

On the Influence of Parental Psychological Control on Adolescents' Internalized Problem Behavior

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Abstract

Adolescents' internalized problem behavior refers to a common phenomenon that individuals associate with their own immature and inappropriate cognitions, emotions or behaviors in social situations, and this internalized problem behavior may be either a kind of bad cognitive and emotional experience of their own, or it may also be caused by the social situation they are in in their family life, such as bad relationship with parents and emotional deficits in their family life, and so on. Whereas there is a link between adolescents' internalized problem behaviors and parental psychological control, this study attempts to examine the effects of parental psychological control on adolescents' internalized problem behaviors in order to deepen our understanding of this important issue. It was found that: there is a positive correlation between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problematic behaviors; parental psychological control causes adolescents to have bad emotions, which affects their normal learning; parental psychological control increases adolescents' potential for conflict, which in turn causes their problematic behaviors; and there is an interaction between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problematic behaviors.

Keywords: parental psychological control, adolescents, internalizing problem behaviors

1. Background

In recent years, with the rapid development of society, adolescents' internalized problem behavior refers to adolescents' social, psychological and other aspects of the emergence of family, school and other closely related bad behavior, is a complex phenomenon faced by adolescents in the process of development, the current situation of adolescents' internalized problem behavior is not optimistic, and therefore attracted a great

deal of attention from researchers in various countries and academia (Zhao Min, 2010). The Special Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Students' Mental Health in the New Era (2023-2025) (Yuan Fang, 2018) points out that adolescents in junior high school are the group with the most problematic behaviors among minors, and that it is necessary to comprehensively strengthen and improve the work of students' mental health, enhance students' mental health literacy, and reduce the occurrence of problematic behaviors.

At present, the incidence of internalized problem behaviors among adolescents is increasing year by year, and is trending towards a younger age, which has become a focus of social concern. The reason for this is that the psychological control of parents is an important influencing factor. In traditional Chinese culture, filial piety is an excellent moral quality. This concept still has a certain influence in modern society, especially in the period of social transformation in China, parents' expectations and requirements for their children are often higher than the general social standards (Dong Hui-Qin, 2009). As an important part of family education, the influence of parents on their children cannot be ignored. This study will explore the relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors by combing domestic and international literature, and analyze its mechanism of action and influencing factors, with a view to providing references for parents' psychological control over adolescents (Zhang Pengyun, 2012).

2. Definitions

The concept of "problem behavior" was proposed by Wakeman in Britain, and this concept is still evolving since its introduction, and so far, there is still no uniform definition (Zhang Pengyun, 2012). Problem behavior of secondary school students refers to some behaviors that are not compatible with the physical and mental development level of secondary school students due to various factors in school life, which are manifested as undesirable behaviors that bring negative impacts on learning, life and interpersonal relationships (Chen Zhuojian, 2022). At present, with the deepening of educational reform and the continuous development of society, the continuous improvement of people's requirements for education, as well as changes in lifestyle and competitive environment, secondary school students have undergone major changes in physiology, psychology, social interaction and other aspects. If students are unable to adapt to these changes, various discomforts and problems will arise. Behavioral disorders due to these discomforts or unpleasant emotions are problem behaviors (Cui Lixia, 2005). Problem behavior refers to adverse emotional and behavioral responses (including mild behavioral problems, learning disabilities, and personality disorders) that result from an

individual's inability to adapt well to changes in the environment, causing difficulties in adaptation, including the home, school, and social environments. Adolescents are in an important period of physiological and psychological development, and their psychological tolerance to external pressures or changes is relatively weak, making them more prone to internalizing and externalizing problematic behaviors, thus hindering their healthy development. Therefore, the characteristics of adolescents themselves should be fully considered in the study of the effects of parental psychological control on adolescents' internalizing problem behaviors (W. Zhang, G. Yu, W. Fu, et al., 2022).

Parental psychological control (parental psycho-logical control) refers to the conscious or unconscious use of some non-verbal means by parents to manipulate, restrict, and influence their children's behavior or cognition. Parental psycho-logical control mainly includes three dimensions: emotional control, cognitive control and behavioral control. Emotional control mainly includes the control of the child's material needs, interference in the child's life and study, and interference in whether the child meets his or her own expectations, etc. Cognitive control mainly refers to the parents exerting pressure on the child that is not commensurate with his or her age, such as excessive expectations, excessive control, etc. Behavioral control refers to the parents' influence on the child's behavior by means of verbal and nonverbal means. Adolescence is a very important period in the development of life, a period in which individuals have gradually matured physiologically but have not yet reached the level of adulthood psychologically, and parents, as the most important and direct others in their lives, have a very important influence on the development of adolescents. Studies have shown that parents intervene and manipulate children's cognition, emotion and behavior, thus hindering their physical and mental development, thus adversely affecting their mental health (Yanhui Wang, 2024).

Internalizing problem behaviors refer to individuals having negative emotional feelings such as depression, anxiety, and withdrawal (Qiu Min, 2023). Internalizing problem behaviors are usually not as directly threatening or harmful to the individual themselves or others as externalizing problem behaviors such

as aggression, hyperactivity, and aggression, and are often difficult to detect due to their insidious nature (M.J. Zhang & H.Z. Zhao, 2024). Because it is difficult to be detected, researchers should pay more attention to adolescents' internalizing problem behaviors than externalizing problems. Moreover, studies have shown that adolescence itself is one of the risk factors for adolescents' internalizing problem behaviors, and the persistence of internalizing problem behaviors in adolescents can largely predict psychological and behavioral problems in adulthood (E.M. Kim, H.Y. Ahn & J.J. Woo., 2018). Therefore, the internalizing problem behaviors of junior high school students should not be ignored, and an in-depth study of junior high school students' internalizing problem behaviors is very beneficial to a more comprehensive intervention of internalizing problem behaviors. Therefore, it is of great value to explore the influence of parental psychological control on adolescents' internalizing problem behaviors and its internal mechanism of action.

3. Status

In terms of time dimension, foreign studies mainly focus on the end of the 20th century, while the studies of scholars in China mainly focus on the 1990s to the present. In the past decade, domestic scholars have conducted a large number of relationship studies between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors from different perspectives, but most of them are explored based on theoretical deduction and practical experience. Therefore, this study focuses on reviewing the relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors.

In terms of the amount of literature, in China, some studies have shown that adolescents' internalized problem behaviors vary in terms of age, gender, and region. Some researchers believe that the role of parental psychological control on adolescents' internalized problem behaviors is complex and diverse, and its mechanism of action is complex and complicated. Regarding the relationship between psychological control and adolescents' internalizing problem behaviors, existing studies have shown that parental psychological control has a positive effect on adolescents' internalizing problem behaviors.

Evidence of negative effects on behavior (Shen Zifeng, 2021). In general, the research of domestic scholars on the relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalization problem behaviors is characterized by multi-dimensional diversity, multi-dimensionality and multi-perspective (Q. Wang, E.M. Pomerantz & H. Chen, 2007). But overall, domestic studies are not as rich as foreign studies in terms of the amount of literature.

In the discussion of the relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors, scholars have discussed from different perspectives: First, from the perspective of the relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors, scholars believe that there exists a mutual influence, mutual constraints and mutual promotion between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors. First, parental psychological control is the main factor influencing adolescents' internalization problem behavior; second, parental psychological control influences adolescents' internalization behavior through indirect ways; third, parental psychological control can positively predict adolescents' internalization problem behavior. Second, based on the influence of parents on adolescents' internalizing behaviors, researchers have proposed two possible interaction effects (Wang Fenying, 2022).

4. Relationships

Ecological Systems Theory (EST) suggests that the family is the microsystem that exerts the most important influence on individual development (P. Minuchin, 1985). Parental psychological control, as one of the important family factors, is closely related to the behavioral development of adolescents, and Glasser's choice theory suggests that parental psychological control over children undermines children's autonomy needs, and if children believe that satisfying their own autonomy needs is more important than maintaining a good relationship with their parents, they will choose to stop listening to parental advice and behave accordingly to get their own needs are satisfied (C. Robitschek, 1998).

In family systems, interactions between family members have an impact on other members of the system, and there may also be an interaction

between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors (Wen Zhang, 2022). Although scholars have found some correlations in the current study, research on the relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors is still in its infancy. Their research methods are mostly based on questionnaire and interview methods, and they mainly use cross-sectional studies. This means that researchers have used a larger scope and longer time span when exploring the relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors. This has led to some limitations for the researcher in examining the relationship between the two.

In future research, scholars can focus on (1) conducting longitudinal studies. Longitudinal studies can examine the dynamic relationship between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors in different time periods, stages, and contexts; (2) enriching research methods. The investigation methods can be diversified, such as questionnaire method, interview method, etc., which makes the research results more persuasive; (3) Focus on theoretical innovation. Focusing on the role mechanism between parental psychological control and adolescents' internalized problem behaviors, the relationship between the two can be explored to make it more explanatory. In addition, the two can be combined to explore the mechanism by which parental psychological control affects adolescents' internalized problem behaviors to solve their problems.

5. Impact

During adolescence, the self-awareness and self-control of adolescents are still developing, and this is a crucial period for shaping the moral character and behavior of adolescents. At this stage, parents' education style and concepts play a crucial role in children's growth. If parents have problems in educating their children, it will easily lead to adolescents' bad behavior (Cui Lixia, 2005). For example, some parents are too strict with their children, which makes their children rebellious and even run away from home; there are also some parents who can't understand their children's psychological changes in time, and can't guide their children's behavior in time; and there are also some parents who are bent on exerting pressure on

their children, which leads to negative emotions such as anorexia and anorexia (Su C., 2018). And among these factors, parents' psychological control plays a contributing role in internalizing problematic behaviors in adolescents.

6. Discussion

Parental psychological control has a positive predictive effect on children's negative mental health status and a positive predictive effect on adolescents' internalized problem behaviors, and the relationship between the two has been highly valued by scholars. Parental psychological control is a parent-centered parenting style, which reflects parents' high regard and concern for their children and plays a crucial role in their children's growth (Chi Xinli, 2021). Relevant foreign studies have shown that parental psychological control not only affects children's academic performance, behavioral performance and physical health, but also affects their emotions, psychological state and social functioning (D. Saxbe, L.B. Del Piero, M.H. Immordino-Yang, et al., 2016). Domestic studies have shown that parental psychological control can cause adolescents to develop bad emotions, poor behavioral performance and reduced academic performance. Parental psychological control increases adolescents' potential for conflict, which in turn causes their problematic behaviors.

7. Recommendations

This study concludes that parental psychological control has an important influence on adolescents' internalized problem behaviors and suggests that:

- (1) Parents should accept, understand, and support some of adolescents' internalized problem behaviors, such as addiction to the Internet, smoking and drinking, and truancy, etc., which will help them establish a good self-concept and reduce the emergence of anxiety and depression, which will in turn reduce the occurrence of adolescents' internalized problem behaviors.
- (2) Parents should learn to master some psychological control techniques, such as effective communication skills, positive role modeling, positive attention, etc., in order to help adolescents establish a good self-concept, reduce anxiety and depression caused by the lack of self-concept, and reduce the occurrence of adolescents' internalized problem behaviors.

(3) Parents should pay attention to the influence of their own behavior on adolescents' internalized problem behaviors, avoid transferring their own negative emotions and stress to adolescents, and help adolescents establish a good self-concept.

(4) Parents should communicate with their adolescents in a timely manner and pay attention to their emotional experience and behavioral performance. Through effective communication with their adolescents, they can gain their parents' understanding and support, which can help to reduce the anxiety and depression caused by the adolescents' lack of self-concept, and to reduce the occurrence of their internalized problem behaviors.

(5) Parents should learn to master some psychological control techniques, such as positive communication skills, effective role modeling, and positive attention, in order to help adolescents establish a good self-concept and reduce the occurrence of internalized problem behaviors.

We can consider the following aspects in our future research:

Improving parents' own quality and ability. Parents need to learn to express their feelings and opinions appropriately, and to respect and protect their children in their expressions; to be able to listen to their children's opinions and suggestions adequately when encountering conflicts and contradictions; to be able to maintain patience and rationality when communicating with their children; to treat their children equally, democratically, and respectfully when educating their children; and to be able to carry out family education in a way that is open, positive, rational, patient, and encouragement-oriented, among other things.

8. Conclusions and Outlook

This study draws the following conclusions by combing the existing literature at home and abroad:

Studying the performance level of parental psychological control in different situations, revealing the reasons for its formation and its influencing factors are of great significance for improving parenting styles and promoting the healthy development of adolescent psychology (Qiu Yafei, 2024). This conclusion has a certain guiding significance for the improvement of family parenting styles, that is, when

implementing psychological control on adolescents, appropriate ways and methods need to be adopted, and their independent personalities need to be respected while psychological control is being implemented, so as to minimize the harm caused to them (Minghan Cheng, 2023). Therefore, parents need to consider a variety of factors when implementing psychological control on their children, not to implement a high-pressure policy, nor can they completely ignore the feelings of their children. Finally, implementing parental psychological control on adolescents is a dynamic process. Among the many factors affecting adolescents' internalized problematic behaviors, family environment, social environment, school environment and so on have a great influence (Bai Jie, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the dynamic development process in parental psychological control of adolescents. With the development and change of society, the relationship between parents and children will continue to change. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct dynamic research on parental psychological control in the context of the times and social needs.

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