

The relationship between parenting style and depressive symptoms during adolescence

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Abstract. This review explores the effects of parenting styles and attachment on adolescent mental health. Parents are key to shaping the lives of adolescents, and different parenting styles can affect different outcomes. Psychologist Baumrind's typology of parenting, which includes authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles, is the focus of the research. Adolescence is a pivotal phase, marked by major transitions such as the onset of puberty, and is both vulnerable and potentially amenable to interventions. Negative parenting styles, excessive parental expectations, and maladaptive attributional styles are associated with depressive symptoms. Positive parenting styles, including attentive parenting and self-compassion, are protective of adolescent development. The role of parental expectations and self-esteem in adolescent mental health is emphasised. It recognised the influence of culture on these dynamics and the need for targeted interventions. Furthermore, the way parents and adolescents perceive parenting styles, as well as the disparities between these perceptions, may have an impact on the mental health outcomes of adolescents. The influence of attachment styles, notably towards parents, significantly impacts depressive symptoms during adolescence and emerging adulthood. This review can contribute to future intervention efforts and prevention strategies in adolescent mental health with this review paper.

1 Introduction

It is well established that parents exert a significant influence on the development of adolescents. Different aspects of parenting, including supervision, consistent discipline, and positive interactions, are associated with different outcomes for adolescents. Research has found that children's mental health is related to the way parents interact with their children [1]. Adolescence is a critical stage characterised by changes in relationships, self-growth and the onset of puberty, which provides vulnerabilities and opportunities for intervention.

Baumrind delineated four distinct parenting styles by considering two key dimensions of parenting behaviour: control and warmth [2]. Parental control pertains to the level of regulation parents exert over their children's conduct, ranging from highly controlling to setting minimal rules and demands. Parental warmth relates to the extent of parental acceptance and responsiveness to their children's actions, as opposed to being apathetic and dismissive [3]. The combination of these two dimensions in various configurations yields four primary parenting typologies.

Authoritarian parenting is typified by the establishment of stringent standards and regulations that children are anticipated to adhere to with unwavering compliance. These parents often link their love and affection to their children's achievements, prioritizing success over the display of nurturing attributes [2]. This parenting approach is characterized by elevated parental

expectations and limited parental responsiveness, resulting in minimal reciprocal interactions between parents and children, with the expectation that children will unquestioningly conform to adult expectations.

The authoritative parenting style involves constant supervision and discipline along with a great deal of support and nurturing [2]. Authoritative parents embody a psychological balance between having high expectations of their children and being emotionally responsive to them. They set reasonable expectations and set boundaries for their children to follow, while maintaining a warm and accepting attitude. They value their children's perspectives, encourage their children to participate in decision-making, and frequently seek their children's opinions on family matters and choices.

The permissive parenting style is characterised by a lack of clearly defined and consistent rules. Rules are irregularly enforced and there is usually an apathetic, neutral or even positive attitude towards children's deviant behaviour. Thus, "permissive" parenting emphasises an overly permissive socialisation orientation and is typically characterised by parenting styles that are responsive to the child's needs without being demanding. These parents demonstrate nurturing and acceptance while avoiding the imposition of strict limits [4].

Uninvolved parenting is characterised by a distinct lack of responsiveness and demands. In the most extreme cases, this parenting style may exhibit characteristics similar to rejecting-neglecting or

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negligent parenting. It is worth noting, however, that the majority of parents who adopt this parenting style tend to be traditional parents [2].

It is crucial to understand that parenting styles function as typologies, rather than simple linear combinations of responsiveness and demandingness. Consequently, each parenting style transcends and diverges from the mere summation of its constituent elements. Depression stands as one of the most widespread mental disorders and has been analogized to the "common cold" within the field of psychopathology [5]. On a global scale, approximately 3.8% of the population grapples with depression, with a prevalence of 5% observed in the adult population. Furthermore, a gender-based breakdown reveals a 4% prevalence among males and a 6% prevalence among females. Notably, among individuals aged 60 and older, the prevalence escalates to 5.7%. It is noteworthy that an estimated 280 million people worldwide are currently suffering from the burden of depression [6].

The incidence of depression increases dramatically from childhood to adolescence, and this upward trend continues into adulthood. A decade-long prospective longitudinal study by Hankin et showed a six-fold increase in the prevalence of depression during the adolescent years. They showed that about 2 per cent of adolescents aged 13 years suffered from depression, but by the age of 18 years, this figure had risen dramatically to 17 per cent [7]. The parenting behaviour of caregivers significantly contributes to the mental well-being of adolescents. Numerous prior studies have traditionally examined the impact of caregivers' parenting behaviour on their psychological state during childhood. This literature review places specific emphasis on the effects of various parenting behaviours on the mental health of adolescents, with a particular focus on adolescent depression. Adolescence represents a critical phase marked by rapid physical and psychological development, and the experiences encountered during this developmental period often led to psychological challenges and diverse mental health issues [8]. Several factors influence the mental health of adolescents, with parenting style emerging as a demonstrated key determinant in shaping adolescent mental well-being [9].

Recent academic research has shown that positive parenting practices have important, lasting, and protective effects on adolescent development. Enhanced parental supervision, effective parent-child communication, and nurturing parent-child relationships have been found to mitigate the occurrence of depression among adolescents. This review will discuss the impact of different parenting styles and parenting behaviour on adolescent mental health and will also focus on the relationship between parental expectations, behavioural control and empowerment, and internalization of adolescent problems, particularly depression. The development of strategies to promote parenting practices that are conducive to the well-being of adolescents, while helping societies and families fill in the gaps in effective interventions for adolescent depression.

2 The impact of parenting style and relevant factor on adolescents

2.1 The effects of negative parenting

Smokowski et al. delved into how parenting influences various mental health outcomes, such as depression, self-esteem, anxiety, aggression, optimism about the future, and academic performance [10]. They believe negative parenting style can affect a teenager's mental health. Negative parenting refers to behaviours and attitudes that involve a lack of support, harsh discipline, low levels of parental involvement, and high levels of control. The researchers followed a diverse group of middle school students, observing their perceptions of parenting and its influence on their mental health over time. The study involved following the same group of participants over a period spanning from Year 1 to Year 2, during which some students transitioned to high school while others were promoted within the middle school system.

The outcomes of this study support the view that contemporary parenting practices have a more pronounced impact on adolescents' mental health. There was a correlation between parent-adolescent discord in the previous year (Year 1) and adolescent mental health outcomes in the current year (Year 2), even after accounting for Year 2 parenting practices. This highlights the negative consequences of conflict in the parent-child relationship and helps to understand how this discord triggers various psychological challenges in adolescents. The study shows that negative parenting styles, particularly parent-adolescent conflict, are positively correlated with adolescent mental health problems and negatively correlated with good adolescent outcomes.

On a similar aspect, Babore et al. discussed the importance of early adolescence as a critical period for understanding the development of relationships between parents, children, and the environment. It includes self-esteem and parental emotional availability. "Emotional availability" is defined as the emotional support, affection, and responsiveness that parents offer to their adolescent offspring. This concept encompasses the quality of the parent-child relationship, the extent of emotional bonding, and the adolescent's perception of their parents as emotionally available and supportive individuals [11]. The investigation revealed that self-esteem serves as a substantial predictor of early adolescent depression. The quality of the relationship with both parents, particularly maternal emotional availability, plays a role in emotional adjustment during this period. In the investigated sample, the prevalence of depressive symptoms aligned with results observed in prior research conducted in Italy and other nations. A robust correlation was identified between self-esteem and depressive symptoms. Reduced self-esteem emerged as a noteworthy predictor of depressive symptomatology in early adolescence. Furthermore, the study revealed that emotional availability on the part of both mothers and fathers played a pivotal role in the emotional adjustment of early adolescents. This study found that

both mothers and fathers had a significant impact on emotional adjustment for both boys and girls.

Furthermore, Ma and Tse investigated the potential adverse consequences of elevated parental expectations in their research conducted in Hong Kong. Their study focused on exploring the association between high parental expectations and adolescents' academic performance and levels of depression [12]. The research survey provides insight into the impact of parental expectations on the overall well-being of adolescents, taking into account both favourable and unfavourable consequences. The concept of elevated parental expectations encompasses parents' beliefs about their offspring's achievements, educational attainment and prospects for success.

The study collected data from 872 adolescents in secondary schools in Hong Kong. Participants responded to questionnaires about their perceptions of parental high expectations, academic achievement, depressive symptoms and related factors. Findings suggest that high parental expectations may have a twofold effect on adolescent development. In particular, these expectations are positively correlated with academic achievement, as adolescents tend to internalise and incorporate these expectations into their own aspirations for success. This can enhance academic motivation and self-efficacy, leading to better academic performance. However, this study also highlights the possible negative effects of high parental expectations. Adolescents who believe their parents have high expectations of them may feel more pressure and stress to meet those standards. This pressure may lead to depressive symptoms, especially in Asian cultures where academic achievement is highly valued and associated with self-worth [12].

Meanwhile, Rodriguez and colleagues investigated the interplay between parental behaviour, cognitive variables encompassing negative self-concept and maladaptive attributional styles, and internalizing issues involving symptoms of depression and anxiety among a sample of children aged 7 to 11. In the context of primary school-age children, it was observed that maladaptive attributional styles and negative self-concepts demonstrated a moderate level of correlation [13]. Self-concept refers to the way an individual perceives themselves, and their beliefs about their own abilities, qualities, and characteristics. "Negative self-concept" suggests that children in the study may have a generally pessimistic or unfavourable view of themselves. A maladaptive attributional style is considered problematic as it is thought to contribute to children's psychological difficulties, such as depression. It suggests that these children tend to blame themselves for negative events, expect them to persist, and view them as affecting various aspects of their lives.

In their investigation, Rodriguez et al. conducted a study with a cohort of children undergoing mental health interventions. Their research focused on discerning the discrete impacts of negative and positive parenting on depressive and anxious symptoms through cognitive factors. The results of their study indicated that, when analysed in conjunction, greater negative parenting was directly associated with elevated levels of both

depressive and anxious symptoms, whereas reduced positive parenting displayed distinct effects [13]. The relationship between less positive parenting and depressive symptoms was found to be mediated by negative self-concept and maladaptive attributional style, while the link between less positive parenting and anxious symptoms was mediated by positive self-concept. It is more relevant for understanding depression in children. Multiple studies have shed light on the significant influence of negative parenting styles and parental expectations on adolescent and child mental health outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of considering parenting practices, adolescent self-esteem, emotional availability, and cognitive factors when addressing adolescent and child mental health.

2.2 Positive parenting and the role of adolescents' perception

It is not simply negative parenting that has been found to be problematic for adolescents' mental health, but positive parenting has also been found to have some impact on adolescents' mental health. Geurtzen et al. examined how a parenting style called "mindful parenting" is related to adolescents' emotional well-being, specifically their levels of depression and anxiety. Mindful parenting involves being attentive, compassionate, and non-judgmental towards both oneself as a parent and one's child [14]. The researchers compared mindful parenting with more traditional parenting practices to see which is more strongly linked to adolescents' mental health.

They gathered information from a large group of parents and adolescents. The results showed that adolescents in the study generally had low levels of depression and anxiety. Parents reported practising mindful parenting quite often and also reported relatively good emotional well-being themselves. When looking at the connections between different factors, they found that adolescents' depression and anxiety were strongly linked to each other. Particularly, parents who demonstrate non-judgemental and self-compassionate parenting are more likely to have children with reduced levels of depression and anxiety. In addition, parents' personal experiences with depression and anxiety were also associated with their parenting styles, both positive and traditional, which further increased the likelihood that adolescents would have reduced levels of depression and anxiety [14]. The authors discussed that when parents are kind and understanding towards themselves in their role as parents, their children tend to experience fewer emotional issues. They also mentioned that these findings could help in designing parenting programs that focus on self-compassion, as this might be a key element in promoting adolescents' mental well-being.

The concept of self-compassion, which involves treating oneself kindly during difficulties, has been linked to improved mental health and social functioning [15]. As Geurtzen et al. found that a parent's self-compassion affects a child's depressive condition, is the

development of a child's self-compassion affected by their parents? Zhao and Karl designed a study to comprehend how self-compassion, parenting behaviours, friendships, and cultural factors relate to depressive symptoms in adolescents.

The study employed surveys with adolescents from the UK and China, using structural equation modelling to analyse the data. The findings indicated a link between positive parenting and increased levels of self-compassion and enhanced quality of friendships across both nations, resulting in a reduction in depressive symptoms. It is noteworthy that cultural distinctions were evident: interpersonal variables such as parenting and friendships exhibited a more pronounced influence on self-compassion and depressive symptoms among the Chinese participants. In contrast, the association between self-compassion and depressive symptoms displayed greater significance within the UK context.

Culture plays a pivotal role, as individualistic cultures (e.g., UK) emphasize personal goals, while collectivistic cultures (e.g., China) prioritize social harmony [15]. The study explores the potential impact of cultural disparities on the relationships between parental influence, self-compassion, social connections, and symptoms of depression in adolescents. Consequently, the research delves into the complex interactions among favourable parenting practices, self-compassion, friendships, and cultural factors as they pertain to the manifestation of depressive symptoms in adolescents. The findings underscore the significance of considering cultural contexts and psychosocial factors when addressing adolescent mental health.

Since most experiments have focused on the correlation between parenting styles and children's mental health from the child's perspective, it is important to consider whether parents' and children's differing perceptions of parenting styles may also be a factor influencing adolescents' mental health. In Babore et al.'s study about emotional availability, in the experiment, adolescents themselves rated their parents' emotional availability, hence making judgments about parenting style on adolescents' mental health from the adolescents' point of view [11]. Accordingly, considering both the parent and adolescent perspectives is crucial when evaluating parenting behaviours [16].

Nichols and Tanner-Smith delved into the impact of conflicting reports on parenting behaviours from both parents and adolescents, specifically in the context of adolescents who have faced substance use disorders (SUDs) [16]. The study examined discrepancies in reports of parenting behaviors between parents and adolescents, exploring how these discrepancies might relate to the adolescents' mental health outcomes. Different facets of parenting, including monitoring, consistent discipline, and positive interactions, have been connected to diverse outcomes in adolescents. Notably, inconsistencies in discipline and parental monitoring have consistently been linked to both internalizing symptoms (such as anxiety and depression) and externalizing symptoms (like rule-breaking and delinquency) in adolescents.

To gather data, the study involves adolescents who have completed substance use treatment programs. Both adolescents and parents participate in in-person interviews and provide information. By comparing both perspectives, the researchers aim to uncover relationships between parenting behaviors and mental health outcomes in adolescents. Research findings show that adolescents in recovery from substance use disorders (SUDs) exhibit increased levels of both internalising and externalising symptoms. The findings provide a complex understanding of the impact of these differences on adolescent mental health. Surprisingly, incongruence in positive parenting was associated with increased internalising symptoms in adolescents, contradicting initial expectations. This means that when parents do not perceive their parenting behaviour as positive, whereas adolescents do, this incongruence is associated with a decrease in internalising symptoms. On the other hand, discrepancies in parental monitoring were related to fewer externalizing symptoms. This means that when adolescents perceived higher levels of monitoring than their parents reported, they tended to show fewer externalizing behaviours. This study shed light on the differences in how parents and adolescents perceive parenting behaviours, and how these differences can be associated with adolescent mental health outcomes. It can also be seen that there is a relationship between adolescents' mental health problems and parenting styles, which may also be related to adolescents' perceptions of parenting styles.

This section provides a comprehensive exploration of the impact of parenting styles and their associated factors on adolescent mental health, emphasising the importance of considering both parental and adolescent perspectives when assessing parenting styles and their impact on adolescent mental health. Therefore, through the review of the above experiments, it can be found that interventions in the family, and in the relationship between the family and the adolescent, are essential when dealing with adolescent mental health issues.

3 Attachment style and depression in adolescents

In addition to parenting styles, the impact of the relationship between parents and adolescents on their mental health has also received concern. Agerup and colleagues explored the relationship between attachment styles and trajectories of depression throughout adolescence and early adulthood. The study focuses on the impact of attachment with parents and peers on depression. The quality of attachment, whether secure or insecure, is crucial in shaping an individual's mental health outcomes. Depression is prevalent during adolescence and young adulthood, particularly among females. The transition from attachment to parents to attachment to peers is significant during these years. An insecure attachment to parents is associated with increased vulnerability to the onset and persistence of depression [17].

Researchers involved three data collection waves: T1 (1998), T2 (1999), and T3 (2004). Participants were initially 8th and 9th graders, which was a longitudinal study. They measured depressive symptoms, depression diagnoses and attachment assessment by using different questionnaires and surveys. Research findings suggest that reduced secure attachment to either parent during the transition from mid-adolescence to early adulthood increases the risk of depressive symptoms. Insecure attachment to both mothers and fathers, but not to peers, was associated with a trajectory of depressive symptoms from adolescence to early adulthood. Specifically, adolescents with less secure attachments to their mothers are more likely to experience depressive symptoms at age 15 and in the following five years [17]. According to the findings, an association exists between insecure parental attachment and the occurrence of depression in adolescents at the age of 15 and beyond Agerup et al.'s experiments, conducted at different points in time, demonstrate more specifically the ongoing impact of parental attachment on adolescent mental health and provide more insights about the impact of parental attachment on adolescent mental health beyond the parenting style.

4 Conclusion

Several studies have explored the significant influence of parenting styles, attachment, and related factors on the mental health of adolescents. Negative parenting styles, typified by insufficient support, stringent disciplinary measures, limited parental engagement, and elevated control, have demonstrated correlations with a range of mental health consequences, including but not limited to depression, anxiety, and aggression. Parent-adolescent conflict has been linked to adverse psychological effects on adolescents, highlighting the importance of harmonious parent-child relationships. Conversely, positive parenting styles, such as mindful parenting and self-compassion, have demonstrated positive effects on adolescents' emotional well-being, reducing levels of depression and anxiety. Cultural factors play a role in how parenting practices influence adolescent mental health, with collectivistic cultures emphasizing social harmony and individualistic cultures focusing on personal goals.

The perception of parenting styles by both parents and adolescents, as well as the discrepancies in these perceptions, can also impact adolescent mental health outcomes. It is essential to consider both perspectives when evaluating parenting behaviours and their effects on adolescents. Moreover, within the context of attachment theory, attachment to parents, in particular, has important implications for the development of mental health outcomes in adolescents. Insecure parental attachment has been associated with a greater likelihood of developing and maintaining depressive symptoms during adolescence and into adulthood. Several of the studies rely on self-report measures to assess parenting styles and adolescent mental health. Self-report measures are subject to biases and may not always accurately

reflect the true dynamics of parent-child relationships or the mental health of adolescents. In future research, conduct longitudinal studies that follow adolescents from early adolescence into young adulthood to better understand how changes in parenting and attachment over time relate to the course of depression and other mental health issues. This may help provide insight into the enduring effects of these variables. In addition, psychologists could examine interventions and preventive measures to improve the quality of attachment and parenting behaviours of parents and adolescents. There is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures in reducing the likelihood of depression and anxiety in adolescents. Overall, these studies highlight the complex interplay between parenting styles, attachment, and adolescent mental health. Interventions in the family environment and relationships between parents and adolescents are crucial when addressing adolescent mental health issues. Understanding these factors can help inform strategies for promoting the mental well-being of adolescents.

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