# The Correlation Between Parenting Styles and Chinese College Students' Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help

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**Abstract.** Prior studies have demonstrated that authoritarian parenting styles significantly influence attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help (ATSPPH). However, they did not investigate the effects of parenting styles' particular factors. This study surveys 152 Chinese university students to investigate the correlation between parenting styles and ATSPPH. This study correlates three parenting style factors, overprotective, emotional warmth, and rejection, with four factors, confidence, stigma tolerance, need, and openness, in ATSPPH. The results show a substantial negative correlation between ATSPPH and parental overprotection; overprotection is strongly negatively correlated with confidence in psychological experts, and overprotection is correlated negatively with openness. A considerable positive link exists between parental emotional warmth and ATSPPH, as well as between emotional warmth and confidence and between emotional warmth and openness. Parental rejection had a substantial inverse relationship with ATSPPH, a significant positive relationship with stigma tolerance, a significant inverse correlation with confidence, and a significant inverse correlation with openness. Regression analyses further indicate that parental rejection significantly predicted children's tolerance and openness to seeking professional psychological help.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles, ATSPPH, college students, stigma tolerance, openness, confidence, need.

## 1. Introduction

This study investigates the correlation between parenting styles and college students' ATSPPH. In their early adult years, college students typically experience psychological issues, yet they cannot handle them independently. The psychological health of college students has long been a worry of society and academics since many college students who need psychological support or are even in a psychological crisis are unwilling to seek it actively. Psychological help is a person experiencing psychological and emotional difficulties seeking assistance from outside social resources, such as comprehension, support, knowledge, guidance, and therapeutic techniques, to address their psychological issues and promote inner development. One of the most essential methods for college students to address their psychological issues is via it. Getting assistance from professionally qualified or licensed individuals, such as psychiatrists, psychological counselors, and mental health professionals, is called seeking professional psychological help [1].

The family is also the most critical setting for developing a person's psychological makeup because it is the foundation for their growth [2]. Parenting styles are recurring patterns of attitudes, interactions, and strategies parents use to engage with and raise their children. Children's mental health, a crucial component of the home environment, is closely correlated with parenting style. Providing a positive home environment to support children's healthy development is crucial.

## 2. Literature Review

Modern Chinese adults are experiencing an increasing number of mental health issues as social competitiveness gets more and more fierce. Whether on an emotional or physical level, more and more people suffer from varying mental health issues. Some patients with severe mental illnesses

may even commit suicide, harming the individual and society. A research report published in The Lancet claims an estimated 173 million individuals with mental health illnesses, 43,000 of whom have been identified as having severe mental health issues in China [3]. The World Health Organization found that depression and anxiety disorders are China's two most prevalent mental diseases. Other mental health conditions include bipolar disorder, psychotic disorders, intellectual challenges, developmental problems, and autism. China has prioritized mental health and implemented numerous efforts to alleviate the situation, but it is still in a very critical state. According to the data from WHO, over the past ten years, China has worked hard to eliminate barriers that prevent people from accessing diagnosis and care, notably by passing a mental health law that requires new facilities and implementing various other programs [4]. However, the reality remains that China's recognition rate of mental diseases is significantly lower than the global average. Furthermore, the detection and treatment rate of mental health conditions is likewise quite low, with just 150 people per 100,000 receiving treatments for serious mental illnesses on average. China's present mental health condition is characterized by a high adult incidence of mental diseases and poor treatment uptake [5].

Many Chinese individuals may need mental health therapy based on the prevalence and impact of mental diseases; however, this demographic frequently has low rates of treatment-seeking [6]. Nevertheless, not everyone requiring mental health care is eager to seek expert psychological assistance, especially young individuals. Young people are reluctant to seek professional psychological aid, despite the high frequency of mental health issues and illnesses that manifest throughout adolescence and the early stages of life, according to research by Rickwood et al. [7]. People's unwillingness to seek expert mental health services is an essential reason for the low rates of mental illness identification and treatment in China, and many factors influence adults' ATSPPH. According to research by Gulliver et al., stigma, difficulties identifying symptoms (inadequate psychological literacy), and a propensity for confidence are the main barriers to receiving treatment among young people [8]. In general, young people who seek professional psychological care tend to be aware of mental health problems and resources for support, are at ease expressing their emotions, and have built relationships of trust with possible helpers. In contrast, young people who are less likely to seek help may have depression symptoms and suicidal thoughts together, may feel negative about getting help because they have had bad experiences getting it in the past, or may firmly believe they can handle their mental health issues on their own [7]. Additionally, the stigma attached to mental illness is frequently mentioned as a potential barrier to seeking qualified psychiatric assistance. It carries a particular stigma to ask for help for mental health issues. Reduced willingness to get mental health treatment from professionals is connected with anticipated personal discrimination and self-stigmatizing prejudice [9].

The inclination for independence, looking for assistance from other sources, and the cost of care are often stated obstacles to Chinese individuals getting mental health support. A few people mentioned stigma, family resistance, unwillingness to report a mental illness and worry about burdening the family as barriers, which shows that Chinese adults' ATSPPH relate to their independence and family factors [6]. There is proof that young people find social support and other people's encouragement helpful in getting treatment, as well as positive past experiences with seeking psychological help [8]. Rickwood et al. mentioned that speaking with friends and family can help young people get the support they need, and for young teens, family is even more crucial [7]. Family fosters a cozy and personal environment and is crucial to human growth. Parent's beliefs and parenting methods have a significant impact on the way their kids turn out. The support and care of parents has an impact on adolescents' mental health. It has been discovered that an authoritarian parenting style harms mental health and causes teenagers to acquire poor coping mechanisms. Contrarily, encouraging and supportive parenting promotes the growth of effective coping mechanisms and improved mental health. [10]. In addition, there is also a relationship between parenting styles and children's ATSPPH. A study by Xien and Zakaria found that authoritarian parenting significantly affected attitudes about seeking professional mental health care. However, there was little correlation

between parenting style and attitudes toward doing so, and levels of self-assurance and attitudes toward obtaining professional psychological assistance were significantly correlated [11]. Parenting styles can impact a child's mental health, and seek professional psychological help. Positive parenting styles contribute to a child's mental health, while hostile and authoritarian parenting styles jeopardize a child's mental health.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Participants and Procedures

This study uses a questionnaire method to survey undergraduates and postgraduates from several universities in China. The questionnaires are disseminated online. A total of 152 valid questionnaires are collected, with men accounting for 42.10 percent (64 participants), women for 57.20 percent (87 participants), and other genders accounting for 0.70 percent (1 participant).

### 3.2. Measurements

#### 3.2.1 Parentings Styles

This study uses the Chinese version of the Parental Rearing Style Measure (s-EMBU), created by Li Zhongquan et al., based on the My Memories of Upbringing-Short Form [12]. The scale has nineteen questions broken up into three categories, seven of which address overprotection (for example, " I wish my parents would not be so concerned with what I do."); six of these address emotional warmth (for example, "My parents praised me."); six of these questions pertain to rejection (for example, " My parents did not explain to me why they were upset or unhappy with me."). Using a Likert Four-point scale, this scale assesses how children perceived their parents' parenting methods. The higher the score, the more pronounced the related parenting style factors are. The three subscales' Cronbach's coefficients vary from 0.71 to 0.81. Participants are asked to evaluate their parents' overall conduct as they raised them rather than the father and mother's respective parenting methods.

#### 3.2.2 Seeking Professional Psychological Help Attitude

Fisher and Turner created the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH) measure in 1970, which was utilized in this study [13]. 2004 Hao Zhihong and Liang Baoyong translated and updated the scale [14]. The internal dependability of the scale is 0.86. There are 29 questions total, which are broken up into four subscales. The first subscale, "Confidence," measures individuals' confidence levels in mental health professionals; the second subscale measures participants' tolerance for the "stigma" associated with seeking professional psychological assistance in terms of both societal and individual shame; the third subscale as "Need" assesses participants' perceptions of whether they require professional psychological help; the fourth subscale abbreviates "openness," measures participants' openness to their difficulties. The scale uses the Likert five-point rating system. The likelihood of individuals seeking professional psychological help increases as more score high.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

This study uses SPSS 26.0 to perform correlation and linear regression analyses on the data. The study's hypothesis includes the following: The attitude of college students toward asking for professional psychological assistance is negatively correlated with the rejected parenting style, positively correlated with the warm emotional parental rearing style, and negatively correlated with the overprotective parenting behaviors.

# 4. Results

## 4.1. Correlation Analysis

**Table 1.** Correlation Between Parenting Style and ATSPPH

| Help-Seeking Attitude / Parenting Styles | | Total Points | Confidence | Stigma Tolerance | Need | Openness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overprotection | p | -.190* | -.222** | .159 | .024 | -.224** |
| | Sig. | .019 | .006 | .051 | .770 | .006 |
| Emotional Warmth | p | .189* | .207* | -.025 | .140 | .175* |
| | Sig. | .019 | .010 | .759 | .086 | .031 |
| Rejection | p | -.308** | -.240** | .336** | -.093 | -.314** |
| | Sig. | .000 | .003 | .000 | .252 | .000 |

A significant negative correlation is found between overprotection and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological assistance. Confidence is strongly adversely connected with overprotection. Overprotection and openness have a solid negative correlation. Emotional warmth and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological assistance show a strong positive correlation. Emotional warmth and confidence are positively correlated. Emotional warmth and openness have a positive relationship. Rejection and ATSPPH are significantly negatively correlated. Rejection and stigma tolerance have a solid positive correlation. There is a strong inverse correlation between rejection and confidence. A strong inverse correlation exists between openness and rejection (see Table 1).

**Table 2.** Correlation Between the Factors of Parenting Style

| | | Overprotection | Emotional Warmth | Rejection |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overprotection | p | 1 | -.210** | .489** |
| | Sig. | | .009 | .000 |
| Emotional Warmth | p | | | -.369** |
| | Sig. | | | .000 |

Overprotection and emotional warmth have a substantial negative association; rejection and overprotection have a strong positive relationship; and emotional warmth and rejection have a significant negative relationship (see Table 2).

**Table 3.** Correlation Between the Factors of Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help

| | | Total Points | Confidence | Stigma Tolerance | Need | Openness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Points | p | | .856** | -.656** | .788** | .753** |
| | Sig. | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| Confidence | p | | | -.357** | .644** | .486** |
| | Sig. | | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| Stigma Tolerance | p | | | | -.319** | -.512** |
| | Sig. | | | | .000 | .000 |
| Need | p | | | | | .386** |
| | Sig. | | | | | .000 |

A substantial negative relationship exists between confidence and acceptance of stigma; a significant opposing correlation is present between confidence and openness; an important beneficial relationship is available between confidence and need; a significant negative correlation between stigma tolerance and openness; and a substantial positive correlation exists between need and openness (see Table 3).

### 4.2. Regression Analysis

**Table 4.** Linear Regression Analysis of Stigma Tolerance and Parental Rejection (1)

| **Model Summary[b]** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .336[a] | .113 | .107 | 2.906 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Rejection | | | | |

**Table 5.** Linear Regression Analysis of Stigma Tolerance and Parental Rejection (2)

| **Coefficients[a]** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | Unstandardized B | Coefficients Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 (Constant) | 7.289 | .748 | | 9.744 | .000 |
| Rejection | .348 | .080 | .336 | 4.365 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Stigma Tolerance | | | | | |

The regression analysis results show a linear relationship between parents' rejection and children's stigma tolerance of seeking professional psychological help, and rejection can explain 11% of the variation of stigma tolerance (see Table4 and Table5). The regression equation is as follows:

$$\text{Stigma Tolerance}=7.29+0.35*\text{Rejection} \quad (1)$$

**Table 6.** Linear Regression Analysis of Openness and Parental Rejection (1)

| **Model Summary[b]** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| .314[a] | .099 | .093 | 3.454 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Rejection | | | |

**Table 7.** Linear Regression Analysis of Openness and Parental Rejection (2)

| **Coefficients[a]** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | Unstandardized B | Coefficients Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 (Constant) | 27.796 | .889 | | 31.267 | .000 |
| Rejection | -.384 | .095 | -.314 | -4.055 | .000 |
| b. Dependent Variable: Openness | | | | | |

The regression analysis results show a linear relationship between parents' rejection and children's openness to seeking professional psychological help, and rejection can explain 10% of the variation in openness (see Table6 and Table7). The regression equation is as follows:

$$\text{Openness}=27.80-0.38*\text{Rejection} \quad (2)$$

## 5. Discussion

This study's objective is to clarify the correlation between parental styles and college students' views on seeking out professional psychological help, which also includes the correlation between the four factors of ATSPPH—confidence, stigma tolerance, need, and openness—and the three factors of parenting styles—overprotection, emotional warmth, and rejection. There are many consistencies between the present study and previous research, such as a negative correlation between an individual's stigma tolerance and willingness to obtain psychological care. Authoritarian parenting styles reduce children's willingness to get professional mental health help. Furthermore, this study expanded on previous research and found that parental rejection significantly affected children's ATSPPH, specifically the correlation between rejection and stigma tolerance and openness. The flaw in this study is that participants were asked to rate their parenting methods as a whole without

considering that each parent has a unique parenting style. By considering parents as two distinct people, future studies might examine how parenting practices affect college students' feelings about getting professional psychological assistance.

## 6. Conclusion

This study discovers that college students' openness and confidence in mental health professionals are all impacted by overprotection, emotional warmth, and rejection, and rejection is also positively correlated with students' tolerance of stigma, which suggests that parenting styles significantly influence college students' ATSPPH, with parental rejection being a predictor of stigma tolerance and openness. This study first examined the effects of each factor of parenting style on ATSPPH, which facilitated the development of research on specific parenting methods. Finally, this study does not adequately consider the individual parenting styles of parents, and it analyses parents' whole parenting styles, which could be further refined to facilitate in-depth research on this topic.

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