

# A study of the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Adolescent

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**Abstract.** In recent years, adolescent depressive mood is a common concern in society, and some researchers have shown that parenting styles possess a tremendous influence on how teenage depression develops. Therefore, the research topic of this paper is the relationship between adolescent depressed mood and parenting styles, which was studied using the method of literature review. It was found that the dimensions of parenting styles affect adolescents of different genders, grades, and family structures differently, as well as differences in the extent to which fathers' and mothers' parenting styles affect adolescents. Significant correlations were found between parenting styles and adolescent depressed mood. Psychological resilience, cognitive reappraisal, and other mediating moderating effects also have a very important role in adolescent depressed mood and parenting styles. This study will enable parents to recognize the importance of adolescent depression and their own parenting styles in the development of their adolescents, so that they can optimize their parenting styles to improve or even reduce the probability of adolescent depression.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles; depression; adolescent; mechanism.

## 1. Introduction

Adolescents are an important part of the social improvement, however, 10% to 20% of kids and teenagers experience mental health issues [1]. Depression is one of the most common psychological problems among adolescents, and as a negative emotion, it has become a major risk factor for adolescents' physical and mental health in the 21st century. It has a negative impact on adolescents' lives, studies, friendships, cognition and other aspects, and may even be life-threatening.

The family is a vital resource of psychological support in the teenagers' growth, parenting styles are the key. It has been shown that some dimensions including parental emotional warmth and understanding, denial, harsh punishment, and excessive interference have some correlation with adolescent depressed mood. Moreover, parenting styles have significant differences in gender, family structure, and grade level. The ways in which and the reasons why different parenting behaviors affect depression are equally varied. Therefore, studying the effects of parenting styles on adolescent depression and exploring the mechanisms of depression are of great practical significance in preventing adolescent depression at the family level and in enabling parents to promote adolescent mental health through positive parenting styles.

## 2. The Definition and Status Quo Of Depression

A contemporary American psychologist, describes "depression" as follows: (1) "depression" is a fluctuation of the normal state of mind towards a low mood, i.e., the bad side of an individual's mood; (2) "Depression" refers to feelings of misery, sadness, or mental distress that arise in response to unfavorable circumstances or occurrences; (3) The term "depression" describes a person's expression of the absence of a consistent and enduring sense of well-being; and (4) "depression", as a symptom, refers to a pathologically low or bad state of mind [2]. According to the characteristics and causes of depression, depression can be divided into the following three categories: the term "depressed mood" describes a person's emotional reaction to external and internal stimuli, primarily displaying as poor happiness, impatience, and diminished interest.

Depressive Symptoms refers to emotional phenomena such as sadness and irritability triggered by individual's behavioral problems, accompanied by physical, mental, and social developmental discomforts; and Depressive Disorder refers to a severe state of depression, in which an individual is unable to carry out normal work and study due to the effects of depression over a prolonged period of time [2].

In 17 centuries, depression is considered to be an emotional state by people, which characterized by low mood, pessimism and depression. Scholar systematically researches depressed mood, a non-specific period of sadness, unhappiness, and irritability in an individual's state of mind, as an emotional response to environmental and internal stimuli [3]. Depressive mood is one of the most powerful symptoms that distinguish clinical depression from non-clinical depression [3]. Depressed Mood was an emotional response of an individual to environmental and internal stimuli, which is mainly characterized by low happiness, irritability, and reduced interest [2]. Based on previous related studies, Depressed Mood was an emotional experience of negative emotions, which is a significant and persistent emotional, behavioral, and physical and mental discomfort symptom of sadness, misery, and irritability, predominantly melancholy [4]. On the other hand, people defined depressive mood very simply as a long-term negative emotion experienced by an individual [5].

Some people learned that the present state of despair among Chinese high school pupils was more severe compared with that of middle school students by conducting a systematic search for studies related to depressive mood among adolescents in China and analyzing them using Meta meta-analysis [6]. In addition, some studies also found that depressed mood showed significant differences in gender [7]. On the other hand, only children and non-only children, rural students and urban students are also able to show significant differences in the level of depressed mood [8].

In this study, depressive mood refers to the persistent loss, sadness and so on that appear in an individual's daily life.

### **3. The Impact of Parental Parenting Methods on Adolescents' Depression**

#### **3.1. Parenting Styles**

The parenting styles have different dimensions and types. Baumrind (1978) used a research methodology of home and laboratory observations to typify parenting styles, classifying them into three categories based on the dimensions of warmth and control: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive [9]. This was followed by further categorization of permissive parenting styles into doting and neglectful, thus classifying parenting styles into four types [9]. Clinical psychologists at the Swedish Department of Psychiatry, further refined the connotations of parenting styles by categorizing fathers' parenting styles into six dimensions such as emotional warmth and understanding, favoritism of the subject, over-interference, refusal of denial, punitive severity, and overprotectiveness, as well as the five characteristics of mothers' parenting approaches, which include understanding and emotional warmth, favoritism of the subject, over-interference and overprotection, and refusal of denial, punishing harshness and other five dimensions [10]. Some scholars also categorize parenting styles into positive and negative parenting styles [11]. Positive parenting style is a positive relationship that exists between parents and children, which is full of warmth, support, democracy, etc., and is a good protective factor in the process of child development [11]. Negative parenting style, on the other hand, is a negative relationship between parent and child, which is full of rejection, punishment, hostility, etc., and is detrimental to the development of a healthy personality in children [11].

##### **3.1.1. A Comparison of Parenting Styles in Adolescent Sex**

Adolescents of different genders showed significant differences in the dimensions of parenting styles. The girls were able to obtain more emotional warmth from their parents than boys [12]. And boys scored significantly higher than girls on parenting dimensions such as harsh parental punishment, refusal to deny, and excessive interference [12,13]. This may be related to the gender characteristics

of male and female students. Boys are more mischievous, disobedient, and defiant than girls, and thus are more likely to produce behaviors that violate parental rules and family rules, thus eliciting negative reactions from parents. Girls, on the other hand, are more obedient and are less likely to engage in offending behaviors, thus reducing the likelihood of negative parental reactions.

The dimension of mother's control is also different in the gender of adolescents. The boys obtain more controls than girls [14]. In other words, mothers have more control over boys than girls. First of all, it is possible that because boys are more mischievous and active than girls, they are more difficult to discipline in parents' minds, so they need to be strictly managed and controlled in all aspects [15]; on the other hand, secondary school students are in puberty, and a typical feature of puberty is rebellion, and boys are more likely to show more outward behaviors, such as disobedience to parental advice, and behaviors with strong words, etc., which will make parents worry more, so boys feel more control from their mothers, which is in line with different features of boys and girls, and the norms of different gender roles in the society [15].

### **3.1.2. A Comparison of Parenting Styles in Adolescent Family Structure**

There are differences in parenting styles among different family structures. Family structure includes whether the family is an only child and whether the family is an intact family, a single parent family or a stepfamily. Only children are given more emotional warmth and less rejection by their parents than non-only children [16]. In terms of the parental dimensions of the father's emotional warmth, overprotection, and emotional warmth of the mother, the scores of intact families are higher than those of single-parent and reorganized families [17]. Taking more negative parenting behaviors toward non-only children; children of intact families can have a more positive parenting style later.

### **3.1.3. The Comparison of Parenting Styles in Teenagers' Grades**

The parenting dimensions of adolescents in different grades vary significantly. Someone indicated that on the dimensions of parental favoritism as well as father's refusal to deny, the scores of middle school students were lower than those of high school students, but had more emotional warmth and understanding from their mothers than high school students [13]. In the dimensions of harshness of punishment and refusal to deny by both father and mother, as well as over-interference by mother, middle school students had scores that were significantly higher than those of high school students [18].

### **3.1.4. Comparison of Parental and Maternal Parenting Styles in the Degree of Influence**

At the level of the rejection dimension, maternal rejection had a greater degree of influence on adolescent depression, while paternal rejection had a small effect on depression [19]. This may be attributed to the fact that mothers have more contact with their children and take on more parenting tasks, suggesting that mothers play an important role in parenting [19]. Moreover, numerous studies have revealed that depression in adolescents is more related to mothers [19]. Negative parenting styles of mothers are more likely to lead to the emergence and development of negative emotions in adolescents, and mothers who use too many negative parenting styles such as punishing harshness and refusing to deny to their children will increase their children's anxiety and depression [20]. This may be attributed to the fact that mothers have more contact with their children, take on more of the parenting tasks for their children, and have more influence on their children's emotional adjustment and healthy development than fathers, whose parenting concepts may not be directly reflected in their behaviors but rather conveyed to their children through their mothers.

## **3.2. The Relationship between Parental Rearing Style and Depressive Mood in Adolescents**

Many researchers at home and abroad, the connection between parental rearing style and adolescent depression has been studied extensively, and indicated that different dimensions of parenting style have significant correlation with the generation of adolescent depression. A large number of studies have proven that adolescent depression is significantly negatively correlated with

parents' emotional warmth and understanding [17,19], and significantly positively correlated with parents' severe punishment, excessive interference and protection, and refusal to deny [20].

In the dimension of denial, the results of this study are inconsistent with those of other people. The denial dimension has no correlation with adolescent depression [12]. It is speculated that the reason may be because the subjects of the study are high school students, and their parents mainly adopt positive parenting styles [12]. In addition, most families have only one child, and parents rarely refuse to deny the way, but give more emotional warmth and understanding. At the same time, junior middle school students were found to have a strong positive correlation between parental rejection and depression [21]. It can be seen that parents' denial has different effects on teenagers of different ages [21].

In terms of emotional warmth and understanding, the outcomes of this investigation are different from people whose findings that male depression has no correlation with the emotional warmth of the father and the emotional warmth of the mother, while emotional warmth of both fathers and mothers is a negative factor in female depression [22]. This may be because boys are more rational in life, and girls are more emotional, so they need more emotional support, and parents' emotional warmth and understanding are protective factors for their depression.

There is no correlation between parents' over-protection and over-interference and adolescents' depression [23]. This finding is quite different from Western studies, which may be due to different results caused by different cultures. The subjects of this study are Chinese people. Chinese parents have always expressed their concern for their children through excessive interference and over-protection, which is a common way and has been recognized by the social environment and even most teenagers. But in Western societies, this parenting style can cause children to feel powerless and out of control of their own actions, resulting in negative emotions.

## **4. Discussion on the Mechanism of Depression in Adolescents by Parenting Style**

### **4.1. Mediating Role**

Parenting styles and mental health are influenced by psychological resilience. In this case, psychological resilience partially mediated the relationship between parental denial, over-interference, and total mental health scores, i.e., negative parenting styles of middle school students can affect mental health both by influencing the level of psychological resilience and by directly affecting mental health [16]. Acting as a full mediator between parental emotional warmth and total mental health scores, parenting styles of emotional warmth will directly impact the degree of psychological resilience, which in turn will have an effect on the mental wellness of middle school students [16]. Parents who adopt an emotionally warm parenting style can increase their children's psychological resilience and thus reduce the emergence of psychological problems; parents who adopt a denial and over-interference parenting style may not be conducive to the improvement of psychological resilience thus increasing their children's psychological problems, which is not conducive to mental health.

Adolescents' attributional styles play an important mediating role as a significant cognitive style between parenting styles and their own depression [23]. While fathers' warmth and understanding acted entirely through cognitive components on children's emotions, mothers acted only partially through attribution on depression [23]. The father's punishment and harshness towards the child acted entirely through the cognitive mediation of depression. Chinese parents' over-interference and over-protection of their children had no direct negative effect on children's attributions and depression [23].

The multiple mediating effects of negative perfectionism and ruminative thinking between parenting styles and depression in middle school students were significant [14]. Parenting styles negatively affected negative perfectionism, fathers' parenting styles negatively affected depression and ruminative thinking, and negative perfectionism and ruminative thinking positively affected depression [14]. Motherhood and depression are interconnected by negative perfectionism, and

negative perfectionism and rumination thinking play a partial mediating role between father parenting style and depression [14]. Mothers' parenting styles affect depression through negative perfectionism in secondary school students, and negative perfectionism plays a fully mediating role between mothers' parenting styles and depression. Mothers are often viewed as the mainstay of family education, and their tolerant and supportive parenting styles create a forgiving family atmosphere so that their children can face life's challenges calmly and not overly pursue perfection. On the contrary, the more the mother interferes with and restricts her children, the more likely they are to develop negative perfectionism, including an excessive fear of failure, setting extremely high standards for themselves, and showing hesitancy for fear of imperfection.

The expression suppressor dimension in emotion regulation has a role in mediating between parental rejection and depression in adolescent parenting styles [24]. At the same time, social anxiety acts as a mediator between parental emotional warmth and depression in adolescent parenting styles [24]. Furthermore, it is found that emotion regulation and social anxiety has a role as a mediator between adolescent parenting style and depression [24]. Firstly, the parental rejection dimension in adolescent parenting styles can positively predict the expression inhibition dimension in emotional regulation. When parents ignore their children's emotional requirements and needs in life, children feel unresponded, and when emotions occur, they often choose to suppress and restrain. Expression inhibition can positively predict social anxiety. Finally, social anxiety is a significant positive predictor of depression. These results suggest that adolescent parenting styles can predict depression through emotion regulation and social anxiety.

Cognitive reappraisal strategies in emotion regulation strategies partially facilitate the interaction between various parenting styles (father's emotional warmth and mother's emotional warmth) and junior high school students' depression [17]. Paternal emotional warmth positively predicts cognitive reappraisal and higher levels of cognitive reappraisal led to lower levels of depression. Maternal emotional warmth positively predicted cognitive reappraisal, and cognitive reappraisal negatively predicted depression. Forgiveness plays a minor role in the mediation between family parenting styles and depression [17]. Specifically, parental emotional warmth and depression can be partially mediated by forgiveness [17].

Parenting styles and nursing students' depression are mediated by coping styles [25]. The role of positive coping styles in mediating between parental emotional warmth and depression was more significant, and coping styles mediated that middle school nursing students in Northwest Yunnan have a negative effect on depression due to parental emotional warmth [25]. In this study, nursing students in middle school in northern Yunnan, who felt the emotional warmth of their parents, were prone to form positive coping strategies and reduce the occurrence of depression, while those who felt the overprotection and rejection of their parents tended to adopt strategies to cope with negative situations, which in turn were prone to depression [25]. The effect of coping styles on mediation also suggests that the depression of middle school nursing students in Northwest Yunnan is not entirely controlled by their parenting styles, and that the risk of depression can be reduced by actively exercising subjective initiative, attempting to reacquaint themselves with the outside world, and optimizing their coping styles [25].

Bullying of middle school students mediated the effect between some dimensions of parenting styles and depression [26]. Specifically with respect to positive parenting styles, bullying played a small role as a mediator in the effects of fathers' and mothers' emotional warmth on depression in middle school students [26]. For negative parenting styles, being bullied partially mediated the effects of father's punishment, harshness, and denial on depression, and being bullied fully mediated the effects of father's overprotection on depression. Being bullied played a partial mediating role in the effects of mothers' refusal to deny, punishment, harshness, and on depression [26].

#### **4.2. Regulatory Role**

Cognitive reappraisal plays a moderating role in the impact of parental rejection on depression, and the positive predictive effect of parental rejection on depression decreases as the level of cognitive

reappraisal rises [27]. It suggests that cognitive reappraisal can help individuals understand depression-inducing parental rejection in a more positive way, is a rational attribution of parental rejection, and is able to moderate the impact of depression on parental rejection [27]. Individuals with high levels of cognitive reappraisal were able to significantly reduce the risk of depression induced by parental rejection [27]. Not all individuals who perceive parental rejection are depressed, and individuals with high levels of cognitive reappraisal are able to reduce depression induced by parental rejection by using cognitive reappraisal strategies [27].

### 4.3. Regulated Intermediation

Perceived parental rejection played a somewhat balancing role in parental rejection and depression among pupils in middle school [21]. The mediating role of perceived parental rejection between parental rejection and depression was moderated by peer relationships, i.e., parental rejection had a moderately moderating effect on middle school students' depression [21]. Adolescents in delinquent families are more susceptible to peer influence, and in environments with poor parenting styles, they may retreat into isolation or rebellion, or they may struggle to belong to a peer group and seek emotional compensation and acceptance [21]. At this time, positive peer relationships can help them gain support and assistance from their peer groups, enable them to acquire positive attitudes toward others, reduce negative expectations in interpersonal interactions, and promote the development of adaptability in other psychosocial domains among junior high school students, thus reducing the occurrence of depression; whereas, negative peer relationships can cause them to retreat back into loneliness or rebelliousness, thus resulting in depression.

## 5. Conclusion

The prevalence of depression has been rising annually in recent years, with younger people displaying a tendency toward depression, and more and more researches have been made on its related influencing factors. Starting from the family environment, this essay explores the connection between teenage depression and parenting practices. This study shows that the different dimensions of parenting style have significant differences in gender, grade, family structure and so on. Simultaneously, there exists a noteworthy association between the parenting style of parents and the occurrence of depression in adolescents. Negative parenting style is more likely to lead to depression in adolescents, while adolescents' mental health benefits from positive parenting. Furthermore, parents should give equal love to boys and girls, and not be overly harsh on boys because they are more mischievous and rebellious; parental affection may change a child's attitude and trajectory of growth.

Adolescence is the most important period for the physical and mental development of adolescents, and the child's character, values, outlook on life, etc., are initially formed in this period. Therefore, the author suggests that parents should always pay attention to their children's psychological state and correctly recognize their children's depression, and build a warm and caring family for their children during adolescence. For the children of divorced families, parents should give them more care and understanding. Most children of divorced families are more sensitive, low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, so parents' love is more conducive to their mental health growth. In addition, parents should give boys and girls the same love, not because the boy's character is naughtier and more rebellious, it is too harsh treatment, parents' love may change the child's attitude and growth trajectory.

It is self-evident that the growth of children during the growth of teenagers is greatly influenced by the parenting style of parents. Therefore, this study also suggests that positive parenting styles, emotional warmth, and understanding should be a priority for parents, pay attention to children's emotions, understand their inner needs, listen to their ideas, and be less severe and punitive. When the child does something wrong, parents should patiently communicate and guide, rather than blindly scold. Growing up in a harmonious and loving family atmosphere will help children cultivate and

develop positive emotions, reduce the possibility of depression, and thus promote the healthy growth of children.

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