

The Impact of Childhood Neglect on College Students' Self-focused Attention

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Abstract. Purpose: This study aims to explore the impact of childhood neglect on college students' self-focused attention, so as to deeply understand the psychological development characteristics of college students and provide a theoretical basis for preventing and intervening in college students' self-focused attention. Methods: A random sample survey of 307 college students was conducted using the Childhood Neglect Scale (CNS) and the Self-focused Attention Scale (SFAS). Results: There was a significant negative correlation between childhood neglect and the self-focused attention of college students. The higher the degree of childhood neglect, the lower the self-focused attention of college students. Childhood neglect has a significant predictive effect on self-focused attention of college students. Conclusion: Childhood neglect has a negative impact on college students' self-focused attention.

Keywords: Childhood Neglect; Self-Focused Attention; College Students.

1. Introduction

Childhood neglect, as a type of child abuse, has a wide range of impacts on individual psychological, emotional, and social functioning(PanJianping&LiYufeng,2005;Liao Ying,Deng Yunlong&Pan Chen,2007).Self-focused attention is a psychological phenomenon in which an individual's attention center turns to himself during the cognitive process. According to previous studies, self-attention is affected by many factors, such as social exclusion(Wang Ziwei&Tu Ping,2014).People have social attributes, and individuals have a desire for socialization and the pursuit of intimacy and a sense of belonging. However, childhood neglect damages the intimacy between children and their early parents, making it difficult for individuals to feel a sense of belonging and emotional support in their childhood(Yang Shichang, Zhang Yalin &Guo Guoyi.etal., 2003).The lack of emotional feelings can lead to changes in the degree of self-feeling in adulthood, either excessive self-focused attention or self-neglect(Gao Peixia,2006).Too much or too little self-focused attention will affect college students' mental health. Excessive self-focused attention will make them evaluate themselves too negatively, lack self-confidence, and even have a sense of inferiority(Zhang Yiran,2022;Lin Kanju,2023).College students with low self-focused attention find it difficult to discover their own strengths and values(Tang Wenjia,2019).Based on this, this paper analyzes the relationship between childhood neglect and college students' self-focused attention in order to clarify the influencing factors of self-focused attention and provide a reference for college students' mental health education.

2. Statements of the Problem

2.1. Childhood neglect is significantly negatively correlated with college students' self-focused attention.

2.2. Childhood neglect can negatively predict college students' self-focused attention.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Through the Wenjuxing online platform, 322 questionnaires were distributed to college students, of which 307 were valid, with an efficiency of 95.34%. Among them, there were 128 boys (41.7%) and 179 girls (58.3%); 223 people from two-parent families (72.6%) and 84 people from single-parent families (27.4%); 166 only children (54.1%) and 141 non-only children (45.9%); 175 students from towns (57.0%) and 132 students from rural areas (43.0%).

3.2. Materials

3.2.1. Child Neglect Scale (CNS)

The Child Neglect Scale (CNS) compiled by Yang Shichang et al. in 2007 was used. This scale is designed to help individuals self-report the degree of neglect they suffered during childhood (before the age of 16) (Yang Shichang, Du Ailing, Zhang Yalin & Zhang Yalin et al., 2007). The scale consists of four core factors: physical neglect, safety neglect, affection neglect, and communication neglect. Each factor contains specific items, totaling 38 items, which comprehensively capture all aspects of neglect. The scale is designed with a four-level evaluation standard: "1" symbolizes "none", "2" represents "occasionally", "3" is "often", and "4" is "always". The score directly reflects the severity of the neglect. The higher the score, the more serious the neglect. The reliability of this scale in this study is excellent, with a Cronbach α coefficient of 0.966, which fully proves the reliability of the scale in assessing the degree of childhood neglect in college students.

3.2.2. Chinese revised version of the Self-Focused Attention Scale (SFAS)

Kiropoulos et al. compiled the Self-Focused Attention Scale (SFAS) in 2006, Chinese scholar Xiao Shilai translated and modified the scale in a localized way in his study (Xiao Shilai, 2010). This scale contains 17 items and divides self-focused attention into four dimensions: social psychological perception, social physiological perception, individual psychological perception, and individual physiological perception. The classic Likert 5-point scoring method is used, in which the number 1 represents that the individual is completely contrary to the description, and the number 5 means that the individual is completely consistent with the description. This scoring method makes the level of self-focused attention clear at a glance. The higher the score, the deeper the individual's self-focused attention. The experiment shows that the scale not only has a high internal consistency reliability, with a value of 0.746, but also the reliability of each subscale meets the statistical requirements, and shows good convergent validity. These data together confirm that the overall reliability level of the scale is acceptable. In this study, we once again verified the reliability of the scale. Its Cronbach α coefficient was 0.882, which further proved the reliability of the scale in the study of self-focused attention.

3.3. Data processing

Spss26.0 software was used to process and analyze the data. To explore the relationship between variables, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis and linear regression analysis were used.

4. Results

4.1. Correlation between childhood neglect and self-focused attention in college students

Correlation analysis of each variable yielded the following results:

Table 1. Correlation Analysis of Childhood Neglect and Self-Focused Attention

	Safety Neglect	Communication Neglect	Physical neglect	Affection Neglect	Childhood Neglect
Social Physiological Perception	-0.395**	-0.297**	-0.355**	-0.395**	-0.393**
Social Psychological Perception	-0.310**	-0.231**	-0.285**	-0.296**	-0.303**
Individual Physiological Perception	-0.284**	-0.195**	-0.282**	-0.263**	-0.275**
Individual Psychological Perception	-0.309**	-0.168**	-0.329**	-0.245**	-0.277**
Self-Focused Attention	-0.388**	-0.269**	-0.373**	-0.361**	-0.375**

Note: ** indicates significant correlation at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

As can be seen from Table 1, childhood neglect and self-focused attention are significantly negatively correlated ($r = -0.375$), that is, as the degree of childhood neglect increases, the degree of self-focused attention of college students decreases.

4.2. Regression analysis of childhood neglect and self-focused attention among college students

Regression analysis was used to test the impact of childhood neglect on college students' self-focused attention. The results are as follows:

Table 2. Regression Analysis of Childhood Neglect and Self-Focused Attention among College Students

Predictor variables	Dependent Variable	R2	B	β	t	P
Childhood neglect	Self-Focused Attention	0.140	-0.169	-0.375	-7.058	0.000

As shown in Table 2, a regression analysis was conducted with the degree of childhood neglect as the predictor variable and the self-focused attention score as the dependent variable, $R^2 = 0.140$, $t = -7.058$, $p = 0.000 < 0.001$, indicating that childhood neglect has a certain predictive effect on self-attention, and it is a negative prediction.

5. Summary

This study revealed a significant negative correlation between childhood neglect and the degree of self-focused attention of college students, that is, the higher the degree of childhood neglect, the lower the individual's self-focused attention. Childhood neglect may lead to a lack of necessary care, guidance and support in the growth process of individuals, making them encounter difficulties in forming self-awareness, building self-esteem and self-confidence, and developing emotional regulation ability (Dong Jinjin, 2022). This will further affect their attention and focus on their own needs, feelings and values in adulthood, manifesting as a lower level of self-focused attention.

Each dimension of the Childhood Neglect Scale has a significant negative correlation with the Self-Focused Attention Scale. For example, affection neglect is associated with lower levels of self-attention in adulthood, which means that the individual's early affection needs are not met, which may lead to difficulties in establishing healthy affection connections in adulthood, lack of attention and understanding of their own affection state, and effective emotion regulation strategies (Xie Yunzi, Wu Jixia, Wang Shicheng, et al., 2022). This research result emphasizes that when understanding and intervening in an individual's self-focused attention problem, it is necessary to comprehensively consider the multiple dimensions of their childhood neglect and implement targeted psychological counseling or treatment.

The results of regression analysis showed that the degree of childhood neglect could be used as an effective predictor variable, significantly predicting the self-focused attention score, and it was a negative prediction. This confirmed the direct impact of childhood neglect on the degree of self-focused attention in adulthood, which means that by assessing the individual's childhood neglect, it is possible to make a certain prediction of their future level of self-focused attention. This result

provides important clues for prevention and early intervention work, suggesting that attention should be paid to the problem of childhood neglect, high-risk individuals should be identified in a timely manner, and appropriate psychological support and intervention should be given to improve their ability to self-focused attention in adulthood.

To improve the problem of self-focused attention among college students, we can strengthen care and support in childhood, which requires joint efforts from families, schools and society to avoid negative experiences such as neglect and lay the foundation for the development of their future self-focused attention ability. For individuals who have experienced negative experiences such as neglect, they should be identified in time and given appropriate psychological support and intervention to improve their mental health and social adaptability.

All the tools in this study are self-report scales. Although this form takes into account the subjective feelings of individuals, it cannot prevent some participants from lying. Therefore, this study should be supplemented with more research methods, such as interviewing cases or editing more effective indirect measurement methods to more accurately measure college students' self-focused attention and childhood neglect. In order to reflect the national situation, more comprehensive participants need to be drawn, which will help verify and expand the current research results and increase the universality and reliability of the conclusions. The relationship between childhood neglect and self-focused attention may be affected by many factors, such as family environment, social support, and personal traits. Future research can further explore the specific mechanism of these factors in the relationship between the two, for example, how they interact and jointly affect the individual's degree of self-focused attention. This will help us understand the complexity of this relationship more comprehensively and provide more targeted suggestions for the design of intervention measures.

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