

The Influence of Family Intimacy and Family Adaptability on College Students' Romantic Relationship

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ABSTRACT

The late adolescence and early adulthood are the key periods of personality development for college students. Romantic and family relationships are important for contemporary college students, and also the key factors affecting the future and even the whole life development. As the first environment for people to grow up, family has a profound impact on interpersonal communication and romantic relationship. Among them, family intimacy and adaptability have influence on college students' romantic relationship. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study the relationship between family intimacy, adaptability and college students' romantic relationship. This study analyzes such relationship and puts forward to provide help for correctly guiding college students' view of love and marriage, so as to promote the mental health development of college students.

Keywords: Family intimacy; Family adaptability; College students; Romantic relationship

1. INTRODUCTION

Family is the most basic cell of society, providing a necessary environment for everyone to grow up. People abide by social norms, learn ethics and morality in family, and get companionship and psychological comfort from family. Every factor in the family affects the daily life behaviors and mental health of college students. Family environment consists of four parts: soft environment, hard environment, internal environment and external environment. They have vital influence on a person's life. Soft environment refers to the psychological and moral environment of the family. Hard environment mainly refers to the environmental factors in the family that can be evaluated and measured by quantitative indicators, including family resources, parents' educational level and occupational status. Internal environment refers to people or things in one's own family that are not easily known to outsiders. External environment refers to the outside of the family, such as the surrounding environment of the family, the situation of the surrounding people, the external activity place and the external interpersonal relationship^[1]. This study focuses on family intimacy and adaptability, which have important influence on college

students' physical and mental health in soft environment, and explores their influence on college students' romantic relationship.

Family intimacy mainly refers to the emotional connection between family members, which is embodied in the mutual support and harmonious relationship between family members. Zhang's^[2] study on college students found that although they had more contact with society and friends, the opportunity for them to communicate with parents was reduced. They stated that no matter in study or life, college students still needed to rely on the support of family, and family intimacy level impacted college students' psychological health. At the same time, Wang^[3] also showed that family intimacy positively predicted college students' subjective well-being and it negatively predicted their depression, and family intimacy had a positive impact on college students' subjective happiness. Growing up in a happy family is beneficial to for students to establish a correct view of love. In this way, they will have higher level of self-esteem, self-love, etc. According to the research of Zhong and Ma^[4], there are significant differences in college students' intimacy by gender, urban/rural, and south/north. In addition, there is a negative correlation

between family intimacy and mental health level. It can improve the mental health level of college students by promoting family intimacy. It can be seen that family intimacy has an important impact on college students' behavior and mental health.

Similar to family intimacy, previous studies showed that family adaptability had an impact on college students' behavior and mental health. Family adaptability refers to the ability of the family system to change in response to the family situation and problems at different stages of family development. Zhong and Ma ^[4] showed that there were significant differences in adaptability between singletons and non-singletons, and between students from the south and the north. At the same time, Meng ^[5] showed that family adaptability had an impact on college students' perspective on intimacy and love. Growing up in a family with good adaptability has a very important impact on improving the personality traits of college students. The above researches indicate that in order to improve college students' behavior and mental health, we also need to pay attention to college students' family adaptability.

Romantic relationship originally refers to a harmonious relationship between two people. It is characterized by three things: (1) They interact frequently for a long time. (2) There are many different kinds of activities or events in this relationship, sharing many common activities and interests. (3) The two people have a lot of influence on each other. Therefore, the study of romantic relationship is of great significance for improving the physical and mental health of college students. As an important part of college students' behavior and interpersonal communication, romantic relationship may be influenced by college students' family intimacy and adaptability. Therefore, this study mainly explores the influence of the two on college students' romantic relationship, and puts forward suggestions to improve college students' romantic relationship from the perspective of family closeness and adaptability.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY INTIMACY ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

Family intimacy refers to the emotional connection between family members, including the emotional distance between family members, the consistency in interests and hobbies, etc. Family is the first contact growth environment for individuals, but also the most basic place for individuals to learn to communicate and establish romantic relationships ^[6]. The better the function of the family of origin has, the higher the level of good feelings, better understanding of romantic relationship, and more willingness students have to carry out and maintain a long-term romantic relationship ^[7].

Individuals who grow up in dysfunctional families may experience more difficulties in establishing and maintaining healthy relationships in adulthood. In the absence of effective communication and uncertain acceptance among family members, in order to gain a sense of self-worth and avoid conflicts in the family, individuals will almost put others first, be unable to draw a clear line and regard their personnel as their own business. When they grow up, they will bring this kind of mode into romantic relationship interaction, so that their feelings will be suppressed, and their ability to deal with daily affairs and social communication will become increasingly low. Finally, it will hinder the development of romantic relationship, which is not conducive to the establishment of correct love concept of college students.

Families with a high degree of family intimacy can provide more family warmth and social support for the growth of their children ^[8]. This not only has a great beneficial influence on the shaping of children's personality, but also contributes to the formation of a good parent-child relationship. On the contrary, for families with low degree of family intimacy, there is often a situation of indifference between family members. Their parents' attitude towards their children is autocratic, which will seriously affect children's physical and mental health development ^[8], as well as their perspective on love and romantic relationship when they grow up. Low degree of family intimacy will lead to some bad habits and psychological problems in the behavior characteristics and communication modes of family members, which has been proved by numerous studies. Therefore, in order to reduce individuals' family-derived psychological problems and behavioral problems, it is necessary to improve family intimacy among family members, which is of great practical significance to the physical and mental development of individuals ^[8].

The environment with high degree of family intimacy and good family function is conducive to individual independence, positivity, stability and maturity in personality, thus promoting the formation of good romantic relationship. Children growing up in such a family environment have a high level of mental health and a relatively low probability of having anxiety disorders ^[9]. Individuals who grow up in such an environment are more likely to achieve success, because they are more confident, can get respect from others, and can deal with various problems in reality with a calm attitude ^[9]. Such children will consider the feeling of their partners in adulthood, can calmly deal with the problems in the relationship with the partner, and will not feel worried about gains and losses. Families with a high degree of family closeness can provide some specific guidance and help for children, which can be reflected not only in interpersonal communication, but also in love and other aspects ^[9].

Many factors can influence family intimacy. First of

all, gender has significant influence on family intimacy, for girls perceived significantly higher degree of family intimacy than boys did^[8]. The reasons for such difference is that girls' emotion tends to be exquisite and they tend to have closer relationships with family. In addition, parents have higher requirements for boys and are more strict in discipline than girls, which may be the reason for boys' low perceived family closeness^[8]. In addition, in general girls desire to have a warm and close family environment more than boys, so they have a higher degree of actual family intimacy. This may have something to do with the traditional idea in our country that men are primarily engaged in work outside the home while women are expected to take care of the family.

In addition, there is a significant difference in family intimacy between one-child families and families with more than one child, and the actual family intimacy of one-child families is higher than that of families with more than one child^[8]. Perhaps because in the one-child family, the parents only focus on the only child, which will increase the children's sense of closeness to the family. It is also possible that most of the families with more than one child come from rural families. Parents of those families pay more attention to improve the economic condition of the family^[12], so they communicate little with their children and ignore their emotional needs, which greatly reduces the closeness of children to the family. All these will affect college students' perspective on love and romantic relationship.

Finally, there is a significant difference in the degree of family intimacy among college students of different grades. Freshmen have the highest level of family intimacy, while sophomores have the lowest. The economic capacity and social status of a family are often affected by the educational level and occupational level of the parents. If the educational level and occupational level of the parents are poor, the family closeness will be correspondingly low^[8], because it will affect the psychological environment of the family and the conflicts between family members are more likely to occur. Conflicts between family members will affect the intimacy between college students and their partners^[8].

3. THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY ADAPTABILITY ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

Family adaptability refers to the ability of the family system to cope with the problems that arise in response to the family situation and different stages of family development. In China, parents are accustomed to participate in every detail of their children before and after they become adults, and children have less control and independence in life, which indirectly results in poor adaptability of individuals and families. When there are problems in the family, most children are not informed and cannot put forward their own opinions to solve family

problems, and most of problems are solved directly by their parents. It's also one of the reasons why families are less adaptable. The relationship between parents and children is the most important factor affecting attachment. Nowadays, the parents of college students are mostly "post-60s" and "post-70s", who habitually take charge of everything in children's daily life, making children too dependent on their parents. Such lack of autonomy and over-dependence will influence their future romantic relationships.

There is a significantly negative correlation between family adaptability and fear-type attachment, that is, the worse the family adaptability, the more likely the individual is to develop fear-type attachment^[10]. Families that lack family adaptability cannot provide a stable home environment and atmosphere for their children. Individuals who have been in a stressful family environment for a long time experience more anxiety. This high level of anxiety extends into adulthood, leading individuals to avoid forming romantic relationships with others in order to avoid being abandoned. In dysfunctional families, the interaction between family members appear to be a problem, and the individuals' growth will be threatened. Their understanding of boundary will become fuzzy, and over time, the tilt of the interpersonal mode can destroy intimacy^[13]. In other words, a lack of family adaptability can lead to children's lack of control over the situation, which directly affects the quality of their romantic relationships.

Similar to family intimacy, a variety of factors can influence family adaptability. There are significant differences in family adaptability between one-child families or families with more than children. This is reflected by Yin's study^[11], which shows that the family adaptability of families with more than children is significantly higher than that of one-child families^[10]. There are more members in families with more than children, so with effort invested, it is easier to solve and change periodical problems. When encountering problems, such families can take advice from various angles to better cope with the problems. In the one-child family, when family problems occur, most children's views are not valued, and they may be unwilling to cooperate with changes, leading to poor family adaptability. In addition, college students from single-parent families have lower family adaptability than those from non-single-parent families, which is due to psychological trauma brought to them by parents' divorce or families' death^[9].

It is very important to put forward the influence of family environment on family adaptability. In many Chinese films and television literature works, the big family stories with rural themes mostly show the scene of mother's kindness, son's filial piety and family reunion, which makes many people mistakenly believe that rural college students are more adaptable to family than urban

college students, which is actually not the case. Rural parents tend to work outside and do not go back home for a long time. A large number of rural college students have left-behind experience. When they go to college, they live in different places with their parents [8]. Moreover, in films and television literary works, there are many barriers between two generations, mostly because of families in the busy enterprise cause family tensions to not live with their children, which is an important factor, but the function of the rich family is better and parents are more likely to meet their children's demand, so eventually rich families do not have a significantly lower intimacy and adaptability than poverty and ordinary families. On the contrary, their family adaptability is significantly higher than that of college students from poor families [8]. This is related to the large amount of social resources occupied by wealthy families. Rich asset accumulation and wide network resources make family conflicts easier to solve, while many poor college students have part-time jobs at school, which not only have to cope with economic pressure but also bear the high expectations of their families, often resulting in generation gap and reduces adaptability.

4. Discussion

4.1 Strengthen internal family contact and communicate actively

In terms of family intimacy, it is suggested that parents communicate more with their children and pay attention to their children's suggestions and opinions on solving family problems. Listen to the opinions and suggestions of family members in many ways. Family members can try to adopt a variety of ways to cope with family problems, let each family member actively participate in solving family problems, and contribute to the family and improve the family's adaptability when encountering problems.

Positive communication skills can help family members understand each other, both emotionally and informally. Such communication skills include listening, empathy, and supportive words, which can enhance the family's ability to cope with changes in the environment. In the process of personal growth, if the parent-child interaction relationship is not changed, it will affect the establishment of romantic love relationship in adulthood and the expression of personal interpersonal and social functions, which ultimately impairs the personality function and affects the formation of personality traits. Because family adaptability will have an impact on the individual's unique psychological work mode and psychological representation, whether adult interpersonal relationship is well developed or not is related to family adaptability.

4.2 Parents should set an example to prevent forbidden fruit effect

For college students, the romantic relationship of their parents is the example of their own one. The happiness of their parents in their marriage will benefit college students who gain experience by observation and learning. If parents cannot handle the relationship at home, it will have an extremely negative impact on their children's future romantic relationship. Family adaptability also needs to be improved by strengthening interaction, and improving the ability to solve family problems.

The so-called "Romeo and Juliet effect", also known as the "forbidden fruit effect", is based on Shakespeare's tragedy. It is the idea that when there are external forces that interfere with the relationship, and the relationship is strengthened by such forces. This is similar to the revolt of children in adolescence. Therefore, when guiding the love education of college students, families should not be too strong or too severe criticism, and should give more support and encouragement to their correct love views and behaviors, and reduce the restrictions on their freedom of love.

4.3 Make full use of school education support to promote romantic relationship

Parent can try to cooperate with schools to carry out psychological health education and sex education for college students, and parents in the family should start sex education earlier. Sex should not be regarded as a very sensitive or taboo issue, and we should give a more scientific explanation to the physical development of the children at the development stage. College students should pay special attention to reducing the inner unrest during their development.

Schools can set up relevant courses, establish professional institutions and provide professional assistance. School can establish a love-related psychological education website to give everyone a platform to ask questions and discuss, improve the attention of college students to love education, and solve the psychological problems of love through collective participation. Love psychology courses or love psychology lectures should be set up to systematically interpret the scientific knowledge related to love in class. After class, love psychology books can also be recommended for students to study in depth according to their own interests. Our government can establish professional love consulting institutions, which provide professional psychological counseling, so as to provide professional scientific support and guidance for college students to love.

5. CONCLUSION

College students' intimate relationship is significantly correlated with family intimacy and adaptability. There are significant differences in gender, only child and grade of college students' family intimacy. There are significant differences in college students' family adaptability on whether they are the only child, single parent or not, and whether they are poor or not. Family intimacy and family adaptability have influence on college students' intimate relationship.

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