

The Study on the Relationship between Social Differences and Mental Health in Adolescents

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Abstract: Adolescence is a critical stage in individual growth, as well as in the development of social skills and psychological states. During this phase, adolescents face numerous challenges and pressures, including adapting to social environments and maintaining mental health. Social differences are the distinct characteristics that adolescents display in their social behaviors, strategies, and outcomes. These differences may stem from various factors such as family background, personality traits, and personal experiences. Different social differences have varying impacts on adolescents' mental health. For instance, popular adolescents may find it easier to establish positive self-perception and good interpersonal relationships, thus possessing a higher level of psychological well-being. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the relationship between adolescents' social differences and mental health is significant for guiding their healthy development. This paper analyzes the types of social differences among adolescents and their interplay with mental health, providing valuable insights and implications for adolescent mental health education and social skills training.

Keywords: Adolescents; Social Differences; Mental Health.

1. Introduction

In today's societal context, adolescents face a complex social environment that increasingly exacerbates their psychological stress. Different family backgrounds, personality traits, and growth experiences can lead to significant social differences among adolescents. These differences are not only reflected in their social behaviors and strategies but also have a profound impact on their mental health. Compared to their peers, popular adolescents are often able to integrate more easily into groups, establish good interpersonal relationships, and thus possess higher self-esteem and confidence, which correlates with better mental health. In contrast, rejected or ignored adolescents may face more social troubles and feelings of loneliness, leading to frequent psychological issues such as inferiority, anxiety, or depression. Simultaneously, the state of mental health can also affect adolescents' social differences[1-4]. Adolescents with good mental health are usually more confident and outgoing, enabling them to participate more actively in social activities and establish positive interactions with others. On the other hand, those with poor mental health may exhibit withdrawn, aggressive, or anxious behaviors. Therefore, parents, educators, and society should work together to provide a positive social environment and support for adolescents, helping them develop robust social skills and mental health, providing more effective support and guidance, and promoting their healthy and happy growth.

2. Types of Social Differences Among Adolescents

2.1. Proactive Socializers

Adolescence is a phase full of changes and exploration. During this unique stage of growth, some adolescents stand out due to their distinctive social traits. These adolescents are typically extroverted and energetic, eager to express their opinions and feelings, and enjoy making friends widely. In social settings, they are quick to initiate conversations, using

humor and wit to lighten the atmosphere and attract attention. They are good at expressing themselves and also possess excellent listening skills, able to patiently listen to others' stories and provide appropriate responses and support. This outgoing, sharing nature makes them highly popular among their peers. They tend to easily connect with others and expand their social circles. By interacting with people of different backgrounds and personalities, they not only enrich their own experiences but also cultivate their empathy and understanding of others' needs and feelings. However, in the pursuit of wide social connections, they may face challenges in time management, needing to balance academics, hobbies, and social activities. Thus, for these adolescents, it is crucial to maintain their extroverted, sharing nature while also attending to their inner needs and managing their time wisely to avoid an excessive pursuit of social approval.

2.2. Passive Waiters

Within the adolescent group, there are individuals with introverted personalities who tend to be relatively passive in social interactions. These introverted adolescents are more accustomed to a wait-and-see approach, waiting for others to approach them rather than initiating social activities themselves. However, this does not mean they lack a desire for friendship and belonging. On the contrary, they yearn to build deep connections with others and share mutual joys and sorrows. Due to their personality limitations, lack of confidence, or social skills, they find it difficult to take the first step in making friends. These adolescents may doubt their abilities and appeal, worrying that initiating social interactions could lead to rejection or ridicule. Therefore, they tend to choose safe, inconspicuous ways to participate in social activities, such as quietly observing from the sidelines or maintaining contact through online communications[5-7]. However, this passive approach to socializing often limits their social circle and the depth of their relationships, potentially missing many opportunities to make new friends, expand their horizons, and resolve misunderstandings and conflicts with others due to lack of effective communication.

Hence, schools and families should also provide more understanding and support, encouraging them to bravely take the first step in initiating friendships, thus enjoying a more diverse and colorful social life.

2.3. Independent Type

Among adolescents, there is a category that enjoys solitude, appreciating time alone and not keen on bustling social activities. Instead, they prefer immersing themselves in their personal world, engaging in activities like reading, thinking, or focusing on personal hobbies alone. They relish the tranquility and freedom of solitude, undisturbed by the external world, which allows them to focus deeply on their thoughts and emotional processing. These adolescents may possess rich inner worlds and unique perspectives on various matters, expressing their thoughts and emotions through reading, writing, or painting. Although not averse to interacting with others, they tend to choose a few close friends for deeper communication. These friends usually understand their inner world and share similar interests and values. In the presence of close friends, they are willing to open up and share their joys and sorrows, seeking support and understanding. However, excessive solitude can also present challenges, as it may lead to shyness, introversion, or lack of confidence due to insufficient social experience. Moreover, excessive solitude might cause them to miss opportunities to make new friends and broaden their horizons. For such adolescents who enjoy solitude, finding a balance that suits them is crucial; they can enjoy their alone time while also actively participating in some social activities to expand their social circle.

3. Analysis of the Relationship Between Adolescents' Social Differences and Mental Health

3.1. Impact of Social Differences on Mental Health

Adolescence is a crucial stage for psychological development, and social activities are significant factors shaping their mental health. Different social styles and strategies can lead to distinctly different psychological experiences for adolescents. Popular adolescents, typically with strong social skills and a wide network, can easily integrate into various groups and establish good interpersonal relationships. This social advantage not only brings them more social support but also helps them receive assistance and comfort when facing difficulties, thereby fostering a positive state of mental health filled with confidence and optimism. However, the situation is quite different for those who are rejected or ignored. They might struggle to fit in due to introversion, lack of social skills, or other reasons, making it difficult to form deep friendships. Thus, it is essential to recognize the impact of social differences on adolescents' mental health and take appropriate measures to help them develop healthy social habits. Schools and families should provide sufficient support and guidance to help adolescents enhance their social skills, boost their confidence, and better integrate into society, enjoying the pleasures of socializing.

At the same time, attention should be given to adolescents who are neglected or rejected, offering them more care and help to make them feel the warmth and support of society.

3.2. Impact of Mental Health on Social Differences

During adolescence, their psychological state often directly reflects in their social behavior, thereby shaping their image and status among peers. As adolescents are at a critical stage of physical and mental development, they face multiple challenges and pressures from academics, family, and interpersonal relationships, all of which can impact their mental health. The quality of their mental health directly affects their social performance and popularity. Adolescents in good mental health are usually more confident and cheerful, facing life's challenges with a positive attitude and a willingness to interact with others. This positive mindset often attracts others, making them more popular in social settings. Conversely, adolescents with poor mental health may exhibit withdrawn, aggressive, or anxious behaviors. They might struggle with self-esteem, fear, or irritability, making it difficult to establish good interactions with others, and they may even be ostracized or isolated in social contexts. Therefore, it is crucial not only to focus on adolescents' social behavior but also on their mental health. Schools and families should work together to create a healthy and harmonious growth environment for adolescents, helping them develop positive psychological states and social habits. For those with poor mental health, timely psychological counseling and support should be provided to help them overcome difficulties.

4. Strategies for Enhancing Adolescent Mental Health

4.1. Creating a Healthy Growth Environment

Schools and families are pivotal in adolescents' growth process and should collaborate to create a positive and healthy growth environment, as depicted in Figure 1. Schools could regularly offer mental health education classes that are engaging and informative, helping adolescents understand the importance of mental health and providing practical mental adjustment techniques. Moreover, schools should establish professional psychological counseling services to offer timely aid and support for adolescents facing psychological distress. The family environment, where adolescents find sanctuary, plays a crucial role. Parents need to provide ample love and support, encouraging them to actively face life's difficulties and challenges. At the same time, parents should respect adolescents' individuality and needs, offering appropriate guidance without overly interfering in their choices and decisions. The harmony of the family atmosphere also significantly impacts adolescents' mental health. A peaceful, harmonious family environment helps foster a positive mindset and good qualities in adolescents[8-9]. Therefore, by working closely together, schools and families should focus on adolescents' mental health and growth needs, creating a better growth environment and helping them grow up healthy and happy.

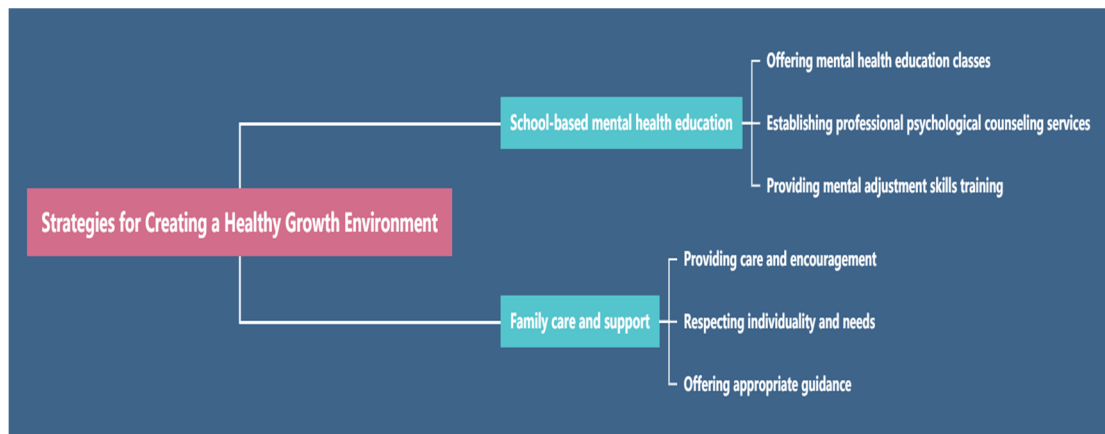


Figure 1. Strategies for Creating a Healthy Growth Environment

4.2. Enhancing Social Skills Development

During adolescence, the development of social skills is directly linked to the quality of their interpersonal relationships, affecting their self-esteem, confidence, and sense of security. Adolescents should take the initiative to step into social settings and actively participate in various social activities. Whether it is school clubs, class trips, or community cultural exchanges, these are excellent platforms for practicing social skills. In these activities, adolescents can establish deep friendships with classmates and friends, sharing life's moments and thus cultivating good interpersonal relationships. Therefore, parents and schools should fulfill their responsibilities: parents can encourage their children to attend family gatherings and social gatherings with relatives and friends, allowing them to learn how to communicate in the warmth of familial relationships. Schools can organize a variety of group activities, such as sports meets, artistic performances, and volunteer services, enabling students to expand their social circles and learn cooperation and communication skills. Through these efforts, adolescents can gradually improve their social skills, better adapt to social life, and continuously enhance their self-esteem and confidence in the process of interacting with others, thereby establishing a healthy psychological state.

4.3. Fostering a Healthy Lifestyle

A healthy body often accompanies a positive and sunny mindset, and conversely, an unhealthy lifestyle can lead to a range of psychological issues, as illustrated in Figure 2. Before adopting a healthy lifestyle, many adolescents are addicted to electronic devices, sitting for long periods, leading to obesity and lethargy. Their sleeping patterns are also irregular, staying up late at night and feeling listless during the day. This lifestyle severely affects their physical health, giving rise to psychological health issues such as anxiety and depression. However, when adolescents start to adopt a healthy lifestyle, the changes are evident. Engaging in moderate physical exercises daily, such as jogging or swimming, not only trains the body but also relieves stress and enhances mood. Additionally, maintaining regular sleeping patterns, ensuring adequate sleep, and balanced nutrition are crucial. Parents and schools should actively support and guide, offering healthy dietary advice, limiting the time adolescents spend on electronic devices, and encouraging them to participate in outdoor activities and sports. Adolescents should take proactive steps to develop good habits, laying a solid foundation for their physical and mental health.

Pre-culture state	Pre-culture state
Addicted to video games	Exercise every day
Irregular schedule	Go to bed at the same time at night
Eating an unhealthy diet	Eat a balanced diet
Mood swings	Mental state improved significantly
Lack of confidence	Confident and cheerful

Figure 2. Comparison of Healthy Lifestyles

4.4. Providing Timely Psychological Support

Adolescents are at a critical stage of physical and mental development, facing multiple challenges from academics, interpersonal relationships, and self-awareness, which often trigger psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. As important environments for adolescent growth, schools and families should closely monitor their emotional changes. Whenever adolescents show signs of depression, anxiety, loss of interest, or other unusual behaviors, immediate action should be taken. First, engage in deep communication with adolescents to understand their thoughts and feelings, offering them ample love and support. Second, encourage them to participate in beneficial activities, such as sports, music, or painting, to relieve stress and enhance mood. Finally, when adolescents face severe psychological issues, seek help from professional psychologists[10]. Through professional psychological testing and assessment, accurately gauge adolescents' psychological conditions and provide personalized psychological support and advice. Therefore, for the healthy growth of adolescents, schools and families should place high importance on their psychological issues, providing timely psychological support and intervention.

5. Conclusion

With the rapid advancement of technology and the advent of the information society, adolescents need to adapt to an increasingly complex and variable social environment while coping with pressures from academics, family, and self-growth. In this context, deeply exploring the relationship between adolescents' social differences and mental health is crucial for their healthy development. Different social strategies and behavioral patterns not only reflect the personality traits of adolescents but also, to some extent,

indicate their psychological health. Additionally, the state of mental health in turn affects adolescents' social performance, forming a complex and subtle interactive relationship. Although the relationship between social differences and mental health has garnered widespread attention, there are still many challenges in practical education and life. Therefore, analyzing the relationship between adolescents' social differences and mental health contributes wisdom and strength to their healthy growth. At the same time, parents, educators, and society should provide more understanding and support to help adolescents better cope with social challenges and achieve comprehensive development of psychological health.

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