

The Influence of Parenting Style on Children's Personality Development: based on Horney's Neurotic Theory

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Abstract: The family life environment in early childhood is an important factor that affects the personality structure of children and the way they react to society. Karen Horney's neurosis theory emphasizes the important role of family environment and early interpersonal relationship, especially parent-child relationship, in the formation and development of children's personality. This theory has certain reference value for parents to cultivate children's healthy personality. This study mainly analyzes the influence of parenting style on children's personality development.

Keywords: Parenting Style; Child Personality; Neurosis; Basic Anxiety.

1. Introduction

On the basis of innate heredity, personality is a unified organization formed in the process of socialization by the interaction of various personality tendencies, subjective efforts and other factors, and the integration of internal motivation organization and external behavior pattern [1]. Personality tendency refers to the dynamic system that determines people's attitude and behavior towards things, which is characterized by enthusiasm and selectivity. It includes different components such as needs, motivations, interests, ideals, beliefs, and values [2]. Studies have shown that childhood is a critical period for the development of individual personality, and physiological factors and living environment will have a significant impact on the formation and development of personality. As personality determines individual behavior and behavior guidance, personality is an important part of early childhood education.

Modern personality psychologists advocate the combination of environmental factors and genetic factors, and believe that personality is a comprehensive product of both [2]. Family studies of behavioral genetics have shown that heredity and environment have a great influence on cognitive ability, personality and mental health [3]. Children's living environment and family education are important factors affecting the development of personality, among which parent-child relationship has a significant impact on the development of child personality [4]. Karen Horney, an American psychologist and psychiatrist of German descent, has systematically discussed the influence of family environment, early interpersonal relationship, especially parent-child relationship, on the formation and development of children's personality from the perspective of neurosis. Based on Horney's neurosis theory, this paper discusses the influence of parenting style on children's personality development.

2. Horney's Theory of Personality Structure and Neurotic Personality

2.1. Theory of Personality Structure

Horney's theory of personality structure is different from

Freud's. Freud divided personality structure into three parts: "id", "ego" and "superego". Although Horney's personality structure theory also uses "ego" as the core concept, it is different from the "self" said by Freud. It is more like the person itself, a dynamic self-image, that is, the individual's view of himself. Because of personal life experience and cultural background, there are three types of self-images: (1) The real self is the source and original force of everyone's growth and development, which pushes people to realize their potential development qualities. (2) The ideal self is what people want to be, that is, what kind of goals an individual hopes to achieve in his development and what kind of person he should become. (3) The real self is the current status of the individual, "the physical and psychological sum of the individual at a given time" (Horney, 1950).

2.2. Basic Meaning of Neurosis

"Neurosis arises from a fear, a disorder of mind resulting from defensive measures against these fears, from efforts to find a compromise solution in order to ease internal conflicts. In fact, such disorders are called neuroses only when they deviate from patterns common to a given culture [4]." Horney's view breaks away from Freud's theory that personality development depends on unchanging instinctual forces. It emphasizes that the formation of personality structure is mainly dependent on our life environment, including the large social and cultural environment and the small personal family environment.

2.3. Causes of Neurosis

Horney pointed out that neurosis is caused by improper interpersonal relationships, it will make individuals feel contradictory, hostile, and hostile emotions will threaten the individual's sense of security, and the repression of hostile emotions will cause anxiety, it is this kind of helpless pain experience - anxiety, for the production of neurosis laid the foundation. Horney argues that neuroses exist because of "basic anxiety," or "the feeling of isolation that a child feels in a world of latent hostility"[4]. The meaning of anxiety is not the actual situation in real life, but refers to the inner feelings of the individual, that is, the individual always has a strong sense of insecurity, and a sense of powerlessness for

insecurity.

Horney believes that children's most basic need is to feel safe, and that the primary source of that security is their parents. If parents can sincerely care for their children, then their safety needs will be met, and their physical and mental development will be normal; On the contrary, if parents cannot provide or even damage children's sense of security, it will lead to neurosis [5]. Interpersonal disharmony, especially early conflicts with parents, will make children have a hostile mood towards their parents, but in order to survive, children must rely on their parents, and the social culture does not allow hostility, so children must suppress this hostile mood. In fact, the psychological state produced by repression is a typical anxiety, that is, the feeling of a powerful danger from the outside world, and the initiation of a lack of defense.

2.4. Manifestation of Neurotic Personality

Such hostile feelings caused by improper parenting styles will generalize to others around them as individuals grow and develop, and children will think that everything and everyone around them is unreliable and hostile, which aggravates their experience of "basic anxiety". The loneliness caused by anxiety also prompts them to adopt corresponding coping strategies [5]. Honey sees these coping strategies as manifestations of neurotic personality, including the neurotic need to be loved and approved, the neurotic need to seek help from a partner, the neurotic need for power, and the neurotic need to be perfect.

In fact, normal people also have needs such as love, approval, partners, power, etc., but they can make corresponding adjustments and choices according to their actual situation, rather than clinging to one and giving up the others. This is not the case with neurotics. In order to resist basic anxiety and eliminate conflict in order to maintain initial personality integration, their first response is to highlight one of these needs and suppress the others, which is contradictory and does not really solve the problem, overcome interpersonal barriers and maintain self-confidence and self-esteem. They will obsessively pursue certain needs as a way of life, even at great cost. In the process of clinging to one need, neurotic individuals try to reduce or eliminate their "basic anxiety," but other needs cannot be met, which causes them to feel more anxiety, so it becomes a vicious cycle.

3. Influence of Parenting Style on Children's Personality Development

Parenting style refers to a combination of parenting concepts, parenting behaviors and their emotional expression to children [6]. Baumrind proposed three common parenting styles: authoritarian, indulgent and authoritative [7].

3.1. Authoritarian Parenting Style and Compliant Personality

Authoritarian parenting is parent-centered. Parents want children to obey them unconditionally, let them grow up according to their parents' development blueprint, and expect all children's behaviors to be protected and supervised. Such parents are often indifferent to their children and ignore their needs and wishes. Get angry at children who break the rules and even take severe punishment. Children are in a passive, repressed state for a long time, they suppress their protests, blame all criticism and scolding on themselves, and thus feel that they are not worthy of love.

If parents in a powerful position educate children by intimidation, threat, prohibition, punishment or anger, they can make children feel frightened and worried all day long, resulting in children's fear of "because I am afraid of you, so I must suppress my hostility to you" [5]. Children in such circumstances, especially those who are often controlled by parental authority, are likely to cling to this "substitute" of love, afraid to resist, lest they lose the reward of being good. In essence, it is the loss of self-esteem caused by the fear of losing the "ideal self". Over time, a compliant personality is formed. People with the compliant personality type are particularly submissive to others, showing love, kindness, compassion, humility, weakness, selflessness, and generosity. Abhors conceit, ruthlessness, ambition, immorality and dominance. To control others in a submissive manner, expecting to be liked, missed, expected, and loved by others in exchange for one's submissiveness; The desire to be accepted and welcomed, approved and appreciated by others in exchange for submission; Hoping to make others feel that their existence is valuable and that they are needed by others (especially those who are close to them); They also want to use obedience in exchange for others' help, guidance, protection and care. Obedience is based on their inner calculation, which Horney mentioned in *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, that people with this personality have a philosophy of life: "If I am obedient, then you love me, you love me, then you will not hurt me" [4]. But in real life, their concept of life is often destroyed, because their humility and obedience often invite rudeness from others. Instead of fighting it, they suppress, mask, and regulate their anger to avoid hostility toward others, creating endless anxiety.

3.2. Permissive Parenting Style and Aggressive Personality

Baumrind believes that "permissive" parenting is a kind of *laissez-faire* parenting [7]. Permissive parents let children make their own decisions and control their own activities without parental interference. There are two different types of permissive parenting style, namely "drowning type" and "lax type". The typical manifestation of "drowning" parenting style is excessive concern for children, but often do not control children's behavior. They believe that children can do the right thing and can control themselves; When children make unwise decisions, they find it difficult to intervene, and the most common practice is to let children do what they want. The "lax" parenting style is also known as the "neglectful" parenting style, this kind of parents tend to be emotionally isolated from the child, and unlike the drowning parents, their indulgence of the child is not out of expectations for the child, but out of their disregard for the child, they have no expectations and standards for the child.

Children who grow up under the permissive parenting style feel the conflict between the relationship and the parents, the parenting style and attitude of the parents can only arouse hostility in the heart of the child, such as the preference for the child, unfair scolding, sometimes too much love, sometimes ignoring the existence of the child, moody mood changes. These lead children to have a distorted impression and negative evaluation of the "real self", making them feel that whatever they do and how they do it is always wrong and inferior. The deeper this impression is, the more perfect their opposite, accepted and approved "ideal self" will be. The difference between the two makes the "ideal self" dominate everything and become the master of the command. Over time,

children who grow up under the "drowning type" and "relaxed type" parenting style will show strong aggression, they rarely think about others, lack of enthusiasm and concern for others, such children are more likely to have bad behavior problems in adolescence, thus forming an aggressive personality. The aggressive personality advocates success, prestige and domination of others, which is characterized by narcissism, pride and arrogance, competitive, vindictive, conquest and possession. Attack as a means to achieve the recognition of others, control others and dominate the world's desire, with power, prestige and wealth as a bargaining chip to obtain security. Their philosophy of life is: "If I have the power, no one can hurt me". They are suspicious, distrustful, and hostile to their surroundings, resisting all influence exerted by others. However, their concept of life is also destroyed in real life, because of hostility and aggression, resulting in interpersonal tension, alienation and counterattack of others, in response, they do not adjust their hostility and aggression, but adopt more serious hostility and stronger aggression, in exchange for more serious interpersonal tension and intense anxiety.

3.3. Prestige Parenting Style and Healthy Personality

Authoritative parenting is a rational and democratic parenting style [7]. Authoritative parents believe that they should have authority in the minds of children, but this authority comes from parents' understanding and respect for children, frequent communication with children and help for children. Parents should treat children with a positive attitude, respond to children's needs in a timely and enthusiastic manner, respect and encourage children to express their own opinions and views. At the same time, they also have higher requirements for children, and they also give clear rewards and punishments to children's various behaviors. This highly controlled, emotionally receptive and warm parenting style has many positive effects on children's psychological development. Children with this parenting style can form healthy personality characteristics, such as: good independence, strong self-control, independent problem-solving ability, high self-esteem and self-confidence, good at interacting with people, friendly to people and so on.

4. Conclusion

First of all, the important role of parenting style in the formation of personality can be seen. Many psychological studies have found that authoritative parenting is conducive to children's personality development, therefore, parents should attach importance to emotional communication with children, encourage children to bravely express their views, and at the same time, treat children's childishness and negligence with a positive attitude, guide and inspire children in a circular way, so that children can grow up healthily in a democratic and equal family atmosphere. Secondly, Horney believes that the disharmony between parents and children is mainly due to the parents' strange behavior, changeable emotions, deformed love and lack of understanding of children. Therefore, strengthening parents' own quality is an important aspect of children's personality education. To improve the quality, not only to improve cultural literacy, but also to improve the psychological quality of parents, children live in the state of psychological integration with their parents for a long time, the major changes in the heart of their parents are actually very sensitive, the parents' good psychological state will let them have realistic expectations of the child, this

peaceful, stable mentality will also have a positive impact on the child. Finally, Horney argued that neurotic personalities arise from basic anxiety, which in many cases is caused by the conflicts and frustrations experienced by children. In fact, this kind of conflict and frustration does not necessarily cause anxiety. Generally speaking, children have a certain capacity to withstand setbacks, as long as they believe that setbacks are justified and necessary, then children will not be dissatisfied with their setbacks, although children suffer setbacks, they can also be sure that they are loved. Therefore, in the positive education of children, we should also be appropriate frustration education, to let children realize that life is not smooth, failure and setbacks are necessary to experience. However, an important prerequisite for frustration education is to make the child feel genuinely loved; otherwise, children who do not feel warm and safe in the family will only create more hostility towards the family with their "negative stimulation". It can be seen that Horney's neurosis theory has important theoretical and practical significance for improving and guiding the parenting style of parents and cultivating children with good personality characteristics. The formation and development of children's healthy personality include other social factors besides the unilateral role of parenting style. Therefore, while using Horney's theory to guide parents, we should also start from the reality of children's education and actively explore more effective and more in line with children's reality, so as to promote the formation of children's healthy personality.

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