



The Impact of Parent-Child Interaction on the Mental Health of College Students

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Abstract. The latest survey shows that 54.4% of college students nationwide drop out due to mental illness. 28% of college students have varying degrees of psychological problems, among which nearly 10% have moderate or higher levels of psychological problems. College students are the future of our country, and research on the mental health issues of this special group is urgent, while parents are the first guides for children's spiritual growth. Therefore, this article discusses from three dimensions: parent-child interaction, parent-child relationship, and mental health, analyzes the impact of parent-child interaction on parent-child relationship, and then on the mental health of college students. Finally, opinions and suggestions on parent-child interaction and psychological adjustment are proposed to promote the development of college students' mental health.

Keywords: parent-child interaction · Parent-child relationship · Psychological Health of College Students

1 Introduction

1.1 Question Raising

As early as the 1980s, the mental health issues of college students received high attention from the Party Central Committee. In 2021, the Education Department issued a notice on strengthening the management of student mental health, and the mental health of college students has increasingly become a focus of society. The Third International Conference on Mental Health defined mental health as “developing an individual's mental state into the best possible state within the range of physical, intellectual, and emotional incompatibility with the mental health of others.” As a special group, whether college students have a healthy psychology is related to their own destiny and the future of the country.

There are various factors that affect the mental health of college students. According to Freud's personality development theory, many psychological problems that arise in adulthood or even after old age mostly stem from personality development disorders in childhood. The family is the earliest social environment of an individual, playing a crucial role in the formation and development of individual psychology and self-awareness. Previous studies on the relationship between parent-child interaction factors and the mental

health of college students have been multifaceted. Wang Yuhao, Liu Huijun, and others proposed that there is a significant negative correlation between parent-child interaction and depression in college students [1]. Li Xiaoxiao and others found that parent-child interaction plays a moderating role in gender differences in mental health between parents going out and middle school left behind adolescents [2]. Li Xiao and others believe that positive parent-child interaction effectively enhances the sense of security in interpersonal communication among Chinese medicine college freshmen, and by reducing self-control loss, it enhances their sense of interpersonal security [3]. Previous studies have mostly focused on specific groups of subjects; Empirical research methods are often used in research methods; In terms of theoretical application, most of them discuss the impact of various factors such as schools on college students' mental health from the perspective of positive psychology theory and educational management. Few scholars use micro sociological theory to study college students' mental health problems. The novelty of this article is that this study borrows system theory and adopts a qualitative research strategy. Through interviews with 26 college students from different universities and family backgrounds, it analyzes the psychological health problems of college students from three dimensions: parent-child interaction, parent-child relationship, and mental health.

1.2 Research Methods

This study mainly attempts to analyze the impact of the content and frequency of parent-child interaction on the quality of parent-child relationships and the mental health of college students. The writing of the article originated during my university years. I encountered classmates who had varying communication frequencies with their parents during their time in school, and there were also certain differences in the quality of parent-child relationships. Through careful observation, it was found that students in the class who are more outgoing, optimistic, and confident generally have good relationships with their parents, and have a higher frequency of family interaction and sharing. Therefore, in order to further explore the relationship between the two, this study focuses on full-time undergraduate students at L University. Taking into account factors such as grade, place of residence, family size, and gender, three college students were pre interviewed. After the interviews, a formal interview outline for the study was finally established. The outline mainly includes: interaction frequency, interaction content, emotion management, interpersonal communication, etc. Using a random sampling method and based on the principle of voluntary participation, 26 college students were ultimately selected as the research subjects for in-depth interviews. Only child families accounted for approximately 40% of the research subjects. The average age of college students as the research subjects is 21 years old, with 11 males and 15 females.

2 Parent-Child Interaction, Parent-Child Relationship, and Mental Health of College Students

2.1 Parent-Child Interaction and Parent-Child Relationship

Parent-child interaction refers to the mutual interaction activities between parents and children, including face-to-face interaction and indirect interaction. Its content is mainly manifested in three aspects: interaction frequency, interaction content, and interaction method. The higher the frequency of interaction, the better the parent-child relationship. The quality of communication and the psychological state in specific situations are the key to interaction. As can be seen from “every time we talk on the phone about learning, we are prone to conflicts” and “My mother is relatively strong and speaks quickly. Sometimes it takes a while (mood) to really calm down after hanging up the phone”, frequent negative interactions are more likely to lead to bad parent-child relationships. In terms of interactive content, children often follow the principle of “reporting good news but not bad news”, such as “sharing some happy things with parents” and “generally finding friends to chat with when they are in a bad mood”. On the one hand, it does not make parents worry, and on the other hand, it also cherishes the time spent with parents more. Direct positive emotional expression between both parties in simultaneous interaction is more conducive to enhancing parent-child relationships, such as “making a phone call is still different from face-to-face communication, and some words are generally more likely to be spoken on the phone”; “My mother sometimes calls like a child and says I miss you or something”.

2.2 Parent-Child Interaction and Mental Health of College Students

Referring to Cartel’s Sixteen Personality Factor Test Scale, we divide the mental health of college students into seven aspects: personality traits, psychological stress, emotional management, interpersonal communication, self-awareness, and social adaptation. This study found that the impact of parent-child interaction on the mental health of college students is indirect, and its mechanism of action is: parent-child interaction parent-child relationship mental health. The quality of parent-child interaction directly affects the parent-child relationship. Positive interaction can construct a good parent-child relationship, become a strong psychological support for children, make them feel loved and respected, reduce the generation of negative emotions and problematic behaviors. Conversely, the negative parent-child relationship created by negative interaction can easily lead to children’s hostility towards family and society, apathy, sensitive interpersonal relationships, and is not conducive to their psychological health development, this is particularly prominent in the interaction between fathers and children. My mother sometimes takes the initiative to ask me for my opinions on work matters, and sometimes says that my daughter has better handling skills than me, and I am also quite happy. ““I feel that this outgoing personality is also related to the encouraging education of my parents, right?” “My relationship with my father has always been very cold, and there is not much communication.”” When he (father) talks to me, he shows that attitude, feeling very indifferent, and I am not willing to take the initiative to talk to him It has an impact, how to say it? My psychology is a bit extreme, because I tend to be irritable, either due to

psychological issues or personality. Yes, personality issues, and then more sensitive and suspicious. This is similar to the viewpoint proposed by Chen Lecheng et al. that poor parental relationships can create a negative family atmosphere, and children are prone to chronic insecurity towards the family, which can lead to negative emotions such as depression over time.

3 Conclusions

The quality of parent-child interaction affects the quality of relationships, which in turn affects the mental health of college students. Good parent-child relationships cultivate children's excellent qualities and healthy personalities. While paying attention to the frequency of parent-child interaction, it is also important to pay more attention to the quality of the interaction. The use of communication skills such as listening, respect, empathy, and common topics makes it easier to bridge the relationship between the two parties and achieve high-quality interaction. In families with multiple children, unequal attention from parents and unfair educational methods can worsen parent-child and sibling relationships, resulting in tense family relationships, a lack of security for children, and a tendency to develop inferiority complex. In families with multiple children, the level of attention from parents and a fair educational approach are extremely important. Equal respect should be given to every child, and the eldest son or daughter should not be labeled as "rightful". At the same time, they should maintain their authority over their younger siblings, and parents should not intervene too much under normal education.

In contemporary society, the role of parents is still influenced by traditional education, and the father's poor language has become a great obstacle to parent-child interaction. Children should understand and empathize with their parents, and both parents should pay attention to verbal and nonverbal expression, enhance parent-child communication, provide comfort and encouragement in a timely manner, and give children enough sense of security and happiness. Combining direct and indirect expression, encouraging children to bravely reveal themselves through physical contact, verbal expression, WeChat, phone calls, etc., and providing them with a comprehensive channel of expression. Establishing a shared family power structure, emphasizing the cultivation of children's sense of self-determination and autonomy, and creating a democratic and free family atmosphere. From the perspective of family life cycle, as children grow up, parents' dependence on their children increases, and their children leave home.

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