

Original Paper

The Influence of Parental Rejection Style on Children's Depression: The Moderating Role of Teacher Support

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between parental rejection and childhood depression and the moderating role of teacher support in this relationship. EMBU-C, CES-D10, PSSS and other tools were used to measure parental rearing style, children's depression mood and perceptive teacher support. The results showed that parental rejection style was positively correlated with children's depression, and teacher support was negatively correlated with children's depression. Teacher support acted as a buffer effect between parental rejection and children's depression.

Keywords

parental rejection, parenting styles, children's depression, teacher support

1. Introduction

Depression, as a negative emotion, is mainly manifested as low mood, loss of interest, mental exhaustion, decreased self-evaluation, pessimistic disappointment about the future, feelings of helplessness and meaninglessness etc. (Gong et al., 2020). Depressive symptoms have become an important public health problem affecting the physical and mental health of children and adolescents in the 21st century (Zhou & He, 2003). Depression in children and adolescents not only affects their normal learning, interpersonal relationships, behavior choices, and life satisfaction, but is also closely related to substance abuse, aggression and even suicidal behavior (Wang, Zheng, & Liu, 2009). A large number of studies have shown that negative parenting styles are significantly associated with an

increase in anxiety and depression symptoms (Zlomke & Young, 2009).

Parental rejection is a kind of negative nurture method that parents deny their children's reasonable needs, are indifferent or neglect their children, and make children feel distanced. Some scholars have put forward the theory of parental acceptance of rejection, and believe that parental rejection of parenting will have a long-term impact on the psychological growth of children and adolescents, and it will be reflected in the subsequent mental health status. According to Maslow's needs theory, children and adolescents have a psychological tendency to get care. When they perceive their parents' rejection of rational needs, this need cannot be met, and a series of psychological problems such as depression or anxiety will occur. Studies have shown that parental rejection can predict a number of negative behaviors of children and adolescents. Parental rejection may cause children to have self-doubt, self-denial, lower their level of self-esteem, and lead to depression. With the development of age, children get stronger and stronger support in the peer system, which reduces the demand for the family system. This may also lead to antagonism between children and the family, and further aggravate the negative effects of parents' rejection of parenting methods. A large number of studies have also shown that in the Chinese cultural background, parental rejection can significantly predict the depression level of middle school students. Young people's assessments of their family environment are often more negative than they actually are. Family system theory (Minuchin, 1987) believes that the family is a dynamic overall system, and the various sub-systems affect each other. If one system is damaged, the operation of the other systems will also be impaired. In addition to the relationship between husband and wife, parent-child relationship is also an important factor in the family. The indirect effect view is that parents' rejection affects the development of their children by destroying other subsystems in the family system, such as the parental system (Chi & Wang, 2002).

Teacher support refers to the degree of students' perception of the support and empowerment shown by the teacher in the behavior, learning, psychology and other aspects of the student. From a psychological point of view, this is more of an individual's subjective feelings rather than an objective measure of behavior. According to the theory of social support, students will experience external support in various types of relationship networks. This support has certain benefits to the individual's life or mental state. At the same time, teacher support, as a part of social support, has a positive correlation with students' academic performance and behavior. Some studies specifically divide teacher support into emotional support and tool support, and some scholars divide it into emotional support, learning support, and ability support.

Therefore, this article aims to explore the impact of parental rejection on children's depression, and to further study the role of teacher support in it. The hypothesis of this study: parental rejection is significantly related to children's depression, teacher support is negatively related to children's depression, and teacher support can play a buffer role in this process.

2. Method

2.1 Purposes

This study explores the impact of parental rejection on children's depression, and further studies the role of teacher support in it.

2.2 Participants

This article uses random sampling, using questionnaire star and Tencent questionnaire to randomly select 623 primary school students from all primary schools in Shanxi. After preliminary screening, 602 valid samples were obtained, including 300 males and 302 females, with an age range of 11.25 ± 3.27 years old.

2.3 Research Tools

The tools used in this study include three aspects:

2.3.1 Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran for Children (EMBU-C)

After being revised by Muris et al. (2003), it was revised by Wang Meifang, Niu Hua, and Zhao Xiao (2018) among Chinese elementary school children. After reliability and validity tests, this questionnaire has a good standard validity. The scale reflects the individual's evaluation of parental parenting behavior, which contains a variety of parental parenting attitudes and behaviors, divided into four dimensions, namely emotional warmth, anxious parenting, rejection and overprotection, etc., with a total of 39 items. This article selects the item of parental rejection factor. A 4-point scoring is used (1=never, 4=always). The higher the score, the higher the parental rejection to upbringing. In this study, the Cronbach's α coefficient of EMBU-C is 0.85.

2.3.2 Short Version of Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D₁₀)

Compiled by Andresen et al. (1994), Yang Wenhui and Xiong Ge (2016) conducted a reliability and validity test in adolescents and found that the scale has good structural validity, criterion-related validity, discriminative validity, clinical validity and reliability, the internal consistency coefficient used in normal children is 0.70 (Wang, Han, Jiang, & Liu, 2018). The scale reflects the individual's depression level, which contains three factors: positive emotions, depressive emotions, and physical symptoms, with a total of 10 items, such as "I feel lonely" and so on. The scale also adjusted the relevant items of CES-D₁₀ to suit elementary school children, changing the "work" in each item to "learning". 4 points are used for scoring, 0 means no or very few (less than 1 day), 3 means most or all of the time (5-7 days). After scoring positive emotions in reverse, the collected data analysis. The higher the total score, the higher the child's depression level. In this study, the Cronbach's α coefficient is 0.86.

2.3.3 Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS)

Compiled by Zimet et al. (1988) and revised by Jiang Ganjin et al. (1999), it has good reliability and validity in previous studies (Xiong, Ma, & Ye, 2020). The scale reflects the individual's self-understanding and self-feeling of social support, including three dimensions of family support,

friend support and other support, with a total of 12 items, such as “my friends can really help me” and so on. When applying the scale, taking into account the actual situation of primary school children, referring to the research of Ni Yakun, Guo Tengfei, Chen Ping, and Wang Minghui (2015), the subjects of other sources of support are identified as teachers, relatives and classmates. Using a 7-point scoring (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree), the higher the total score, the higher the child’s level of understanding of social support. In this study, the factor of family support is selected as the family support score, and the Cronbach’s α coefficient of PSSS is 0.91.

2.4 Research Procedure

Using the questionnaire star and tencent questionnaire to integrate the three questionnaires, visiting primary schools in Shanxi randomly selected primary school students to conduct a questionnaire survey, collected 623 data, after a preliminary screening of SPSS21.0, 21 invalid data were removed, and 602 valid data were retained. The effective rate is 96%.

3. Result

This study uses SPSS21.0 data processing software package and PROCESS plug-in to process the collected questionnaire data.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Parental Rejection, Child Depression Level and Teacher Support

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Parental Rejection, Child Depression Level, and Teacher Support

	Parental rejection	Teacher support	Child depression
Total score	1.78±0.52	2.56±0.45	1.88±0.55
Male	1.77±0.49	2.51±0.46	1.87±0.52
Female	1.79±0.55	2.54±0.45	1.88±0.58
Only child	1.73±0.52	2.53±0.57	1.82±0.56
Non-only child	1.78±0.52	2.57±0.46	1.88±0.55

Through the analysis of variance on gender, grade, age, and only child, the results are shown in Table 1:

① The gender main effect of parents’ rejection to upbringing is significant, and parents’ rejection to upbringing boys is more serious ($F=15.26$, $P<0.001$); ②The main effect of parental rejection of parenting style is significant. The younger the individual is, the more parental rejections are perceived ($F=3.36$, $P<0.01$); ③The main effect of age of teacher support is significant, and the older children can perceive more teacher support ($F=3.99$, $P<0.05$); ④ There is no significant difference between only children and non-only children in parental rejection, teacher support and depression level ($F>0.45$, $P>0.26$).

3.2 Correlation Analysis of Parental Rejection to Rearing Style, Children's Depression Level and Teacher Support

Pearson's product gap correlation analysis was carried out on parental rejection to parenting, teacher support, and children's depression level. The results are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Correlation Analysis of Parental Rejection, Children's Depression Level and Teacher Support

	Parental rejection	Teacher support	Children's depression
Parental rejection	1		
Teacher support	0.12	1	
Children's depression	0.51**	-0.64**	1

It can be concluded from Table 2: ①The parental rejection is positively correlated with the level of children's depression ($r=0.51$, $P<0.01$), That is, when the individual feels more rejection by their parents, they will show a more depressive emotional state; ②Teacher support is significantly negatively correlated with children's depression level ($r=-0.64$, $P<0.01$), That is, the higher the individual's perception of the teacher's support, the lower their own depression level; ③Teacher support has nothing to do with parents' rejection to raise up.

3.3 The Role of Teacher Support in Moderating the Relationship between Parental Rejection and Children's Depression

This article uses teacher support as the moderating variable to explore whether parental rejection has different effects on children's depression at different levels.

Since this article uses a continuous data scale for measurement, the independent variable parental rejection to rearing style, dependent variable child depression level and the moderating variable teacher support are all continuous variables, so the parental rejection to rearing style and teacher support will be processed centrally. The dependent variable children's depression level was not processed, and then the variables were put into the stratified regression model. The results are shown in Table 3:

Table 3. A Hierarchical Regression Model of Teacher Support Moderation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	1.878 ^{***} (95.353)	1.878 ^{***} (98.473)	1.881 ^{***} (98.804)
Parental rejection	0.503 ^{***} (13.260)	0.487 ^{***} (13.225)	0.484 ^{***} (13.181)
Teacher support		-0.105 ^{***} (-6.401)	-0.111 ^{***} (-6.706)
Interactive item			0.060 [*] (2.317)
R ²	0.226	0.276	0.282
Adjust R ²	0.225	0.273	0.279
F value □	$F(1,601)=175.820, p<0.001$	$F(2,600)=114.243, pp<0.001$	$F(3,599)=78.507, p<0.001$
ΔR ²	0.226	0.049	0.006
ΔF value	$F(1,601)=175.820, p<0.001$	$F(1,600)=40.972, p<0.001$	$F(1,599)=5.370, p=0.021$

Note: * $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$ *** $p<0.001$ The t value is in the parentheses

It can be seen from Table 3 that the regulation effect is divided into three models. In the first model, the parental rejection is mainly used to eliminate the interference of teacher support to judge the impact of parental rejection on children's depression. The results showed that the independent variables are significant ($t=13.26, p<0.000$), that is, parents' rejection to parenting style can significantly predict children's depression. The second model adds the moderating variable of teacher support on the basis of the former; in order to explore whether teacher support has a moderating effect in the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. We look at the significance of the interaction term in the third model, that is, the interaction term between parental refusal to parenting and teacher support is significant ($t=2.317, p<0.05$). As shown in the figure, parental rejection is affected by different levels of teacher support for children with depression, and different levels of teacher support may have different effects.

Table 4. Simple Slope Test

Adjusted variable level	Regression coefficients	Standard error	t	p	95% CI
Low level (−1SD)	0.484	0.037	13.181	<0.001	0.412 0.556
Average value	0.554	0.047	11.84	<0.001	0.462 0.646
High level (+1SD)	0.413	0.048	8.523	<0.001	0.318

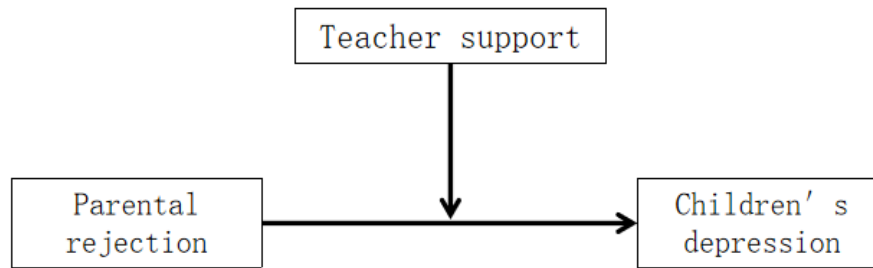


Figure 1. Teacher Support Adjustment Model Diagram

In order to further explore the difference in the influence of different levels of teacher support on the relationship between parental rejection and children's depression, we conducted a simple slope test. Select one standard deviation above and below the average of teacher support respectively, as high-level teacher support and low-level teacher support. A simple slope test shows that no matter what level of teacher support is, it can buffer the depression of children caused by parental rejection.

4. Discussion

This article focuses on the three perspectives of teacher support, child depression, and parental rejection to raise up, to explore the possible relationship between the three, and the possible efforts to reduce the level of children's depression. It is generally believed that teacher support is a positive environmental factor, while parental rejection and children's depression are not conducive to children's mental health. Therefore, judging the relationship between the three has obvious directionality. This article attempts to explore the possible impact on children's emotions from the interaction between the school system and the family system.

Parental rejection is significantly related to children's depression. That is to say, the more the parents reject the reasonable needs of the child in the process of family education, the more psychological distress will be caused to the child, and the depression will be further fostered.

Studies have shown that parental rejection is significantly positively correlated with adolescent depression, which is consistent with the data obtained in this study, and the students' perception of parental rejection of parenting is higher than the actual parent's rejection of parenting. In other words, in the minds of teenagers, parents' rejection will be amplified into a more serious perception of parents' rejection of parenting methods. In addition, the actual parental rejection has a positive predictive effect on children and adolescents' depression. This also enlightens parents that while educating children and adolescents, they should pay attention to their own behavioral tendencies, and they can use warm and reasonable positive expressions, and avoid using rejection behaviors (Luo et al., 2015). Parents'

rejection to upbringing is an important reason that affects children's mental health and depression. Parents' value judgment and behavioral rejection of their children's behavior may make children and adolescents feel inferior or insecure, and show more in subsequent behaviors. More withdrawal and self-blame show lower self-confidence and self-efficacy, which in turn causes depression, anxiety and other emotions in children and adolescents (Wang, 2005). As far as parents are concerned, they can try to break down the unreasonable demands of their children, and promise to reject some of them. Let the child know the reason for rejection. Appropriate rejection will help children's cognitive development and value judgment growth. However, the indiscriminate rejection of parenting style may affect children's perceptions and opinions of the outside world, and then develop the personality traits of shyness or fear.

The care, love and encouragement provided by teachers can help students to develop positive emotions. Studies have shown that teacher support is positively correlated with students' academic achievement, self-confidence, positive emotions, and subjective well-being, and negatively correlated with negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. This is consistent with the negative correlation between teacher support and student depression in this study. In other words, when the teacher's support is higher, the child's depression is lower, and vice versa, when the teacher's support is lower, the child's depression is higher. For teachers, this can give us an enlightenment for the direction of education and teaching: Try to make children feel more teacher support. Educators can care about the mental health and study life of children and adolescents from the perspectives of material assistance, case tracking, group counseling, etc. Let students believe that teachers are reliable and trustworthy in school, which can bring benefits to children's mental health to a large extent. Studies have shown that teacher support can regulate the relationship between belief in a just world and life satisfaction. This is similar to the regulation of parental rejection and children's depression. Teacher support can protect children from mentally unhealthy conditions caused by parents' rejection, which is equivalent to providing a protective cover for children's psychology (Jia et al., 2020).

The data in this article show that teacher support has a moderating effect between parental rejection and children's depression. Regardless of whether the parent's rejection is high or low, teacher support has a significant moderating effect, and teacher support can buffer the children's depression caused by the parent's rejection. When children experience more negative emotions in the family environment, they may be regulated by teachers' positive behaviors.

5. Research Limitations and Prospects

This article uses the cross-sectional research method to measure elementary school students' teacher support, parental rearing styles, and their own depression at the same time. The structural equation model can be used to infer the predictive effect of parental rearing styles and teacher support on pupils' depression. However, this process does not have continuity in time, so it is impossible to make

inferences about causality. Follow-up researchers can consider using longitudinal research or aggregated cross-over research to make causal judgments on the impact of family and school environment on pupils' depression.

Secondly, this article only selected samples from many schools in Shanxi Province for measurement, but this is not enough to explain the influence of parental rejection and teacher support on children's depression and their interactions across the country. Follow-up researchers can use large Scope samples or meta-analysis methods for in-depth research.

Finally, the control of other variables in this article is not refined. It is suggested that subsequent researchers can choose multivariate analysis, use additional variables for covariance analysis, and draw more precise conclusions while controlling for other conditions.

6. Conclusion

Parental rejection may cause depression in children and adolescents, but teacher support can protect children's mental health and buffer the resulting depression when parents at different levels of parental rejection.

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Note

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