown significantly both in maternal and paternal-dominated families and yielded a significant difference between all four types of parenting styles. There may also be additional mediators in the association between parental style and adolescent depression. For instance, peer relationships, academic achievement, stress reactivity, etc.

Furthermore, there are moderators who would play a vital role in determining the strength and direction of the relationship. For example, a Chinese study of 2,179 middle school students states that different levels of resilience have a variation in the connection with parenting styles and adolescents' depressive symptoms, albeit the interaction impact is not significant [10]. However, since this study only contained Chinese subjects, more studies in this area should be gathered all over the world to confirm the result and eliminate the impact of moderators. In addition, there are other moderators like family structure, ethnicity, gender, etc. which would shape the relationship and should be investigated.

Thus, further studies are needed to underlie and understand that influencing mechanism. With a further understanding of these mechanisms, it enables future development in targeted evidence-based interventions and support systems that consider the unique needs of diverse adolescent populations. In this way, it would provide a more efficient strategy to reduce adolescent depression and back other adolescents' emotional well-being.

5. Discussion

The general purpose of the study is to find whether there is a clear association between all of those parenting styles and adolescents' depression. The literature summary demonstrates a significant impact of these parenting styles and adolescents' depression, revealing both positive and negative.

The authoritative parenting style emerges as a protective factor, linked to lower levels of depression among adolescents. It is worth noting that, the main problem of this research in this area is that although the age group covered from 9 to 18, only one paper covers the group from 12 to 18. This paper contains only 158 subjects. The lack of presentation for certain age groups impacts the generality of the conclusion. Since adolescence is a transformative developmental stage that has significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes, the age difference might have a significant impact on the result. This suggests that this conclusion should be confirmed by more papers with various age groups and researchers should have a more comprehensive understanding of this topic.

In contrast, the authoritarian parenting style is negatively correlated with adolescent depression in several nations. Although there are few longitudinal types of research mentioned in this paper, the lack of longitudinal research is still a problem in the related studies. The relationship between parent and child depression is dynamic and complex. While understanding the effect of authoritarian parenting style and adolescents' depression needs longitudinal research which follows the subject for an extended period of time to confirm the authenticity of the parenting style that the subject reported and reduce the impact of some variables like gender, ethnicity, economic status, etc. Also, as longitudinal research has the benefit of data consistency and stability, it could help reduce measurement errors.

and increase the reliability of the finding. Furthermore, researchers could gather results in chronological order which provides further improvement for a causal relationship. Longitudinal research is therefore necessary to fully comprehend the causal link between those two variables.

According to several studies, the permissive parenting approach, which promotes high acceptance but lacks the necessary direction and discipline, is also linked to higher rates of depression. However, disparities were discovered in a Chinese study that explored the interaction between depression and children's cognition of parental control and care. More studies are required to identify the impact of culture on permissive parenting style and adolescent depression because studies authored by researchers in different nations with diverse cultures reach inconsistent conclusions. A more comprehensive view of the issue would be offered with additional international research on permissive parenting style and adolescent depression. With more investigations in this area, it may be possible to develop interventions and support systems that are more culturally responsive by investigating how permissive parenting practices and their effects on teenage mental health vary across different cultural backgrounds.

As the study has shown, there is a clear link between parenting approaches and adolescent depression, it has laid a foundation for studies of further intervention. A study in Mahshahr City applied educational intervention to mothers with children aged 12 to 16 [16]. After the intervention, the mother successfully helped their child handle their depression and lower the depression score. Building on the success of the educational intervention, further studies could investigate peer support groups, family therapy, adolescent resilience program, etc. Moreover, considering the importance of cultural factors, those future studies should be culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific values of different communities.

6. Conclusions

In summary, numerous studies consistently show a link between parenting practices and adolescent depression. The research shows that adolescents with an authoritative parenting style have lower rates of depression than those with an authoritarian or permissive parenting style, who have greater rates of depression.

Further investigation in the field of parenting styles and adolescent depression by exploring the mediating and moderating effects of additional individual and contextual elements may be helpful in future research of adolescent mental health protection and intervention towards depression. Additionally, more cross-sectional and longitudinal research on this subject is required to remove the dynamic influence of this complicated relationship. Furthermore, educational intervention and other interventions are needed to support adolescents' mental development and reduce the depression rate.

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