

Parenting Styles and Emotional Regulation in Adolescents

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Abstract: **Background:** Adolescents with poor emotional regulation often experience difficulties managing impulses, handling interpersonal relationships, and maintaining psychological stability. Research suggests that parenting styles play a pivotal role in shaping the emotional and behavioral development of children and adolescents. Both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles have been associated with emotional dysregulation, low self-esteem, and externalizing or internalizing behavioral problems. **Objectives:** This study aimed to investigate how various parenting styles contribute to the development of poor emotional regulation in adolescents. It further examined therapeutic approaches that focus on restructuring family communication, improving parental attunement, and promoting authoritative parenting practices to enhance emotional regulation in adolescents. **Methods:** A comprehensive literature review was conducted, synthesizing empirical findings and theoretical frameworks from studies by Baumrind (1967, 1991), Belsky (1984), Buboltz et al. (2007), and others. Additionally, qualitative research themes were analyzed to identify patterns related to family communication, parental modeling, emotional attunement, and therapy as a behavioral modeling tool. **Results:** Six major themes emerged: (1) characteristics of emotionally dysregulated adolescents, (2) ineffective communication in the family system, (3) parental modeling of poor emotional regulation, (4) lack of parental attunement, (5) therapy as a modeling technique, and (6) individual work with parents. Supplementary themes emphasized the use of specific therapeutic techniques, including communication training, mindfulness, and relaxation strategies, which correlated strongly with improved emotional regulation outcomes. **Conclusion:** The findings reinforce existing literature linking parenting styles to adolescent emotional regulation and extend current understanding by emphasizing the therapist's role as a behavioral model. Integrating family-based interventions, mindfulness training, and authoritative parenting strategies can effectively promote emotional regulation and strengthen family relationships.

Keywords: Adolescents, Emotional Regulation, Parenting Styles, Family Therapy, Authoritative Parenting, Communication, Mindfulness.

1. Introduction

Adolescence represents a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social transformation. During this period, individuals experience heightened emotional intensity, increased self-awareness, and evolving interpersonal relationships. Effective emotional

regulation—the capacity to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions in adaptive ways—is essential for psychological resilience and overall well-being. However, many adolescents experience poor emotional regulation, which has been linked to a variety of maladaptive outcomes such as aggression, depression, anxiety, and academic or social difficulties (Baumrind, 1991; Sailor, 2004).

Parental influence plays a foundational role in shaping children's emotional and behavioral regulation. The family serves as the first emotional learning environment, and the parenting style employed by caregivers significantly determines how children understand, express, and manage emotions (Awong, Grusec, & Sorenson, 2008; Buboltz, Griffith-Ross, Marsiglia, & Walczyk, 2007). Baumrind's (1967, 1991) typology of parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful—has provided a theoretical foundation for decades of research in this area. Authoritative parenting, characterized by high warmth and firm control, is consistently associated with healthier emotional and behavioral outcomes. In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, marked respectively by excessive control or lack of structure, are associated with maladaptive emotional regulation, low self-esteem, and higher levels of emotional distress.

Neglectful parenting, also known as uninvolved parenting, is characterized by a lack of responsiveness to a child's needs.

Here are some key points:

Neglectful parenting involves minimal interaction, lack of supervision, and ignoring basic needs beyond food, clothing, and shelter. Parents may be indifferent, dismissive, or completely neglectful, failing to provide emotional support or guidance.

Given these associations, the present review focuses on how parenting styles contribute to poor emotional regulation among adolescents and examines how therapists can address these issues through targeted family-based interventions. Specifically, the review integrates findings from prior literature with themes identified in qualitative research, highlighting the roles of parental modeling, communication patterns, emotional attunement, and therapist-guided modeling in improving family dynamics and adolescent emotional regulation.

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2. Literature Review

A. Characteristics of Emotionally Dysregulated Adolescents

Although this theme was not explicitly identified in prior literature, the study emphasized the need to establish a shared operational definition among therapists. Emotionally dysregulated adolescents often display heightened impulsivity, irritability, and mood instability, accompanied by difficulties in maintaining relationships and controlling emotional responses. Establishing a consistent understanding of this construct ensured that all therapists worked from a common conceptual framework, thereby enhancing the validity of subsequent research findings.

B. Ineffective Communication within the Family System

The first major theme emerging from both literature and research findings was ineffective communication within the family. Poor communication patterns undermine the development of emotional regulation and adaptive coping in adolescents. Studies indicate that children raised in permissive households often exhibit weak interpersonal boundaries and low frustration tolerance, whereas those raised in authoritarian households experience low self-esteem, poor social competence, and externalized behavioral problems (Awong, Grusec, & Sorenson, 2008; Baumrind, 1991; Darling, 1999; Buboltz et al., 2007).

C. Parental Modeling of Poor Emotional Regulation

A consistent finding across the reviewed studies was that adolescents often mirror the emotional regulation patterns of their parents. When caregivers express anger impulsively or fail to manage their emotions, their children tend to replicate these behaviors (Buboltz et al., 2007; Sailor, 2004). Hetherington's research supports this observation, revealing that adolescents reared in authoritarian households often respond to parental authority with hostility and defiance (Hamon & Schrod, 2012; Wahloer & Williams, 2010).

D. Lack of Parental Attunement

Another significant theme identified was the lack of parental attunement, defined as a caregiver's inability to recognize and respond appropriately to their child's emotional needs. Belsky (1984) proposed that parents who experienced maltreatment, neglect, or separation in childhood often struggle with emotional responsiveness toward their own children.

E. Therapy as a Modeling Technique

The research also revealed that therapy itself serves as a powerful modeling environment for parents. Although not extensively documented in the literature, this approach aligns with findings suggesting that therapists should actively demonstrate the emotional and behavioral qualities they wish to cultivate in families.

F. Individual Work with Parents

Another central theme was the importance of individual therapeutic work with parents, aimed at helping caregivers transition toward an authoritative parenting style. Evidence-based parent training programs have proven effective in

enhancing warmth, reasoning, and appropriate discipline (Rowinski & Wahler, 2010; Wahloer & Williams, 2010).

G. Additional Therapeutic Techniques

Beyond these major themes, therapists identified specific techniques to strengthen family communication and emotional regulation. These included ensuring all family members are heard, teaching validation and communication skills, promoting collaboration and mutual respect, maintaining therapist attunement, focusing on the present moment, establishing structure and routine, and incorporating relaxation and mindfulness practices.

H. Parenting Practices, Styles, and their Influence on Adolescent Academic Achievement

This article, Spera, C. (2005), presents a comprehensive review of the literature exploring the interrelationships among parenting practices, parenting styles, and adolescents' academic achievement. Findings from empirical studies consistently highlight that parental involvement and monitoring serve as strong predictors of students' scholastic success. Nonetheless, several studies reveal a notable decline in parental involvement during adolescence, emphasizing the need for further investigation into the causes and consequences of this reduction. Moreover, the review suggests that the authoritative parenting style is generally linked to higher academic performance among adolescents; however, these associations vary across different cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic contexts. Darling and Steinberg's contextual model of parenting emerges as a valuable framework for addressing these inconsistencies, though additional research is required to examine the model's key linkages. It is further suggested that this model should broaden its conceptualization of "context" to encompass the wider cultural and economic environments in which family's function.

3. Results and Discussion

The review of the literature underscores the profound influence of parenting styles and family dynamics on adolescents' emotional regulation and overall psychosocial functioning. Across studies, authoritative parenting consistently emerges as the most adaptive style, promoting emotional stability, self-control, and academic success. Adolescents raised in authoritative households tend to exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, emotional awareness, and problem-solving abilities, likely due to a balance of warmth, structure, and autonomy granted by their caregivers (Baumrind, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles demonstrate adverse effects on emotional and behavioral development. Authoritarian parenting, marked by excessive control and limited emotional responsiveness, is associated with aggression, anxiety, and withdrawal among adolescents. Permissive parenting, while characterized by warmth, often lacks boundaries and discipline, resulting in poor frustration tolerance and difficulty managing negative emotions. Neglectful parenting further exacerbates emotional

dysregulation, as adolescents in such environments receive minimal emotional support and guidance, increasing vulnerability to behavioral problems and social maladjustment.

The findings also reveal that parental modeling and emotional attunement are central mechanisms through which emotional regulation skills are transmitted. When parents display empathy, emotional awareness, and calm coping strategies, adolescents tend to internalize these behaviors. Conversely, inconsistent or emotionally volatile parental behavior contributes to impulsivity and emotional instability.

In therapeutic contexts, family-based interventions emphasizing communication training, emotional awareness, and parental attunement have shown promise in addressing poor emotional regulation. Therapists who adopt modeling techniques—demonstrating emotional regulation, validation, and constructive communication—facilitate behavioral change in both parents and adolescents. Additionally, individual work with parents helps caregivers shift toward an authoritative stance by enhancing their reflective capacity, emotional availability, and consistency in discipline.

Spera's (2005) review further supports these conclusions by linking parenting styles to academic achievement. The overlap between emotional regulation and academic functioning is evident: adolescents who experience supportive and structured parenting not only manage emotions more effectively but also perform better academically. However, Spera's findings also suggest that cultural and socioeconomic variables moderate these relationships, highlighting the need for a more contextualized understanding of parenting influences.

Overall, the synthesis of literature and empirical findings underscores that effective emotional regulation and academic success in adolescents are products of emotionally responsive, structured, and communicative family environments. Interventions that address both emotional and relational components of parenting, therefore, hold significant therapeutic value.

4. Conclusion

In summary, parenting styles play a decisive role in shaping adolescents' emotional regulation and developmental outcomes. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth,

structure, and open communication, consistently supports adaptive emotional functioning and academic achievement. Conversely, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful styles undermine these capacities, leading to emotional instability, behavioral problems, and reduced scholastic engagement.

The evidence also affirms that adolescents' emotional regulation reflects parental modeling and attunement. Therapists, by integrating family-based and parent-focused interventions, can facilitate healthier emotional climates within families. Moreover, the inclusion of culturally sensitive approaches is critical to account for variations in family norms and socioeconomic contexts.

Future research should continue to explore the bidirectional nature of parent-adolescent emotional dynamics and the role of broader sociocultural influences on parenting practices. Ultimately, strengthening emotional communication and parental responsiveness remains central to promoting adolescents' psychological resilience and overall well-being.

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