

Role of Parenting Style in Mental Health and Coping Style of the Adolescents



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Abstract

Adolescence is a vulnerable phase of an individual's life. It is a crucial phase of a person's life where he/she undergoes many changes. Family provides warm and intimate surroundings and plays an important role in human development. The attitudes and behaviors that parents use in raising their children have tremendous influence on their children. Parental care and support affects the mental health of the adolescents. The purpose of this review is to understand the role of parenting style on mental health and coping style of the adolescents. Authoritarian parenting style has been found to have a negative influence on mental health and it also leads to development of ineffective ways of coping among the adolescents. On the contrary, positive and supportive parenting results in better mental health and development of active coping strategies.

Keywords: Parenting Style, Adolescence, Mental Health, Coping.

Introduction

Adolescence brings about a set of issues and concerns for both parents and adolescents. It is an intermediary period of physiological and psychological development where a person grows from a child to an adult. Adolescence is a built-in, important transition phase for an individual's ego and social development. Various factors such as family structure, emotional state, socialization, and social status, changes in body, level of aspiration, achievements, cultural and religious beliefs play an important role in adolescent development. Adolescence is a chapter of an individual's life which is full of health and happiness but there is enhanced probability of several health issues as well.

Family provides the warm and intimate surroundings and plays a crucial role in development of an individual. Parenting style of the parents have major influence on behavior of the children, for example on social competence, emotional intelligence, coping with emotion and stress, anxiety, academic achievement, depression, suicide ideation and delinquency (Bhat & Aminabhavi, 2011; De Souza & Paul, 2013; Lakshmi & Arora, 2006; Shalini & Balakrishna, 2013; Sharma, Sharma, & Yadava, 2011; Thergaonkar & Wadekar, 2007; Singh & Behmani, 2018; Mowen & Schroeder, 2018).

Objective of the Study

Adolescence is a crucial phase of a person's life where he/she undergoes many changes. Parenting styles has been recognized as one of the major factor that affects the adolescents' behavior. The present review was done to understand the concept of parenting style and how each of authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles influences the mental health and coping styles of the adolescents. The objective of the study is to figure out the parenting style which provides better results for mental health of the adolescents and that helps the children to develop better coping styles.

Parenting Style

Parenting style is a term, which has generally been referred to attitudes and strategies that parents employ in managing and socializing with the children (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). Darling and Steinberg (1993) have defined parenting style as "a constellation of attitudes towards the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed". Parenting style is commonly conceptualized on two dimensions: parental demands (control) and parental responses (warmth). Various researchers have strived to define the dimensions of parenting style (e.g., Baumrind, 1978; Becker, 1964). The two dimensions

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that have always become apparent are warmth and control (Stewart, Bond, Abdullah, & Ma, 2000).

Diana Baumrind (1967, 1971, and 1978) is the pioneer among the researchers who classically studied educational approaches of rearing children. She has explored certain parenting style as the interaction of acceptance and control exercised by the parents. She classifies parenting styles into three types: Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive.

Authoritative Style

Authoritative parenting is an accommodating and cooperative style marked by higher amount of responsiveness and demandingness. Such parents normally propound explanations of the reasons behind the rule systems, while constantly inflicting the restrictions that are incorporated. Authoritative parents give significance to the needs, opinions and individual perspective of the children (Baumrind, 1967).

Authoritarian Style

Authoritarian parents permit very few discussions and explanations for rules and restraints. Such parents are more concerned by observance of rules rather than the child's distinctive opinions and feelings. Discipline is adopted as an approach to gain command over the child and the wishes of the child are very rarely considered as predominant.

Permissive Style

These parents tend to give more freedom to their children. Permissive parenting is a carefree style of parenting, where the child faces very few demands and expectations from the parents. These parents are highly responsive. The parents encourage the children to express their feelings and thoughts. There are not much restrictions on children, which result in minimal overt control over behaviours (Baumrind, 1967).

Understanding Adolescent Mental Health

Adolescence is a phase with heightened risk of inception of mental health disorders (Kessler, Amminger, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alonso, Lee & Ustun, 2007). According to Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2015, the tendency of suffering from severe mental disorder was found to be around three times more in Australian adolescents. Adolescents are three times belonging to lower socio-economic status and living in non-metropolitan areas were more prone to mental problems. Self-reported depression was found in nearly one in five females of 16-17 years of age. Anxiety disorders and major depressive disorder were found to be marginally higher in females than males. Eating dinner with family members is an expression of family support and is associated with mental health and risky behavior of the adolescents (Fulkerson et al. 2006).

The most common mental health disorder was found to be anxiety disorder but its severity was low. Whereas, the prevalence of mood and behavioral disorders were low but these were more severe in nature among the adolescents (Ormel et al., 2015). Adolescents who spend more time on screens were found to suffer from more mental health problems (Hoare, Milton, Foster & Allender, 2016). Disturbance

Remarkina An Analisation

in sleeping pattern was related with poor mental health among the adolescents (Zhang, Paksarian, Lamers, Hickie, He & Merikangas, 2017). In Indian context, Ranasinghe and Ramesh (2016) stated that 25.5% adolescents reported symptoms of depression, 8.6% felt loneliness and 7.8% students had anxiety related insomnia. Jayanthi, Thirunavukarasu and Rajkumar (2015) in a study found that adolescents dealing with academic stress are at higher risk of depression than adolescents who do not experience academic stress.

Females suffer from higher stress anxiety and depression than males (Wani, Sanka, Rakshantha, Nivatha, Sowparnika & Marak, 2016). Surapuramath (2016) found that males have better mental health than the females. Al-Sughayr and Ferwana (2012) reported that females experience higher stress levels than males.

Understanding Adolescent Coping

Some studies found that emotion focused or avoidant coping is associated with more depressive symptoms in adolescent clinical population. Problem focused coping was negatively related to depression in normal as well clinical population (Li, DiGiuseppe & Froh, 2006; Li & Zhang, 2012). In a study conducted in 18 countries, Persike & Seiffge-Krenke, (2016) found that adaptive coping techniques can also help in reducing suicidality among the adolescents. Adolescents perceive parental stress as greater to peer stress and they use avoidant coping strategies to deal with such stress.

Amongst the three group of adolescents (well adjusted, resilient and vulnerable), resilient adolescents were found to use more active coping strategies than other two group of adolescents (Dumont & Provost, 1999). The higher level of depressive symptoms among the Chinese adolescents was associated with use of avoidant coping strategies, low self-esteem and less social support (Chan, 1995). Emotion focused coping was associated with prevalence of Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) whereas active coping was negatively related with prevalence of Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) among Dutch and Belgian adolescents (Kiekens et al., 2015).

Li et al. (2006) found that depressed adolescent females had more tendency to use emotion focused and ruminative coping strategies as compared to males. Kim, Han, Trksak & Lee (2014) in their study on a sample of 73,238 adolescents found significant gender differences in influence of coping strategies on suicidal ideation among the adolescents. No significant gender differences were found among adolescents in use of coping mechanisms (Williams & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999).

Parenting Style and Mental health

Mental health is something more than the mere absence of mental illness. The WHO has defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Positive mental health is defined as "a dynamic state of well-being in which individual realizes his or her own potential, with an underlying belief in the dignity and worth of self

and others, can cope well with the normal stresses of life, is able to work productively, and can contribute to the community". An individual suffering from mental health problem might have stress, depression, anxiety, grief, addiction, learning disabilities, mood disorders, problems in relationship, or other mental illnesses of various forms.

Adolescents with warm maternal and paternal parenting had less likelihood of suffering from symptoms of depression than adolescents who were harshly disciplined by both parents in case of stressful events (Wagner, Cohen, and Brook, 1996). A different study conducted among Arab adolescents displays a positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and mental health of the adolescents. Permissive parenting styles have shown negative mental health outcomes like anxiety, phobia, depression and negative attitudes.

Shek (2002) states that paternal assistance is positively associated with the mental health of Hong Kong adolescents. Chan and Koo (2011) found that authoritarian parenting style is linked with social problems, delinquent acts and lower rate of accomplishment. Permissive parenting has been found to be related with increased behavioural problems and higher levels of anxiety but improved social skills (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991; Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter & Keehn, 2007; Rinaldi and Howe, 2012). Researchers have found similar results in Asian children and adolescents (Ishak, Low, & Lau, 2012; Sorkhabi, 2005).

Perceived authoritarian parenting style is closely linked with psychological distress during adolescence. Perceived parenting styles has a significant role in development of anxiety (Furukawa, 1992; Gerlsma, Emmelkamp, & Arrindell, 1990; Muris & Merckelbach, 1998). Adolescents who identify their parents as authoritative appear to have lesser depressive symptoms than other adolescents and these phenomena sustains over time (Liem, Cavell, & Lustig, 2010). Adolescents who perceived their parents as authoritative were more psychologically competent and faced fewer psychological and behavioural dysfunctions than adolescents who acknowledged their parents as neglectful (Lamborn et al., 1991).

Family factors have significant impact on psychosocial adjustment, especially positive mental health symptoms among the Hong Kong adolescents (Shek, 1995). Symptoms of depression are experienced by approximately one fourth of population by the age of 18 and depression is one of the most predominant psychiatric problems among youngsters (Clarke, Hawkins, Murphy, & Sheeber, 1993; Lewinsohn, Rohde, Seeley, & Fisher, 1993). Paternal parenting style was found to be associated with psychological adjustment. Though authoritative parenting style of mother had advantage over permissive parenting style of mother which was apparent for all the outcomes that were assessed, however, the advantage was not much certain for paternal parenting style and was evident only in case of depression (Milevsky et al., 2007)

Significant positive relationship was found between different dimensions of maternal parenting styles and mental health (stress, anxiety and depression). Dimensions other than indifference abuse and controlling paternal parenting style are not significantly related to the mental health dimensions of stress, anxiety and depression (Jahan & Suri, 2016). Authoritarian parenting style was positively associated with depression and a permissive parenting style has negative relationship with depression. Significant differences are found between males and females on measures of depression (Sharma, Sharma and Yadava, 2011).

Parenting Style and Coping Styles

An individual reaction to a psychological stressor which is commonly associated with a negative event can be referred to as coping. Silver and Wortman (1980) defined coping as "any and all responses made by an individual who encounters a potentially harmful outcome". Coping styles or mechanisms can be broadly classified as active (approach) or avoidant. Active coping mechanisms are problem focused; generally, the individual is aware of the stressor and conscious attempts are made to lower stress. Avoidant coping mechanisms are emotion focused and are often indicated by ignoring or avoiding the problem.

Positive parent-child relationship provides social support which strengthens psychological resources. Increase in social cooperation assists the teenagers in coping with demanding and stressful events (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Baumrind, 1991). All parenting styles are unique and each parenting style has a distinctive relationship with different adolescent behaviors, such as coping. Paternal warmth correlates significantly with active coping styles. Adolescents with supportive parents are able to cope with stressful situations and practice active coping more habitually than adolescents with authoritarian parents. Authoritative and permissive parenting increases active coping among adolescents (Wolfrat, Hempel, & Miles, 2002).

Dusek and Danko (1994) found that adolescents whose parents had authoritarian parenting style generally used less active coping behaviour than adolescents whose parents were more permissive or authoritative. Authoritative parenting leads to the development of a healthy individual, who can adapt themselves better in new and different circumstances and use effective coping strategies while authoritarian parents raise a child who does not learn to use effective coping (Shaffer, 2000). Active coping strategies are effectively used by adolescents, who recognize the supportive behaviour of their parents and friends (Clark, Novak & Dupree, 2002).

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) corroborated that children who view the behavior of their mothers as supportive use more active coping strategies (Ainsworth et al. 1978). Discouraging and unenthusiastic actions of parents exacerbate children's emotional reactivity, which leads to difficulty in learning and using adaptive coping techniques, thereby intensifying the probability of adopting

avoidance coping to diminish their reactivity (Jaffee, Gullone, & Hughes, 2010).

Perceiving father's behaviour as autonomy granting leads to development of preventive and instrumental coping techniques among the adolescents. Female adolescents are found to have moderate significant relationship between paternal demandingness and instrumental coping strategy than male adolescents (Bhattacharyya & Pradhan, 2015).

Conclusion

The period of adolescence is challenging for both the adolescents and the parents. The adolescents face a lot of conflicts. They want to take decisions for themselves. They face the expectations of parents which seems like a burden to them. The conflicting situation that adolescents face makes them vulnerable to a lot of problems. An extensive amount of research has been conducted on the influence of family and social factors on the mental health of children and adolescents. The results of the present review indicate that parenting style has a very significant influence on the mental health and coping style of the adolescents.

Authoritative parenting style is related with increased depersonalization and anxiety while permissive parenting style is associated with lesser depersonalization and anxiety (Wolfradt, Hempel & Miles, 2003). Parenting style was significantly associated with the dimensions of mental health, which are: physical, anxiety, and depression. Authoritative parents raise children who have better total mental health and better physical mental health and these children also encounter lower anxiety and depression than children brought up by authoritarian and permissive parents. Although, the impact of parenting style on the social mental health was not observed (Niaraki & Rezai, 2010).

Democratic parenting style and greater acceptance of parents may prevent anxiety in children (Thergaonkar & Wadkar, 2007). Children perceive parental rejection as uncompassionate which may lead to depression in the children (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Marton & Maharaj, 1993). The female students had significantly higher scores in total as well as on all sub types of anxiety. Significantly higher anxiety scores were found among the students who had authoritarian parents (Bakhla, Sinha, Sharan, Binay, Verma, & Chaudhury, 2013).

An individual's coping strategies are closely related with parenting styles (Lin & Lian, 2011). Children whose parents exercise more positive parenting behavior tend to employ more adaptive coping techniques (Gentzler Contreras Grau, Kerns & Weimer, 2005; Kliewer, Fearnow, & Miller, 1996; Yagmurlu & Altman, 2010). Authoritative or permissive parenting style helps the adolescents to avail problem-solving and support-seeking strategies more frequently to cope with their feelings of homesickness than the children whose parents are authoritarian or uninvolved (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). Autonomy-supportive parenting behaviour of the parents is associated with constructive ways of coping among the adolescents (Van Petegem et al., 2017).

Remarking An Analisation

Directions for future research

Parental warmth and affection is what all children aspire for. Wholesome and positive parenting is an exceptional gift that a parent can impart. It is very indispensable for the parents to raise their children into good humans. It is necessary for the researchers to explore the influence that parenting can have on children. There is an enormous need to conduct future researches with consideration of parents' age, educational level, socio-economic status, family size, and parental background, while studying the effect of parenting style on mental health and coping style of the adolescents.

Adolescents perceive the world differently as compared to the parents (De Los Reyes, 2013). More analytical researches need to be carried out to understand the influence that parenting can have on mental health of the adolescents as parents are the one who remain in close affinity with children. Parenting also has a significant impact on the coping style of the adolescents. India has a vast landscape and varying culture so the influence of parenting can differ with culture and area of the study. More studies on parenting in Indian context are needed as Indian parents remain in a very closer affinity with their children.

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