

Parental-adolescent Relationship Quality as a Link in Adolescent and Maternal Depression

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Abstract. This paper focuses on teenage depression and the family factor that influences or induce teenage depression. How to diagnose depression, this paper introduced some popular tests and scales that many hospitals use to help their patients. This paper also discusses different types of parenting and how they influence their children's cognition, future, and the way they view the world. There are four types of parenting: authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting, authoritative parenting and permissive parenting, and uninvolved parenting. Each parenting style is different and it will affect a lot from a child's earlier stage of life to adulthood, parenting is essential in a family. Adolescence is a critical period of life where a human being changes, matures, and prepares for adulthood. To add on, teenage depression and parents' influence are explained in this paper, this paper also gives information on how parents could help their depressed adolescents through the right way of communication with their children. Future research should include more qualitative data rather than quantitative data.

Keywords: Adolescence, parenting styles, depression, therapy.

1. Introduction

Humans are complex animals. While other animals act mostly based on their instincts, humans sometimes act based on the thoughts. Other than physical well-being, mental well-being is equally important as a critical part of human lives. It affects the way humans interact with each other, the way humans view themselves, and the way humans cope with complex problems such as stress. Mental health is fast becoming a key instrument of human society nowadays makes it hard to neglect the consequences of being "mentally unwell".

Depression, or clinical depression, is a mental disorder that causes its patients to feel continuous feelings of sadness, loss of interest, self-harm, and even suicide attempts [1]. According to Prb, an estimated amount of more than 1 in 6 adults are diagnosed with depression [2]. Depression is an increasingly important area in modern psychology due to the fact that many people are diagnosed and it is no longer uncommon to have depression nowadays.

This paper is going to focus on different types of parental relationships and how they might affect teenagers' mental status. Adolescence is a very special period of life in which a person goes through a series of changes both mentally and psychologically. Teenager during this period will mature and prepare for their adulthood. They might question their existence, their sexuality, and their identity, and it is very natural that many of the problems that occur in adolescence will cause a lot of stress [3].

Puberty is the stage where a child is going to learn about the world, mild anxiety is absolutely normal, however, there are many risks that this mood will turn into a serious mental illness. According to the statistics provided by the National Institute of Mental Health, NIMH, about 2% of teens who are suffering from mild, long-lasting depression, and dysthymia, have about a 15% chance of developing into bipolar disorder [4]. 30% of teens with depression will have substance abuse problems, they will have a relatively unhealthy social circle, and struggle in terms of academics. Studies done by NIMH indicate that different ways of raising children based on their gender will cause teenage boys unlikely to seek help from their parents [4]. Parents should pay more attention to their parenting styles when it comes to raising an adolescent and learn how to communicate with them.

2. The Diagnosis of Depression

The most common way to diagnose depression would be self-evaluation where a patient is given a paper-based or computer-based questionnaire constructed of closed questions asking for a patient's mental status. The questions and the results help doctors determine whether a patient has mental disorders. The contents of the questionnaire would vary based on different mental disorders. The mental disorder that this paper is focusing on is teenage depression, which is relatively easier to diagnose than other mental disorders.

2.1. DSM-5

DSM-5 is short for The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, which is the universal tool for diagnosing mental disorders [5]. It has a very long history of development; it is clear from the name DSM-5 which 5 means it's on the fifth edition. It offers a criterion that includes 70 mental disorders and it codes suicidal behavior and acts of self-harm [5]. DSM-5 has detailed definitions of mental disorders and provides examples of symptoms a patient might present while diagnosed with a specific mental disorder.

2.2. PHQ-9 and BDI

Frequently used criteria to diagnose depression are the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), and the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (SDS). The Beck Depression Inventory is used to help doctors measure depression symptoms and the severity of depression. It could be used from the age of 13 to 80 and it includes 21 self-report items using the form of multiple-choice questions. Each test will take about 10 minutes to complete [6].

The test has been tested worldwide for its reliability and validity and it has been approved. The Patient Health Questionnaire is a little bit different from the BDI because it works with DSM-5 criteria to diagnose depressive symptoms. It measures the frequency of symptoms and it will be scored and assessed in severity. Compared to BDI, it has only 9 questions and the last question measures the severity of suicidal thoughts of a patient [7].

2.3. SDS

Last but not least, the Zung Self Rating Depression Scale (SDS) is a 20-item scale that also assesses the severity of depression symptoms to diagnose whether a patient has depression or not. It takes about 15 minutes to take the test and it is used for clinical practice [8].

2.4. Other tests

Other tests include physical exams such as CT scans, fMRI, and more. Most hospitals and doctors use a combination of physical exams and self-reports, for example, measuring a patient's pulse rate while they are doing their self-reports.

Since there are so many mental disorders that might present or share common symptoms with depression, such as bipolar disorder, depression still has its specific symptoms that doctors and modern health science can identify. The symptoms of depression would be persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest, suicidal acts, suicide planning, various forms of self-harm, little or no energy, and so on [9].

There are also physical symptoms, such as eating too much or too little, sleeping too much or too little, slowed movements and speaking, having trouble concentrating, and much more. Teenage depression shares most symptoms with adult depression, except for school performance. A teenager with depression might have poor performance or poor attendance at school, use drugs or alcohol, feel misunderstood, and lack social interaction. There are still no accurate causes of depression found yet, however, there are some factors that might contribute to the formation of depression within a person. Firstly, there are biological factors, such as lacking some specific hormones, inherited traits, and changes in brain function. Teenagers have a higher chance of depression due to the fact that during

their adolescence their body undergoes several changes that might lead to malfunctions of hormone emission. Secondly, a teenager's environment is also a factor contributing to his/her well-being, if the teenager is traumatized or bullied, they are very likely to develop depressive symptoms. Last but not least, family factors can damage a teenager's well-being.

3. Parenting Styles and Parental Relationship

It is a shared fact that the first education everyone gets is from their parents. Parents shape the earliest worlds for their children and what they give, their children will carry them on in the future.

3.1. Four Main Types of Parenting Styles

According to Amy Morin's article, there are four main types of parenting styles, which are Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive, and Uninvolved [10].

The authoritarian parenting style focuses on making the child obey what their parents say, and it is the strictest parenting style that ever existed. Children's feelings were not taken into account and rules set by parents must be obeyed. The parents believe that establishing an absolute authoritative figure and making their children obey at all times is the way to success and when their children question their authority, their children are going to be punished. This style of parenting is usually strict, hostile, and aggressive.

Authoritative parenting is when parents allow their children to have a level of freedom, have the right to speak in the house, and generally have a rather relaxed and loving environment. Authoritative parents usually set rules around the house and have a reward system. They enforce positive discipline strategies to help their children learn better, be responsible, and express their true selves and feelings [10].

Permissive parenting refers to the type of parenting where parents set rules but barely enforce them. This type of parenting allows children to have a lot of freedom, usually a lot more compared to authoritative and authoritarian parenting. When their children have done something, wrong there are little or no consequences [10].

Uninvolved parenting is a situation where the parents totally disappear from their children's lives. They don't really spend time with their children, don't give guidance, set rules, or even don't know who their children are hanging out with. Uninvolved parents believe and expect their children to raise themselves [10].

3.2. The Impact of Parenting Styles on Children

Sounds like the most loving and effective type of parenting is authoritative parenting. In a family where parents take this type of approach when they are raising their children, their children are more likely to be responsible adults who are comfortable and confident about themselves, are happy, and disciplined, they can make good decisions, and evaluate their own risks. Overall, children with authoritative parents are more prepared for their adulthood and more likely to avoid having a bad relationship with their parents. However, in the real world, most families have mixed types of parenting. Children with authoritarian parents suffer from problems such as low self-esteem due to the fact that their needs and opinions are often ignored [10].

They are most likely to be good liars because they often have to lie during their childhood to avoid being punished. Children from families with uninvolved parenting or permissive parents often have bad self-control, they struggle with poor academic performance, and they are usually conflicted on the inside, craving love and attention while distancing themselves from people showing interest in them. They usually struggle with human relationships because they have no role models to learn from while growing up [10].

4. Adolescents and Teenage Depression

4.1. Adolescence

During adolescence, a series of changes are going on within the human body. From a biological perspective, adolescence is a period of time where the brain and the body grow until reach maturity. For example, a girl will experience her first period while a boy will experience their first erection in this period of time, which usually starts at 13 years old and ends at 18 years old. According to the Cleveland Clinic, the frontal cortex of the brain is the last part to fully develop during puberty. This part of the brain affects decision-making, prioritizing, and controlling impulses. So, a teenager might make bad decisions or lapse in judgment, sometimes even have extreme mood swings [11].

4.2. Teenage Depression

Psychologically, a teenager will experience a lot during their puberty. During this important period, a teenager is more sensitive towards his/her surroundings, pays more attention to other people's comments, and is more aware of their emotions, along with other people's emotions. It is a good opportunity to discover their true self, such as what they are interested in and what they want to do in the future. A teenager needs a lot of support to build their self-confidence. A lot of factors will influence the way they view themselves and the world, such as social media, friendship groups, school, etc. [12].

However, the only factor this paper is going to discuss is parenting. Different parenting styles will influence their children. Many parents have difficult relationships with their teenage children, many reported that their children as unruly, ignorant, or simply "turned bad". Teenage is very stressful for both children and their parents. Unfortunately, family factors will cause depression.

According to the statistics, for about 50% of depressed teenager's parents, at least one of them had depression [13]. Teenagers growing up in an inharmonic family have a higher chance of depression, with a family that constantly embarrasses, suppresses, and limits a teenager's freedom, a teenager is very likely to have suicidal thoughts, have little or no self-esteem, very conscious about other people's opinion, and develop depressive behavior or depression along with other possible disorders such as bipolar [10].

5. Adolescents and Parental Relationship

5.1. Parental Relationship

It's really common for teenagers to have difficult relationships with their parents. In 2018, four psychologists in China conducted a study with the objective of studying the correlation between depression and parenting styles in 6195 junior and senior students [14]. The study found that 2 out of 10 teenagers who are struggling with parental relationships are suicidal. They also found that overcontrolling, denial, ignorance, obsessive, and constant conflicts are the major causes for a parent to have a depressive child, and many depressive behaviors are linked with childhood trauma. Those children suffer from low self-esteem, they can't have a normal social life, and they place unrealistic expectations on themselves.

5.2. Suggestions

What should a parent do to prevent their children from getting depression? One thing that parents must understand is that they must treat their children as an adult, which requires a lot of respect. Supporting actions such as allowing their children to have more freedom, manage their own allowance, and complement them, will help teenagers develop a healthy mindset and help them build confidence later on in their lives [15]. The parents must be understanding towards their children's behavior and learn that sometimes when their teenage children present any sort of abnormal behavior it might be caused by hormones and other factors and parents should avoid scolding their children.

On many occasions when a teenager feels depressed, misunderstood, judged, and helpless, a teenager should understand when to seek help from their parents and their parents should provide their children with support and understanding.

As a matter of fact, many parents feel helpless when it comes to dealing with teenage depression and communicating with their children. They often suffer from anxiety and depression too. There are five approaches that were suggested by Forrest Talley that would be very helpful when it comes to dealing with teenage depression in terms of parenting [15]. First of all, parents should understand that depression is a mutual enemy for both teenager and their parents. Before eagerly trying to solve the problem, parents should try and learn about depression in order to understand their children better [15].

Secondly, parents should let their teenage children know that they are working in the same direction and they are working together. Many teenagers would feel alone, and nobody was there to help them, so it is essential to make them feel that they are not alone. Thirdly, parents often perceive some of their teenage children's actions as respectful, rude, or irrational, however, those actions are completely different in terms of their children's perspective, parents should learn to think from their children's perspective so that they can communicate better. Fourthly, parents should encourage positive behaviors, such as organizing outdoor activities such as picnics, sports, and many more. Last but not least, it is important to find a therapist and seek for professional help. This is always the most useful way of helping teenage depression, but finding a suitable therapist is the hardest. Parents should have a lot of patience when it comes to communicating with their children and the therapist [15].

Parents and teenagers need to understand that communicating emotional needs and satisfying other people's emotional needs is understanding social roles, such as parents, children, friends, and lovers. When a human is in those positions they are expected to communicate and place emotional needs on the person they love and trust, they are expected to listen and satisfy the emotional needs of people they consider special, and they are expected to trust and expect other people to satisfy the emotional needs. That is the most important aspect of building healthy and long-term relationships.

6. Summary

Different parenting styles will raise different children. To conclude, adolescence is a period of time when parents should pay more attention to their children. There are so many factors that will cause a teenager to be depressed, whether biological or psychological, and parents should be the first to help them cope with it. From the passage, it is clear that children with authoritarian parents would develop depressive symptoms, such as low self-esteem, and sometimes aggressive, children from permissive and uninvolved parents have little self-control, struggle in academics due to the fact that they are often neglected during childhood and their parents allow them to do basically everything they feel like doing. The education that parents give and the home environment are essential for a child to grow, so it is important for parents to communicate with their children and choose the right type of parenting where both the child and parents feel most comfortable. Teenage depression can be extremely deadly for adolescents due to the fact that they would often feel suicidal.

There is also very limited information on how to classify parents into a specific parenting style, as most parents have many characteristics that exist in two or more parenting styles. To add on, the present research focuses on collecting quantitative data, such as depression rates and suicide statistics, however, this data only represents how many, but doesn't explain why and the reason behind it. Future research can interview teenagers, and parents and collect data to investigate the possible relationship between parenting styles and depression rates.

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