

# The Impact of Parental Behaviors on Adolescents' Mental Health

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## Abstract:

Adolescent mental health problems have gradually become a frequent phenomenon, many of which include social pressure, academic pressure, and other dominant factors, including family pressure. However, Much of the existing research examines how social factors, like social media or social stress, affect the health of adolescents, while largely overlooking the role of parents in their family background. This report mainly discusses the influence of parents' behavior on children's mental health, mainly from the perspective of parents' psychology and parenting practice. Parents' own psychological pressure, which can easily lead to their pressure transfer, such as the pressure of parents' caregivers can easily lead to the strengthening of parents' control over their children and the increase of expectations. Parental conflict often increases depression and stress levels in adolescents. In addition, other studies have found some consistency between parental behavior and adolescent behavior, including Internet addiction, sexual cognitive impairment, and violent tendencies.

**Keywords:** Parental behaviors; mental health; parental expectations; caregiver behaviors; parenting styles; adolescents.

## 1. Introduction

Positive mental state is an important factor for adolescents' academic progress and normal personality development, and adolescents' physical and mental health status will continue to affect their life status until adulthood [1, 2]. Students transitioning into early adulthood while moving through adolescence not only encounter a growing academic load but also deal with expectations from their family, school, and society. As students navigate this period of self-discovery, their mental state may not be stable, leading

to increased vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues [3-5]. Available evidence suggests that psychosocial disorders affecting young people have increased substantially over the past 50 years [6]. However, current research focuses too much on the influence of the Internet and social media on teenagers, and ignores the influence of family, which is a particularly important factor.

Adolescent psychological problems in the 21st century the development of the Internet makes it difficult to ignore its impact, especially for the young people born in the Z generation. The public factors affect-

ing the mental health of adolescents are mostly biased towards the Internet. According to this, the research somewhat overlooked the impact of the family of origin, which ought to be the primary factor affecting adolescents' mental health. Therefore, this report will focus on the influence of parental behaviors in the family on the mental health of adolescents, explore which specific parental behaviors will have a negative impact on the mental health of their children, provide ideas for future research on adolescent health problems in the background of the family of origin, and predict and avoid the occurrence of behaviors that hinder the development of adolescent mental health in advance.

## 2. Method

The databases of Google Scholar, Web of Science, Proquest, and Science Direct were used to search literature. Keywords and their derivations were entered as follows: "adolescent mental health," "parenting behavior," "parental conflict," "caregiver psychology," "caregiver," and "parental expectations." The screening criteria included: (i) mentioned at least one of parental behaviors and adolescents' mental health; (ii) it has certain timeliness and regional. China is a country with a high incidence of adolescent mental health, so most of the experimental studies sought were local experiments in China, and the experiment period was 2018-2024. (iii) Have authority. Authoritative medical data such as the Lancet and global health organizations are cited for its credibility.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Definition

#### 3.1.1 Mental health of adolescents

Adolescent mental health refers to individuals between the ages of 10 and 19, and this period is a special stage in human development that is critical to building a solid foundation of health. According to global statistics, one in seven adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 experience a mental health condition, and mental disorders in this age group contribute to 13% of the worldwide disease burden. Depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders rank as the primary causes of illness and disability in adolescents. At the same time, suicide has become the fourth leading cause of death in the 15-29 age group [5]. When mental health problems in adolescence are not properly addressed, the effects can extend into adulthood, damaging not only an individual's physical and mental health but also limiting their ability to live fulfilling lives later

in life. Therefore, it is particularly important to focus on adolescent health.

#### 3.1.2 Parental behaviors

Parental behavior, including parental interaction patterns and parenting practices, has a more direct influence on children than school education [7]. Usually, parents' behavior patterns refer to how they relate to each other and how they raise children, which have a more direct impact on children than schooling. According to the findings, the higher the expectations parents have for their children, the higher the likelihood of mental health problems in adolescents. Current research points to three key structural factors that influence adolescent mental health: family, school, and society [1].

Research indicates that children exposed to higher levels of parental conflict tend to face greater adjustment difficulties than those who experience lower levels of conflict, based on both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies [8, 9]. By definition, the following literature review will focus on (1) parental expectations, (2) Parental pressure, and (3) Parental conflict to carry out research.

### 3.2 Effect of Parental Behaviors on Adolescents' Mental Health

#### 3.2.1 The impact of parental expectations on adolescent mental health

Family environment has a key impact on the growth of adolescents, and psychological development is deeply shaped. In this process, parents' expectations become an indispensable driving force in the growth of children. Educational expectations held by parents, for example, have been widely proven to be effective predictors of children's academic achievement [10-12]. Parental expectations are helpful in shaping a child's self-concept. For example, parents' high expectations of education largely explain Asian students' high expectations of themselves (Goyette & Xie, 1999). Some scholars disagree that teenagers' mental health is only slightly influenced by parents' expectations unless conveyed by their children and perceived by them [13]. In addition, adolescents' self-expectations also play an important role in their long-term development trajectory [14, 15]. Teenagers' psychological states, however, may be impacted by their parents' expectations as well as by their own expectations through various means. Higher expectations might occasionally encourage teenagers to actively participate in class activities and learning, which is linked to constructive thought processes that boost independence and self-assurance, while lower expectations may be associated with feelings of helplessness and withdrawal behaviors that exacerbate mental health problems.

[16, 17]. Teenagers' psychological states, however, may be impacted by their parents' expectations as well as by their own expectations through various means. Higher expectations might occasionally encourage teenagers to actively participate in class activities and learning, which is linked to constructive thought processes that boost independence and self-assurance.[1, 17, 18].

This opinion is also supported by the Irish study. Children with disabilities in Ireland have a poorer self-concept in a number of areas when their parents have low expectations for their education, according to Kenny et al. [19].

Furthermore, several empirical research indicate that parents' high expectations for their kids' schooling may have a negative impact on teenagers' mental health. In particular, teenagers may experience pressure to live up to their parents' high standards, which raises the possibility that they will internalize issues [20]. According to Lu et al., some Chinese youngsters experienced dissatisfaction, embarrassment, and shame as a result of their parents' high expectations for their schooling [21]. Ma et al. also demonstrated a connection between depression in Hong Kong teenagers and parental expectations. [22]

From the perspective of social culture, Asian culture is significantly shaped by Confucian philosophy, which encourages parents to hold high aspirations for their children and to dedicate substantial resources to their education, while also stressing that children should adhere to their parents' expectations and demands [23]. Asian families generally value values such as filial piety, family honor, and hard work, these values are passed on to children with the expectation of academic excellence, which can cause heavy psychological pressure on adolescents and increase the risk of mental health problems [24]. Oishi et al.'s cross-cultural study further strengthened this view. Studies have shown that AsiAn-American teenagers influenced by Asian cultures, particularly Japanese, have generally lower levels of happiness than native American teenagers influenced by Western cultures, which may be related to the high expectations they face from their parents. [25].

It is crucial to recognize that the adverse effects of parental educational expectations are not confined to Asian families; comparable issues arise in Western nations as well. Studies have shown that parents' high expectations for their children's education in Western countries may also lead to adolescents facing more mental health challenges [26].

### **3.2.2 The impact of parenting styles on adolescent mental health**

Baumrind classifies parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, and dismissive, as well as neglectful and rejectful, according to the two main dimensions of parent-

ing: "demand" and "response." [7]. Authoritative parents usually high requirements for children, quick response. High requirements are mainly reflected in high expectations, they hope that children are confident and have a sense of social responsibility, both independent and able to cooperate, but at the same time authoritative parents can give children timely encouragement and support, to set clear standards and supervision for children, rather than punishment and severe treatment. Such parents are usually highly educated and in good psychological condition themselves, and can positively influence their children. One of the major differences between authoritarian parents and authoritative parents is that authoritarian parents are very demanding but do not respond. These parents attach great importance to the behavior and attitude of obedience, and sometimes make demands on children that exceed their own ability, in an attempt to control, shape and evaluate the behavior and attitude of teenagers. Such high expectations can lead to anxiety and even depression in teenagers. Therefore, authoritarian parents are unfavorable to the healthy development of adolescents. This kind of parents mostly appear in Asia and the environment where there are a lot of Asian people. For example, due to the influence of mainstream culture, Chinese people attach great importance to traditional concepts such as filial piety. They adopt a tolerant and accepting attitude towards teenagers, which is manifested as low control and supervision, low expectation, strong emotional value to give, and avoid conflict with children [27]. Such parents tend to pay more attention to the mental health status of their teenagers, and when their children have mental health problems, they are more accepting and more willing to take their children to a psychologist than other types of parents. Refusal, neglect type parents neither request nor respond, neither ask the child nor respond to the child, most of these parents are not highly educated, do not know how to educate the child, and have little opportunity to have emotional feedback to the child due to work reasons. Even some parents may vehemently refuse or completely neglect their child-rearing responsibilities.

### **3.2.3 The influence of parental conflict on adolescent mental health**

Parental conflict involves arguments or physical confrontations between partners stemming from disagreements or various other factors. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies show that children with more parental conflict have more adjustment problems than children with less parental conflict. As the main role of parents in the family, the conflict between parents is bound to have adverse effects on the mental health of adolescents.

According to cognitive-context theory, the extent to which

a child is affected by parental conflict is determined by cognitive assessment, divided into primary and secondary processing through the influence of characteristics of parental conflict (such as intensity, resolution situation, or frequency of occurrence) as well as emotional climate.

In the two stages, primary processing evaluates the threat and relevance of parental conflict to children, and secondary processing evaluates the causes of conflict and coping methods. According to this theory, a scale to assess how children perceive interparental conflict was created to capture their views on the frequency of occurrences, intensity, content, resolution, perceived threats, and feelings of self-blame. Adolescents' emotions are sensitive and susceptible, and the scale is also suitable for studying the development of adolescent mental health under the influence of parental conflict.

According to the emotional safety perception theory, the interparental conflict causes children to feel that the relationship between parents is unstable, and that the interparental conflict will threaten their own and family happiness, thus aggravating the discomfort and stress of adolescents. Emotional insecurity plays a mediating role between interparental conflict and children's adaptation. Research has shown that a child's lack of emotional security in their relationship with their parents can predict future psychological problems.

In the context of parental conflict, children's unease is mainly reflected in three parts [parental conflict]: increased emotional reactivity. The arousal level and intensity of fear, vigilance, pain and other negative emotions increased continuously, and the duration gradually increased, and the emotions were not easy to control. Prolonged exposure to parental conflict situations can lead to behavioural disturbances, such as violent behaviour such as destroying objects. Third, adolescents form negative internal representations of the meaning of their own and family well-being.

Interparental conflict has a negative impact on the construction of adolescent mental health. Frequent interparental conflict makes adolescents in a negative emotional environment for a long time, which is easy to cause huge psychological pressure and negative ideas about family happiness. In the more serious cases, adolescents will gradually fall into self-doubt, believing that they are the cause of parental conflict, so that their mental health level will gradually decline, and even produce strong negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. The researchers found that emotional insecurity played a link between parental relationship quality and children's internalizing problems. Longitudinal studies have also shown that emotional distress mediates the relationship between individuals aged 9-18 years and parental conflict adjustment

problems. Parental conflict is a significant negative part of parental behavior. When couples have conflicts and arguments, they should not only consider self-perception, but also consider that adolescents are in a sensitive growth period and the changes in mental health of adolescents in a high-pressure conflict environment.

### **3.2.4 The influence of parental stress on adolescent mental health**

Parenting stress refers to the stress experience caused by parents' traits, dysregulation of parent-child interaction and children's behaviors in the process of fulfilling parents' role and parent-child interaction [28]. Parenting pressure mainly comes from two aspects: one is environmental factors such as life events and daily troubles; The second is the stress related to the role of parents, including role restrictions, social isolation, parent-child relationship and child characteristics.

In the process of taking care of children and participating in parent-child interaction, parents may encounter stressful experiences caused by personal characteristics, incongruity of parent-child relationship and children's behavior [28]. In the course of parenting, parents mainly face two types of pressure: on the one hand, from the major events in life and daily troubles and other environmental factors; On the other hand, it is related to the direct performance of parental duties and the completion of parenting tasks, which are often closely related to factors such as the limitations of parental roles, social isolation, the quality of parent-child relationship, and the personality characteristics of children.

Parenting styles encompass the beliefs, actions, and principles parents hold regarding their children's growth and development.. Previous studies have found that high parental stress can lead to negative parenting styles. For example, parents who exert greater pressure in their parenting tend to be less involved and display lower sensitivity during parent-child interactions. They often react excessively and tend to adopt a controlling approach characterized by an inconsistent or strict parenting style [29-31].

Abidin et al. proposed a model of the mediating role of parenting style between parenting stress and children's problem behaviors, but this model has not been fully supported by empirical studies. The research shows that mother's parenting pressure may directly affect children's problem behavior, but the mediating role of parenting style is not obvious. However, research has shown that financial, work and marital pressures can lead to authoritarian parenting styles that can affect children's behavior. Parenting stress, unlike family stress, is directly related to the demands of parental roles and is more critical to

child development. Cultural differences may influence the role of parenting stress and style, for example in the Kenyan study, higher parenting stress was associated with lower levels of problem behavior in children, contrary to the findings of middle-class whites. Overprotection is a negative predictor of explicit problem behavior in Asian children and a positive predictor in Western children. Therefore, in the context of Chinese culture, it is necessary to explore whether parenting stress affects children's problem behavior through parenting style through empirical research.

Whether it is the pressure caused by the caregiver's psychology or the daily parenting life, when the pressure on parents reaches a certain threshold, it will be reflected to the children through transmission, which may lead to teenagers' unconscious pressure from parents in addition to dealing with their own social problems at school, and teenagers will thus have negative emotions such as anxiety or compulsion. Feeling responsible for family stress can even lead to depression in the long run.

#### 4. Conclusion

The influence of parental behavior on adolescent mental health is multifaceted, which can be summarized from the following aspects: high parental pressure can lead to anxiety, depression and other psychological problems in adolescents. Adolescents may feel that they are unable to meet their parents' expectations, resulting in a low sense of self-worth. Excessive stress may also affect adolescents' academic performance and social skills, making it difficult for them to cope with the challenges of daily life. However, a moderate amount of stress can motivate teenagers to work hard and grow, and it is up to parents to balance expectations and pressure. Parental expectations have an important impact on adolescents' mental health. Reasonable expectations can stimulate the potential of teenagers and help them set goals and work towards them. High expectations may cause adolescents to feel stressed out and to develop feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction. This can affect their self-confidence and self-efficacy. Parents should communicate effectively with young people to understand their interests and abilities and set realistic goals. Authoritative parenting (high demands, high responsiveness) is generally considered to be the best for a teenager's mental health. This kind of parenting can cultivate teenagers' independence, self-confidence and social adaptability. Authoritarian parenting styles (high demands, low responsiveness) can lead to rebellious, aggressive behaviour and psychological problems in adolescents. Casual parenting (low demands, low responsiveness) may result in adolescents lacking self-control and

being susceptible to peer pressure. Loving parenting style (low demand, high response) may lead to the formation of a dependent personality and lack of problem-solving ability.

In conclusion, the effect of parental actions on the mental health of adolescents is intricate and necessitates that parents carefully manage their stress, expectations, and parenting approaches to foster healthy development in teens. Investigating how parental behavior influences adolescent mental health can aid in promoting their mental well-being, guide parents in appropriate behaviors, and help prevent the lasting negative consequences of harmful actions on teenagers. Additionally, this exploration can assist parents in identifying and addressing psychological issues in a timely manner. Ultimately, it can foster family unity and enhance adolescents' understanding of family happiness. Nevertheless, research on the influence of family dynamics on adolescent mental health remains limited, and there is hope for an increase in relevant studies in this area to better support the development of mental health in young people.

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