

The Effects of Family Factors on the Formation of Adolescence Depression

Yixuan Yuan

Abstract—Depression among teenagers occurs in high proportion and becomes more serious to deal with. Family factors play an important role in the formation of adolescent depression. To investigate the effects of family factors on the formation of adolescent depression, the present study reviewed the definition of depression and various family factors for adolescent depression, including parents' education level, socioeconomic status, parents' comparison, parental conflict, and parenting style. In addition, the relationship among those family factors was depicted and their interactions for the depression. Finally, some suggestions were provided for the prevention and recovery of adolescent depression. The present study emphasizes the family factors and summarizes their interactions, enriches the current findings to specific family fields, and provides some approaches to improve the high incidence of adolescent depression.

Index Terms—Depression, parenting style, adolescent, socioeconomic status

I. INTRODUCTION

During the teenage period, both physical and psychological experience great growth and change. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to poor development due to maladaptation or poor response [1]. In contemporary China, the situation of adolescent depression has become increasingly prevalent. According to the Chinese Mental health survey [1], the lifetime prevalence rate of depressive disorders among Chinese adults is 6.8%. That means 95 million people are suffering from depression in China. Depression can have a serious impact on the individual and social development of adolescents. For individual development, adolescent depression is harmful to their studies, quality of life, interpersonal communication, their health, and even leads to suicide and endangers their life safety [1]. Seriously, of the 280,000 people who commit suicide every year, 40% of them suffer from depression. For social development, depression may cause less social motivation and then lead to lower productivity of workers and a bad effect on the social atmosphere. The exploration of the causes of depression can not only prevent the formation of depression but also provide better suggestions for treatments. Therefore, finding the causes of depression can reduce the proportion of adolescent depression, promote the mental health development of teenagers, and provide a lively and hopeful environment for society.

Previous studies have found that the main factors of depression can be divided into individual, environmental, and family factors. Psychological resilience has an important influence on adolescent mental health Development, including depression [1]. Psychological resilience is an

important psychological resource for individuals facing adverse external influences. It can alleviate the negative impact of adverse factors. In the face of some difficulties in life can cope well and promote the positive and healthy development of adolescents [2]. When a resilient person encounters some changes or setbacks in life, such as conflict with others or failure in school or work. He can overcome setbacks, resolve, and get through this period in good health. When the person's mental resilience is poor, he is easy to have psychological problems due to some external influences and setbacks and is more prone to depression. Therefore, teenagers who lack good psychological resilience are more likely to be affected by the external environment and have emotional problems. In addition, as an individual factor, age can influence depression through the development of social factors. People who undertake heavy social responsibilities may be more likely to experience anxiety or depression states [3]. And endocrine disorders, as a physical individual reason, may also trigger depression in adolescents [4]. Moreover, environmental factors, such as the school environment and school bullying have long been recognized as important factors in preventing mental health problems among adolescents [5]. Studies showed that the victims of bullying had higher feelings of inferiority, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts [1].

In addition, family factors play critical roles in the formation of depression. Studies have shown that the better the family function, the better the physical and mental development of adolescents [6]. Poor family function was strongly associated with the risk of mood disorders [6]. Compared with the individual factors that have been paid more attention to and the environmental factors that are more difficult to change, the influence of family factors on depression has often been ignored, thus making the prevention of depression a bottleneck. Therefore, exploring the role of family factors on the formation of depression can help us to understand the formation and development of adolescent depression more specifically, to promote the mental health development of adolescents.

However, previous studies have often focused on a single aspect of family factors, such as the parent-child attachment theory [7], suggesting that the safety and warmth of the parent-child relationship are crucial, and a good attachment relationship with parents is the key to adolescent mental health. Moreover, parental control, including parents' constraints and inquiry about teenagers' daily activities, is an important part of educational behavior regarding the mental health of their children [8]. It is the effect of household economic income status on adolescent depression. [8] found adolescents from poor families are more likely to have emotional problems than those from non-poor families. As one of the important indicators of family socioeconomic status, parental education also affects the emotional regulation of adolescents. The higher the parental education,

Manuscript received June 13, 2023; revised July 12, 2023; accepted August 30, 2023.

Yixuan Yuan is with Renhe Foreign Language School, Zhejiang, 325000, China. E-mail: 1025351448@qq.com (Y.H.Z.)

the stronger the emotional regulation ability of adolescents. When the family's social status is low, parents will experience more pressure from society, and then bring negative emotional experiences to teenagers. There is a lack of a complete understanding and perspective of family factors for adolescents's depression. To integrate most family factors for depression, external factors, internal factors and communication between members of the family will be reviewed to form a comprehensive view of the generation of depression.

To better explain the influence of family factors on adolescent depression, in the literature review section, we reviewed the definition of depression, the particularity of adolescent depression, and the impact of family factors on depression, including parents' education level, socioeconomic status, parents' comparison, Parental conflict, and parenting style. In the discussion section, we discussed the relationship among these family factors what different family factors influence the formation of adolescent depression, and the prevention and treatment recommendations for different family factors.

The present study aimed to investigate the family factors for depression and give some suggestions to treat the high proportion of depressed adolescents in the family environment, The discussion and the suggestions can provide a reference for social relief or reduce the overall number of adolescents with depression.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Definition of Depression*

Depression is a kind of emotional disorder disease, mainly manifested as depressed mood, loss of interest in life, energy decline, easy fatigue, pessimism, and other diseases. The social function of depression patients will cause problems, serious people will even exhibit hallucinations, delusions, and other behaviors [1]. Different diagnostic criteria have been raised for depression since the 1990s. In the 1994 edition of the Diagnostic and Curative Criteria of Internal Medicine Diseases of Traditional Chinese Medicine, depression was divided into six symptom types: liver depression and qi stagnation, qi stagnation and fire, spittoon qi stagnation, mental disorder, deficiency of the heart and spleen and deficiency of the heart and kidney Yin. DSM-5(2022) defined depression as an episode of depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure lasting at least two weeks, accompanied by symptoms such as poor sleep and loss of appetite.

Depression itself is a kind of normal emotion in a healthy state, as long as the mood fluctuates. Patients with depression can interfere with their psychological and physical functions. From a psychological point of view, depression can make patients lose interest in life and feel hopeless for the future, suffer from listlessness, weakness in their limbs, and a decline in concentration and memory [9]. It is also characterized by a low mood, a loss of faith in the future, and a sense of hopelessness [10]. From a physical point of view, depression is characterized by possible sleepiness and physical decline [2], beginning to alienate and numb stiff [9], and Non-suicidal self-injury NSSI in adolescents, which is an act of self-harm that does not aim at suicide [11]. In the study

of the symptoms of depression among adolescents, the detection rate of depressive symptoms in adolescents was 19.7% [8]. In the studies of other countries, the detection rate of depressive mood among adolescents was 14.9% [1]. To sum up, we can clearly understand the harm and the high ratio of depression.

Teenagers are a critical period of life growth and moral growth. This critical period is determined by the particularity of their development. Teenagers, known as the "key steps" and "the morning sun", have rapid development of physical, mental, and moral growth, and are in a special stage where opportunities and risks coexist [12]. In the teenage period, the adaptive capacity and ability to solve problems are very low. It is easy to into a negative emotion [5]. Therefore, the teenage period is a high-risk time of depression. People start to have a strong sense of self in their teens, and they are easy to have negative emotions when the situation, in reality, is not satisfactory. Young people are an important part of a family and a necessary existence for social development. Therefore, teenage depression will have several serious effects on both family and society.

B. *Influence of Family Factors on Adolescence's Depression*

Some family factors, including parents' education level, socioeconomic status, parents' comparison, Parental conflict, and parenting style were reviewed as important impact factors for the formation of adolescent depression. First, parents' education level has been found as an important factor affecting parents' behavior [7]. Parents, especially mothers, with high education levels can pay more attention to communicating and exchanging more life principles and experiences with their children and are sensitive to their children's emotional changes [7]. High-educational parents show less doting, despotism, neglect, punishment, excessive achievement requirements, and other bad behaviors in education, otherwise, they can provide support and guidance to their children rather than purely upbringing or protection [7].

Family socioeconomic status is also one of the main factors affecting teenagers' depression. Family socioeconomic status is determined by family economic income, parents' occupation, parents' education level, and so on. It constitutes the material basis for individual development, which can not only directly affect the psychosocial development of adolescents, but also indirectly affect the development of individuals by influencing the parenting style of parents and the relationship between family members [13]. In a negative family environment, low family social status has an important impact on the development of adolescents [13]. Parents of higher socioeconomic status families are more likely to provide their children with a variety of learning activities and guide them to communicate with other people of high status. Children's home environment is more spacious, freer, and safer, and they have more access to books, magazines, and extracurricular classes in areas such as music and sports. However, for adolescents with low family socioeconomic status, their limited access to material conditions may hinder their physical and mental development, resulting in emotional problems [13]. Income is particularly likely to influence the frequency of conflict

between parents in lower socioeconomic families. Poverty leads to more conflict between parents, depression, the use of punitive and coercive parenting strategies or less parenting, and emotional problems in adolescents, whereas increasing income can reduce parental conflict in poor families, which leads to fewer emotional problems in adolescents [13].

Parenting style, which is termed as the way parents raise their children, is also an important factor for adolescents's depression. Specifically, polarizing caring and overprotective are two sides of the educational way. The extremes of caring include the emotional extremes of warmth and intimacy associated with love and affection, and the emotional extremes of apathy and rejection. The extreme of overprotection is parental control over children, overprotection and interference, preventing children from being independent, [6] found that a lack of love and too much parental protection and control were linked to depression in children. The way and degree of parental care for children also have a significant impact on depression. With the right care and support, children can grow up healthier and freer. According to the effects of parenting style, parents should pay attention to the way they care about their children when they get along with them in their teenage years and they should not interfere too much in the child's life.

Parents' comparison between the academics of their children and others has been proven to play a critical role in the generation of depression. For example, [14] found that parents' academic comparisons for their children can influence the development of depression in teenagers. As the important family members of adolescents, the evaluation of parents is an important source of adolescent self-identity. Parents' academic comparison is a kind of social comparison criticism, which will have a certain negative impact on teenagers' self-evaluation. The theory of selective access claims that social comparative criticism can reduce adolescents' self-evaluation and make them feel that they are not good enough. This is because, in the case of upward comparison, adolescents are more likely to perceive differences between themselves and others. If the goals and standards are inconsistent, there will be a contrast effect, thus affecting the individual self-evaluation. Consequently, this kind of upward comparison by parents can decrease and undermine children's self-confidence and lead to depression in adolescents [5]. For example, when mothers set high expectations for their child's grades or ask him to surpass someone, then the upward comparison occurs. When this upward comparison fails in the end, the depressed mood of teenagers can emerge from the criticism. Parents' upward comparison behavior can be completely avoided. Parents should give more encouragement to their children, this action in life can increase children's self-confidence and help their mental health development.

Studies have shown that when parents are full of negative emotions, adolescents tend to have lower levels of positive psychological quality development and a stronger sense of deprivation, which are prone to depressive symptoms [8]. Parental conflict is also an important factor in depression in adolescents. The psychoanalytic theory proposes that parental conflict will increase adolescents' adverse childhood experiences, make them attack themselves, and lead to the germination of depression [15]. The studies of middle school

students found that poor parental relationships can increase the risk of depression in teenagers, whereas, the better the relationship between parents, the less likely teens are to be depressed [16].

Although the family factors mentioned in all the above studies are relatively fixed and hard to change, the mood and parenting style of parents can still be variable. In the discussion section, we further draw a schema to figure out the relationship among these family factors and their variability.

III. DISCUSSION

A. The Relationship among Family Factors and their Effects on Adolescent Depression

The family factors we reviewed can be classified into unstable and stable characteristics. The unstable factors, such as parents' upward comparison behavior, parents' care and rearing mode, and parents' personality, can be controlled for improvement. Therefore, these unstable factors could be the main strategy for adolescent depression prevention and treatment. Encouraging teenagers can significantly reduce the phenomenon of adolescent depression. The stable family factors include socioeconomic status, which is determined by parents' education, income, and the emotional reflection of others. These factors are often difficult to change significantly in the short term, but I think the education of parents mainly affects the parenting style and the income situation. Therefore, Parents with low education can read more educational books at ordinary times and learn from some educational methods. You can also take part in some interesting activities with your children in your spare time, which can help improve the mood and knowledge of both parents and children. Based on the relationship between family factors and their variability, we described a figure (Fig. 1) to summarize them with arrows representing the influence and the scale representing their variability from easy to change to hard to change.

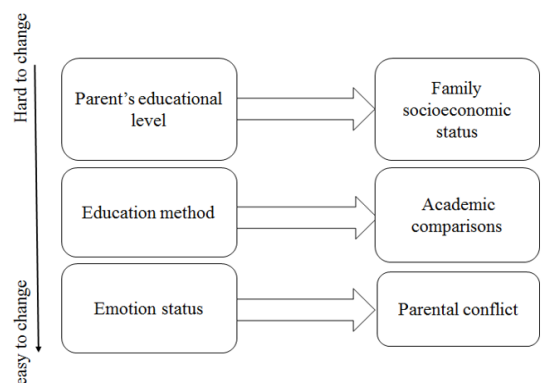


Fig. 1. The impact factors for depression and their relationships.

Fig. 1 shows the relationship among various family factors. A person's level of education largely determines his future achievements and status. Therefore, the education level of parents not only affects adolescents' depression as a single factor but also determines the socioeconomic status of the family. Parents' educational level can provide an adequate reserve of knowledge, excellent practical ability, and broad

perspective, yielding a good family socioeconomic status.

The parenting style of parents is also an important factor. The parenting style adopted by parents can largely determine the emotional state of children. Parents should avoid extreme situations in their children's education, such as excessive discipline or excessive indifference. This is like a person planting a pot of plants, neither excessive water nor can't waste a drop of water, need the appropriate style to be guided. The comparison of academic performance is a very common wrong way of education. In this case, when parents only pay attention to the surface of the satisfaction, their children would aggravate the psychological pressure when they do not meet the expectations. The parents' academic comparison and ignoring the psychological feelings of teenagers can lead to serious psychological problems. The ignoring of others' inner thoughts and feelings derived from inappropriate parenting style and academic comparison can also lead to some negative emotions in their children, yielding to depression.

In today's society, more and more parents have conflicts with each other. This is related to the frustration and stress they encounter in life. When they argue at home, they pass on their negative emotions to their children, literally passing on the bad things that happen to them in their own lives. It can also be discussed in terms of parents' education level. In most cases, people with high quality are more stable in their emotions, so parents with high education are less likely to quarrel and bring negative emotions to their children. Even if there are some necessary arguments, they know how to avoid the child's sight, to provide a comfortable environment for the child. Parental conflict has a significant effect on depression in adolescents. It tends to erupt like a volcano, and it doesn't take long for it to automatically return to a more stable state, like an acute disease. In contrast to emotion and conflict, parental education level and family socioeconomic status, as chronic diseases, have a long but mild influence on adolescent depression. Because family socioeconomic status and parental education are generally immutable, and because they are fixed conditions for adolescents from birth, they slowly build adaptations, the effects of both are slow and mild, but also long-lasting.

Although we roughly divided various family factors into easy-to-change and difficult-to-change categories as shown in Fig. 1, strictly speaking, the educational level of parents can also be changed, because middle-aged parents can also choose to continue to receive education and improve their cognition. According to increasing education, they can improve some deficiencies and improper educational methods, make their emotions more stable, and reduce negative emotions and conflicts. When parents' education level increases, the family's socioeconomic status also has the opportunity to improve. If the family's socioeconomic status is successfully raised, difficulties and frustrations in the parents' lives are correspondingly reduced, which also helps their mood.

There is a relationship between various family factors. When one of them changes, it can often cause the common change of other factors, and then jointly affect the depression of adolescents. For example, if something wrong happens to the parenting style of the parents. They can be more likely to compare their children's grades with others. If their children's grades are not good enough, then parents will feel

dissatisfaction and reflect on bad emotions. With the bad temperature, they easily scold or criticize their children, and even punish them seriously. At this time, the children failing to compare with others can feel some negative emotions such as depression or loss. If they receive criticism and punishment from their parents, it will have a further negative impact on their psychology, such as decreased appetite and poor sleep quality. Or start to lose interest in life. When they reach a certain threshold, they can make a definite diagnosis of depression.

To take another example, when parents are poorly educated cognitively educated, and rude, they tend to put teenagers in a bad mood for a long time. At the same time, low education means parents are more likely to be emotionally unstable. But if one day the conflict between the parents broke out, their negative emotions radiated to the children at the same time, based on the children's emotional problems, there will be two situations. The first is that children's negative emotions also break out at the same time and start to have conflicts with their parents. At this time, the parents are also in an impulsive mood, and the situation will further deteriorate, falling into a vicious spiral. The second situation is that the child's emotions do not break out, but chooses to suffer in silence, This situation will cause the child's own emotions to pile deeper and deeper and, in the long run, will cause serious psychological problems. So either way, it's going to have a very bad impact.

B. Suggestions for the prevention of adolescence depression

We have mentioned that there are many factors affecting adolescent depression, which can be roughly divided into environmental factors, family factors, and school factors. However, as the whole perspective of our life consists of individual, family, and social factors, the three factors influencing depression are also considered as an integrated system composed of their interactions. As is known to all, the individual is the foundation of everything, including society, school, and family. A person's negative emotions are contagious. When a person has negative emotions in society, he will vent his negative emotions to his family at home. This is because of a lack of cognition; he does not know that negative emotions should be thrown outside instead of to innocent family members. At this time, if his family does not realize this point, the emotion spreads to the outside world, It is likely to have been so spread, causing many people emotional problems, and in the long run, there will be mental illness. Why the cognitive deficit? Most of it is due to poor education, and why would parents be poorly educated? It could be the parents of the parents.

As more and more people suffer from mental illness, it becomes a social factor affecting teenagers' emotions. School is included in society, so school factors become an important factor for depression. Critically, a society is made up of countless families, and a family is made up of parents and children. Therefore, when parents pay attention to their education methods and actively improve their personalities, they can have a positive impact on teenagers' emotions, which will also give back to their parents' emotions, thus forming a virtuous circle. When the situation of every family gradually improves, many social problems will be well

solved. We can see that people are the foundation of everything. People first form a family, and then a family forms a society. Therefore, from these three perspectives on the cause of depression, family factors are the most important to accumulate the family members' emotions and to radiate the effects to the whole society.

But just because society is made up of countless families, when many families go wrong, it also has an impact on society that cannot be ignored. In terms of the treatment of depression and the formation of depression, if family factors are improved, not only the depression of adolescents can be alleviated, but also the social factors affecting the depression of adolescents can be alleviated or solved. This is a case of doing more with less. If there is a big problem in the family and it doesn't get better, it not only worsens depression in adolescents, but it also worsens the social factors that influence depression in adolescents, and then it worsens depression in adolescents, and it spreads like a virus and bacteria.

Because the people all form themselves family, some suggestions for the parents can be as follows: First, to improve their educational level, parents can set their mind right and let their mind settle down first. Reading more books is helpful to mood and can eliminate impetuous heart. You can also get more education to increase your knowledge and vision. Second, to make better parenting style and less academic comparison, parents can also be encouraged to communicate with their children more, and this can help them to know the true thoughts of their children. In addition, more encouragement, and less punishment, such as at the end of some tests, children can be rewarded or encouraged on a case-by-case basis. When a teenager comes home from a day of school, parents can offer encouragement and interaction. This not only helps teenagers feel the warmth of their family and reduce negative emotions but also reduces the grievances and frustrations they encounter in school. In this way, family factors and the school environment can be alleviated.

IV. CONCLUSION

Being the most ignored factor, family factors for adolescent depression are emphasized in the present study. Various family factors and their influences on adolescent depression were reviewed, and the interactions among the family factors, including parents' education level, socioeconomic status, parents' comparison, parental conflict, and parenting style were discussed. Some examples were listed to explain how these family factors affect adolescent depression. Through these discussions, we can realize that factors can also influence each other and produce a butterfly effect. Solving the problem of family factors can solve the problem of other factors in a large area. Instead of focusing on school factors and social factors that affect adolescent depression, it is better to fundamentally address family factors. In the treatment or prevention of depression, attention to this important factor can play a multiplier effect, to prevent depression from playing some help.

Additionally, I suggest that parents can actively prevent adolescent depression. Such as more kindly communication

with children. Take them to fun activities and reduce comparisons with other people's children academically or otherwise. It also requires encouragement and support to help them embrace their better selves and help them feel fulfilled and happy in their lives. Lead by example and improve your children's mood by changing your own. In the future, if someone wants to start a new discussion based on my research, they can start with the relationship between other factors and family factors. My paper discusses the relationship between family factors and depression and the interaction between them. Therefore, it would be more meaningful for future studies to discuss the relationship between social factors and family factors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- [1] W. Qin, "Research on adolescent depression and its influencing mechanism," Master Dissertation, University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2022.
- [2] D. Liu, L. Jin, C. Min, and Y. Zhang, "Application of family-centered psychoeducational intervention in adolescents with depression," *Nursing of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine*, vol. 6, no. 10, 2020.
- [3] J. He and L. Kuang, "Research progress on social and environmental factors of suicide," *Frontiers in Medicine*, no. 15, pp. 354–354, 2013.
- [4] W. Zhang *et al.*, "Rumination and depression as chain mediators between non-suicidal self-injury and suicidal ideation in adolescents with depressive disorder," *Chinese Journal of Behavioral Medicine and Brain Sciences*, vol. 31, no. 5, 2020.
- [5] X. Li, "The effect of parents' academic upward comparison on adolescents' self-injury behavior and its psychological mechanism," Master's thesis, Xinyang Normal University, 2020.
- [6] J. Li, "Analysis on the influence of family factors on adolescent depression," *Technology Information*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2013.
- [7] S. Zhang and C. Ma, "Harm of depression and drug therapy," *Sichuan Journal of Physiological Sciences*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2020.
- [8] X. Xie *et al.*, "Family factors related to depressive symptoms in adolescents," *Chinese Journal of Child Health*, vol. 4, 2022.
- [9] J. He and L. Kuang, "Research progress on social and environmental factors of suicide," *Frontiers in Medicine*, no. 15, pp. 354–354, 2020.
- [10] Y. Li and D. Li, "Research progress on emotional regulation models of non-suicidal self-injury," *Advances in Psychology*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2022.
- [11] B. Wen *et al.*, "Risk factors of non-suicidal self-injury behavior in adolescents with depression," *Western Medicine*, vol. 35, no. 2, p. 4, 2023.
- [12] J. Wu, X. Jia, X. Zhang, and H. Gou, "The particularity of school moral education in the moral development of adolescents," *The Road to Success*, vol. 17, no. 13, 2021.
- [13] K. Sun, "The relationship between family socioeconomic status and depressive symptoms in adolescents: the mediating role of negative life events and their gender differences," *Journal of Psychology*, vol. 24, 2021.
- [14] Z. Li *et al.*, "Correlation analysis of school and family factors with adolescent depression," *Journal of Medical Animal Control*, vol. 38, no. 11, 2022.
- [15] Q. Sun, "Perceived parental conflict and adolescent problem behavior," Master Dissertation, Shandong University, Chinese Mental health survey, 2017.
- [16] Y. Wang, "A study on the report content of depression in psychological public accounts," Master's thesis, Dalian University of Technology, 2021.

Copyright © 2023 by the authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).