

Original Paper

The Influence of Family Cohesion on Shyness of Contemporary College Students: The Mediation Role of Emotional Warmth

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Abstract

To explore the impact of family cohesion on shyness of college students, and the mediation role of emotional warmth between cohesion and shyness. The study used the FACESII-CV, the s.EMBU and the Shyness Scale to study 503 college students. The results show that the main effect of shy gender and grade is significant and the main effect of environment is not significant, family cohesion of college students is significantly positively correlated with emotional warmth, and significantly negatively correlated with shyness; emotional warmth is significantly negatively correlated with shyness; emotional warmth plays a completely mediation role between cohesion and shyness.

Keywords

family cohesion, shyness, emotional warmth

1. Introduction

Previous studies have shown that the shame experience of Chinese college students was more common and more serious than that found in other countries, and it has seriously hindered the development of college students' social skills (Ban, 2010), the most typical of which is shyness. Shyness is a kind of subjective social anxiety caused by the expectations of the evaluation of other people's interpersonal relationships in social situations. It is often accompanied by behavioral inhibition or emotional depression or inhibition. Shyness was significantly positively correlated with peer rejection and interpersonal distress; it was significantly negatively correlated with social self-confidence, impression management, peer acceptance and social skills. Normal shyness is a common psychological state of

human beings. Once shyness is excessive, it will cause many negative effects on the individual's interpersonal communication and social adjustment. Moreover, the individual's early shyness may also affect his or her adult career choice, spouse selection, marriage, and even cause physical and mental illness (Chen, 2014).

Family function is an important indicator for maintaining the normal operation of the family system and affecting the mental health of family members. Family cohesion is one of the important family functions. Family cohesion refers to the emotional connection between family members. Studies have found that family cohesion has a significant predictive effect on shyness. The weakening of family education function will lead to lack of understanding between parents and children, weakening of parent-child relationship, prominent contradictions in the family environment and reduced cohesion, which result in family members neither caring nor supporting each other, making people feel more shy (Zhou & Zeng, 2012).

Studies have shown that college students with different parental styles have significant differences in shyness. The level of college students' shyness has the greatest correlation with father's emotional warmth understanding and mother's emotional warmth understanding. College students who are highly shy are often a group that lacks the warmth and understanding of their parents. This shows that parental understanding and emotional warmth play a positive role in reducing shyness (Shan Minglei, 2010). The relationship between family cohesion and parental warmth is very close. Families with high cohesion can provide more warm and emotional support for their children, which is conducive to shaping the character of the children and forming a good parent-child relationship. On the contrary, for families with low intimacy, the indifference among family members or the autocratic attitude of parents towards their children will affect the physical and mental development of their children (Wang, Li, Ma, & Shi, 2012).

Therefore, this article aims to explore the influence of family cohesion on college students' shyness, and to further study the role of parental warmth in it. This research makes the following assumptions:

- ① There is a significant correlation between family cohesion, parental warmth and college students' shyness;
- ② The emotional warmth of parents played an intermediary role in the influence of family cohesion on college students' shyness.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

This study adopted online convenient sampling method, selecting a total of 587 college students from Shanxi, Hunan, Beijing and other places. After removing invalid questionnaires, the remaining valid subjects were 503 (valid rate: 85.67%), consisted of 163 boys and 340 girls aged 21.11 ± 1.88 years old. Participants are required to report gender, age, grade, family environment satisfaction, living environment, and other socioeconomic variables (parents' education level, family monthly income,

presence of brothers and sisters, living environment, etc.).

2.2 Chinese Version of Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACESII-CV)

This scale mainly includes two dimensional factors of cohesion and adaptability. The actual situation is used in the research. The answer for each item has five levels: yes, occasional, sometimes, often, and always, with a score of 1-5. The higher the score, the higher the cohesion or adaptability. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.91, and the two dimensions are 0.80 and 0.87 respectively, which means it has good internal consistency. In addition, it also has good convergent validity (Li & Liu, 2012).

2.3 Short Form Questionnaire on Parenting Style (s.EMBU)

In this study, s.EMBU (Jiang, Lu, Jiang, & Xu, 2010) introduced and revised by Jiang Jiang and others in 2010 was used to evaluate parental attitudes and behaviors. The questionnaire is a self-reporting questionnaire, which contains three dimensions of parental rejection, emotional warmth, and overprotection. The questionnaire contains 21 items. The answers to each item are divided into never, occasionally, often, and always. The score is based on 1-4 points. The higher the score, the more typical the parenting style. The Cronbach's alpha of the three dimensions in the questionnaire are 0.94, 0.93, and 0.71 respectively, and the overall is 0.73. In addition, the scale also has good structural validity and criterion validity.

2.4 Shyness Scale

The Shyness Scale is used to evaluate social anxiety and behavior inhibition. After revision, the current scale has 13 items. Each item of the scale has five levels of answers, which are very inconsistent, inconsistent, neutral, consistent, and very consistent. The score is based on 1-5 points. The higher the score, the higher the degree of shyness (An & Sheng, 2013). The score for shyness from low to high is 13 to 65 points. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale is 0.70, and the score of this scale is highly correlated with other scales that measure shyness, and has good criterion validity.

3. Result

3.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Each Variable

Table 1. Gender Difference of Each Variable (M \pm SD)

Project	Overall	Gender	
	(n=503)	Male (n=163)	Female (n=340)
Family parenting style	49.78 \pm 7.34	51.02 \pm 7.34	49.19 \pm 7.27
Family cohesion and adaptability	103.64 \pm 18.81	104.99 \pm 19.83	102.99 \pm 18.29
Shyness	36.32 \pm 12.11	33.73 \pm 12.77	37.56 \pm 11.60

In order to investigate the gender differences of parenting style, family cohesion and adaptability and shyness, we conducted F-test and found that there were significant gender differences in parenting style and shyness ($F = 6.91, 11.22, p < 0.05$). The level of shyness of female college students was significantly higher than that of male college students. In order to investigate the grade difference of parenting style, family cohesion and adaptability and shyness, we conducted F-test and found that there were significant grade differences in shyness ($F = 7.32, p < 0.01$). As the grade grows, the mean value of the shyness score becomes higher, but the standard deviation decreases. That is, college students will be more and more shy as the grade increased, and this trait tends to stabilize. In order to investigate the circumstance differences of parenting style, family cohesion and adaptability and shyness, we conducted F-test and found that no circumstance difference was found for the three factors ($F = 1.83, 2.90, 1.31, p > 0.05$). It shows that with the development of China's country's economy and the implementation of education policies, college students in rural and urban areas no longer reflect the significant differences in previous studies.

3.2 Related Analysis Results

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Results and Partial Correlation Analysis among Each Variable

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Family cohesion and adaptability	103.64	18.81	1							
2. Cohesion	54.90	9.40	0.97**	1						
3. Adaptability	48.74	10.03	0.97**	0.87**	1					
4. Parenting style	49.78	7.34	0.14**	0.18**	0.09*	1				
5. Rejection	10.55	4.60	-0.37**	-0.32**	-0.40**	0.65**	1			
6. Emotional warmth	21.15	5.37	0.70**	0.64**	0.71**	0.16**	-0.50**	1		
7. Overprotection	18.08	4.75	-0.22**	-0.14**	-0.28**	0.73**	0.60**	-0.40**	1	
8. Shyness	36.32	12.11	-0.47**	-0.41**	-0.50**	0.17**	0.39**	-0.57**	0.53**	1

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, $N = 503$.

First of all, there is a close relationship between parenting style and shyness. Specifically, rejection, over-protection and shyness are significantly positively correlated, while emotional warmth is significantly negatively correlated with shyness. Secondly, there is also a significant correlation between parenting style and family cohesion and adaptability. Rejection and over-protection have a significant negative correlation with family cohesion and adaptability, while emotional warmth has a significant positive correlation with family cohesion and adaptability. The correlation analysis between shyness and family cohesion and adaptability showed that shyness and family cohesion and adaptability showed a significant negative correlation.

3.3 The Mediation Role of Emotional Warmth between Family Cohesion and Shyness

Table 3. The Intermediary Test of Emotional Warmth between Cohesion and Shyness

	Shyness	Emotional warmth	Shyness
Constant	65.329 (22.337**)	1.001 (0.918)	66.488 (25.152**)
Cohesion	-0.528 (-10.064**)	0.367 (18.756**)	-0.104 (-1.675)
Emotional warmth			-1.157 (-10.691**)
R ²	0.168	0.413	0.323
Adjustment R ²	0.167	0.411	0.32
F	F (1,501)=101.290,p=0.000	F (1,501)=351.778,p=0.000	F (2,500)=119.245,p=0.000

Through the analysis of shyness in the two dimensions of family cohesion and emotional warmth, with cohesion as an independent variable and emotional warmth as a mediator variable, family cohesion can negatively predict the degree of shyness and the overall effect is significant ($p < 0.01$), while positively predict emotional warmth and the effect is significant ($p < 0.01$). The confidence intervals (95%) calculated according to Bootstrap sampling does not include 0. At this time, emotional warmth can negatively predict the degree of shyness and the effect is significant ($p < 0.01$), while the direct effect of family cohesion on the degree of shyness is not significant. It is a completely mediation effect, and the effect accounts for 100%.

4. Discussion

The results of this study show that shyness shows obvious differences in gender, that is, female college students are more shy than male college students. At present, there are still differences in the conclusions of the gender analysis of shyness. Some results show that there is no difference in the degree of shyness between men and women (Cheek & Buss, 1981), and some studies are consistent with the results of this study (Xie, Sun, Han, Gao, Chen, & Gao, 2015), there are certain differences in the degree of shyness between men and women. This may be related to the stereotyped role positioning or personality of male and female students in social relations. Men are generally expected to take on more responsibilities in social life, which requires them to be proactive and more outgoing, while may have more tolerance for women.

There is a significant difference in the degree of shyness between different grades, which increases as the grade increases, and gradually stabilizes. However, the results of this study are different from those of Shan Minglei (2010), which may be related to the influence of family adaptability and cohesion. In addition, freshmen who have just entered the campus may face a new environment that is relatively new. They will actively adapt to the environment, meet new friends, participate in activities and show a relatively active state. Since then, as the grade rises, the pressure on schoolwork and employment will

increase, social interaction may be relatively reduced, more calm personality, so that showing appropriate shyness.

Different living environments in cities and villages have no significant impact on shyness. This conclusion is significantly different from previous studies. Previous studies have suggested that living environment and self-esteem are the main causes of differences. This research believes that with the development of the national economy, the implementation of education assistance policies, and the improvement of living standards, rural families have begun to pay attention to the cultivation of children, increasing family cohesion, improving parenting methods, and making children feel more emotional warmth, so that makes the child's personality more outgoing and less shy, gradually reducing this urban-rural difference.

Family cohesion of college students is significantly negatively correlated with shyness. Among high school students aged 13-20, family cohesion has the greatest predictive effect on their mental health (Wu, Shen, & Luo, 2005). The results of this study are consistent with it: The stronger the family cohesion, the better the family atmosphere, which helps children form positive emotions, maintain mental health, and experience less shyness. The emotional warmth in the parenting process has a negative predictive effect on shyness, which is the same as the results of previous studies (Chen, Zhang, & Liang et al., 2014). The parental deny would make their children experience more frustrations and impair their self-esteem, as a consequence they fear of expressing themselves and improve the level of self-restriction, finally lead to the emergence of shyness (An & Sheng, 2013). However, the emotional warmth of parenting can give children more sense of security, increase their self-confidence, and improve their enthusiasm for communication with their parents, thereby reducing their shy behavior.

The mediating effect test results show that emotional warmth plays a completely mediating role between family cohesion and shyness. This means that family cohesion indirectly affects college students' shyness through emotional warmth. College students in different extents of family cohesion will experience different parental warmth, which take different effects on their shyness level. The lower the level of family cohesion, the weaker the emotional connection between family members, which is manifested by the reduction of emotional warmth felt by the child, resulting in a lack of care and communication between parents and children. Children may feel anxiety and insecurity, accompanied by silent autism and low self-esteem, unable to cope with high pressure environments, and eventually become shy. Conversely, if parents strengthen contact with their children, increase family cohesion and educate children with a warm and understanding attitude, it will be easier to establish a better parent-child trust and communication relationship, which can give children more confidence and a sense of security, and finally achieve the goal of reducing their shyness.

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