

Review on the Impact of Parental Neglect on Mental Health among Adolescents

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Abstract: Adolescence is a golden stage of personal development, but mental health at this time is easily affected by external factors. Parents have a strong influence on adolescents' mental health as direct participants in their development. This study highlights the importance of parental involvement and attention in protecting and improving adolescent mental health during this critical stage of adolescent development. This article comprehensively studies and analyses the impact of parental neglect on adolescents' mental health. Parental neglect can be categorized into aspects such as emotional neglect and maternal neglect. By enumerating, analysing, and discussing scholars' related views on this topic, this paper finds that parental neglect has an impact on both the psychological and cognitive health development of adolescents. The impacts are mainly focused on insecurity, trust issues, and depression. Based on these conclusions, this paper finds that scholars' solutions focus on family companionship, school communication, and active psychological intervention.

Keywords: Parental neglect, adolescents, mental health

1. Introduction

The complex dynamics of modern family life leads to serious problems of parental neglect. Family structures have changed significantly in recent decades, and many parents struggle with stressful work situations that leave them with less time and energy to devote to their children. In addition, in the context of economic and cultural globalisation and diversified development, a variety of parenting styles and beliefs are different, some of these may inadvertently lead parents to focus on their children's external performance and ignore their mental health development. If parents ignore adolescents' mental health at this stage, this can have a negative impact on their emotional and psychological health. The aim of the present study is to collect and analyse relevant literature to find out about the psychological problems of adolescents caused by parental neglect and possible solutions.

Currently, the literature on the impact of parental neglect on adolescent mental health is extensive. Scholars' discussions mainly focus on the reasons, impact mechanisms, and related measures. Lissak believes that under the huge economic pressure, many parents do not have time to accompany their children, resulting in obvious physical and mental changes[1]. He analysed questionnaires and emphasised that parents' inability to pay enough emotional attention during the adolescence of college students led to their exposure to psychological problems during college. Studies have demonstrated that neglect of emotional needs during childhood can have long-term adverse effects on an

individual's mental health even in adulthood. Lin et al. obtained a strong association between adolescent online game addiction and a lack of parental companionship through data analysis[2]. Molinuevo et al. believed that the allocation of extracurricular time and parental companionship could predict and promote the occurrence of adolescent depression and externalising problems[3]. And parental companionship and attention to children can effectively help adolescents overcome psychological difficulties. Left-behind children generally suffer from loneliness, and teacher-student attachment, self-esteem, and family intimacy are often the main factors that induce or amplify loneliness. Furthermore, much of the existing research has focused on severe neglect without paying enough attention to the less extreme forms of neglect that are common in many contemporary families, including abuse and depression.

Although similar research exists, more research is needed on parental neglect and its various effects on adolescent mental health. The purpose of this article is to gain a comprehensive comprehension of the topic through a systematic analysis of the literature. The focus of the review is on stakeholders in adolescent health. Explore the reasons for parental neglect and the impact of long-term neglect on adolescents' mental health, and finally provide some suggestions for adolescents, parents, educators, etc. This paper first collects and summarises the reasons why parents ignore the needs of adolescents and the categories of neglected adolescents. Secondly, this paper analyses the impact of parental neglect on adolescents' mental health. Finally, this paper summarises the relevant conclusions of scholars on measures to mitigate or eliminate the impact.

2. Parental Neglect

2.1. Neglected Categories

2.1.1. Emotional Neglect

Scholars' discussion of the emotional neglect suffered by adolescents mainly focuses on the definition of the concept and its specific manifestations. Emotional neglect is commonly understood as the lack of sufficient attention given by parents to the emotional development of adolescents as they mature [4]. The emotional neglect of adolescents by family members and parents makes it difficult for their emotional needs to be met. The main performance of parents ignoring teenagers is that they cannot give enough recognition, acceptance, and response to the emotional needs of teenagers in the long run. Based on existing discussions, Pachankis proposed that adolescents who suffer from emotional neglect will unconsciously hide and suppress their true inner feelings, resulting in more severe mental health issues [5]. It is believed that the phenomenon of emotional neglect includes parents ignoring their children's own loneliness, children's long-term lack of companionship or communication, children's character defects (too low self-esteem or pride), emotional problems in adolescence, problems with classmates, etc. In terms of severity, emotional neglect, whether subjective or objective, is one of the significant factor contributing to mental health issues, and one of several prevalent yet often unnoticed mental illnesses.

2.1.2. Material Neglect

Material neglect refers to the lack of parents' material needs for adolescents in terms of food, clothing, housing, and transportation [6]. The academic community generally believes that guardians' neglect of adolescents' material needs can also cause psychological problems. Based on the current postnatal and learning environments of adolescents, Maurizi et al. believed that the phenomenon of comparison among adolescents may have an impact on adolescents' mental health[7]. Those adolescents who are at a disadvantage in material comparisons are prone to having a sense of inferiority, and this inferiority complex will make adolescents dissatisfied with their families, resent their parents, and

even complain about social psychological problems. The lack of material will make adolescents feel the pressure from the gap between their peers in school, which will increase their psychological burden, make them resist school, and even seriously affect their learning.

2.2. Possible Causes

2.2.1. Economic Reasons

Economic pressures are one reason scholars are keen to discuss them. Family poverty makes parents have to be busy with work while neglecting their emotional needs for adolescents. Exploring this issue on a regional basis and the results pointed out that the prevalence of left-behind children is more prevalent among poor (including immigrant) families in developing and developed countries[8]. At the same time, families of left-behind children usually cannot provide them with strong material support, which also ignores the material needs of adolescents. Parents spend most of their physical energy on coping, neglecting the emotional and material needs of their teens. These parents, who typically leave early and stay late, barely have a chance to spend time with their teens, and some families have even had to send their children to boarding schools. During this period, not only will they not be able to accompany them daily, but even their verbal care for their children will be reduced. This severely impacts communication opportunities between parents and teens, thereby ignoring their needs.

2.2.2. Personal Reasons

Different scholars have different views on the reasons other than economic and social pressure. The occurrence of psychological problems mainly stems from the caregiver's relationship with the child since childhood and growing up. Psychological theory holds that the baby's experience of the relationship with the "mother" (the carer) is the original determinant of personality formation, and the baby's psychological structure is developed from the experience of the mother-infant relationship, that is, the emotional feedback of the carer. Affects the development of the infant's mental structure [9]. Everyone's judgement of himself is closely related to how he thinks others judge him, especially his parents, who have lived closely with him since he was a child. The feedback he gets from them cannot be replaced by anyone. It is necessary to regularly understand the emotional and material needs of young people, thereby creating a generational gap. In addition, students in some countries are under high pressure from competition, causing parents to focus on their children's studies or to control their lives, including special classes, additional homework, etc. This will also lead them to ignore the real psychological needs of teenagers.

3. The Effects of Parental Neglect

3.1. Lack of Security and Trust

It is widely believed in academic circles that parents' attitudes towards their children have a direct impact on the latter's mental health. Especially after a child is born, most of his sense of security is given by the presence of his parents, and teenagers in sensitive periods are more dependent on their relatives. Hughes & Golding proposed that long-term neglect or a lack of companionship can make them doubt their parents' love for them, create a sense of needing to protect oneself or fight alone, lacking a sense of security and trust [10]. And children who suffer from parental neglect may have evasion psychology due to a lack of security and even lose their sense of belonging. After long-term investigation and follow-up, Wallerstein & Lewis found that children who lack parental attention in childhood find it difficult to establish successful interpersonal relationships and maintain long-term

marriage relationships when they grow up[11]. Because they do not trust or depend on others, and they do not have the ability to love and be loved, they can only avoid the process of building a relationship by hiding their true feelings. In their daily lives, they feel that they have difficulty connecting with others, are unfulfilled, and even feel empty. This means that they can only meet the expectations of others by hiding their true feelings.

3.2. Low Self-esteem, Anxiety, and Depression

Many scholars believe that adolescence is a critical period with high psychological risk, the emotional and reward neural circuits and positive emotions of the brain develop and mature rapidly during this period, which may have a key impact on the psychosocial function of the individual throughout life [12]. Neglect experiences were associated with abnormalities in the limbic system, particularly the amygdala. The amygdala produces emotional functions and triggers a stress response that allows animals to fight or flee danger. Increased levels of amygdala activity correlate with levels of anxiety. And those children who experienced neglect had a larger amygdala volume and higher levels of anxiety. Another scholar analysed the fact that young people are less able to bear many problems and thus are more vulnerable. Parental care and companionship can help adolescents filter out many negative influences [13]. Long-term neglect from parents will expose them prematurely to things they cannot bear, which will lead to psychological problems of low self-esteem and anxiety. At the same time, parents who ignore their children's real needs are likely to suppress their children, which will easily lead to children's development of negative self-cognition, which will lead to low self-esteem and increased levels of depression.

3.3. Alienation from Parents or Rebellious Psychology

Some scholars have pointed out that adolescents who have been neglected for a long time will be depressed because they do not feel loved[14]. These teenagers are extraordinarily lonely, coupled with their long-term insecurity, resulting in insurmountable obstacles in their communication with their parents. This makes them more and more alienated from their parents. At this time, when the external requirements are too strong and the parents' education is based on harsh external behaviours, trying to establish unequal relationships or extreme education, the anxiety and pressure they feel will force the teenagers to develop rebellious psychology, which then produces compulsive behaviours and Relieves anxiety [15]. However, in the process of getting along with their children, many parents do not clearly analyse the harm of some extreme control or neglect to their children, and some even deliberately avoid treatment, ignore their children's self-esteem or self-awareness, and think that children can heal or understand themselves.

4. Measures to Mitigate or Eliminate the Impact

4.1. Precautions

4.1.1. Family Aspects

From the perspective of parents, scholars generally believe that parents realise the importance of companionship and that providing emotional value is the key to solving problems. Cline et al. pointed out that parents' active companionship and communication are essential for the process of psychological trauma [16]. As the first person responsible for the growth process of adolescents, need to maintain communication with them at all times, understand their emotional and material needs, and provide appropriate help. This helps to reconnect the child with the parent and make them feel cared for and loved. Hazan & Shaver found that adolescents who feel loved and valued tend to be

more confident and less prone to anxiety, develop a closer relationship with their families., and are more likely to establish relationships with others [17].

4.1.2. School

From the perspective of the school, the third-party perspective is considered to be very good and can provide assistance. Brás et al. believe that schools can provide a good third-party perspective [18]. By observing the behavior of teenagers in school, it is easier for teachers to find out the psychological problems of teenagers caused by being neglected by their parents. From the perspective of a third party, parents can reflect on the shortcomings of their own education model. This helps parents deepen their understanding of their children, clarify the direction of their efforts, and then provide targeted attention and love.

4.1.3. Society

Most scholars believe that social problems and some family problems are strongly related. Russell et al. pointed out that reducing the social pressure on contemporary middle-aged people can help promote family harmony [19]. By reducing the workload, raising wages, and reducing overtime hours, the economic pressure on parents will be significantly reduced. This means that parents have a lot of time and energy to spend with their teens and discover their emotional and material needs. At the same time, a reasonable education model can provide a more harmonious learning environment for young people [20]. By reducing the atmosphere of comparison in schools, conducting regular lectures on psychological problems for young people, and taking appropriate measures to reduce their academic burden, young people can have enough space and time for self-development to understand their own problems and actively carry out self-help.

4.2. Treatment Assistance or Intervention:

4.2.1. Medical Institutions

Scholars generally believe that intervening in adolescents' psychological problems as early as possible can produce good results. Smalley et al. found through a questionnaire survey that parents of adolescents with serious psychological problems usually need psychological intervention more [21]. Therefore, teenagers and parents should seek help from medical institutions together to achieve proper communication and a harmonious relationship.

4.2.2. Regular Psychological Counselling

Possible measures include regularly filling out psychological questionnaires, conducting regular psychological surveys, regularly evaluating the professional ability of psychological counselling teachers, and providing students with substantial help. At the same time, the social level should treat mental health as a routine medical project and provide more incentives [22]. For example, emphasising the public welfare of psychological counselling and reducing fees This can effectively lower the threshold for psychological counselling and encourage more teenagers and their families to actively engage in psychological counselling.

5. Conclusion

This article explores in-depth and analyses the effects of parental neglect on the mental health of teenagers. By analysing and summarising existing research, this paper finds that long-term emotional or material neglect by parents often leads to depression, a lack of sense of security and trust, even

lead to a depressive mental state. To reduce the negative effects of neglect, parents, schools, and society should work together to help adolescents grow up healthy. These conclusions can help those families who are neglecting the emotional and material needs of adolescents face up to their own problems and realise the importance of paying attention to the healthy growth of adolescents. The findings of this article echo the main thrust of the article, revealing the types and causes of parental neglect of adolescents, summarising possible impacts, and exemplifying possible solutions. This topic is important for teenage development and family harmony because it leads readers to discover an important reason for teenage mental health problems and serves as a wake-up call for parents who are neglecting their children's needs. This study provides a feasible solution to the psychological problems caused by the neglect of adolescents in aspects of society, family, and school and has a certain impact in the academic field. In the future, relevant research and meta-analysis can focus on targeted analysis in different regions and more detailed solutions. For example, how to help teenagers overcome anxiety and alleviate bad emotions in the family

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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