

Mental Health and Help-Seeking Behaviors; The Consequences of Familial Expressions

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MENTAL HEALTH AND HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS

Adolescence is when the pursuit of social status and respect drives many of the actions committed by younger generations. Actions that influence mental health (MH) and help-seeking behavior (HSB) expression depending on how an individual was raised in a social setting. Several studies show that an encouraging, productive home environment connects with positive MH and HSB in teenagers. Adolescents express their emotions more when they feel connected to their parents than when they do not (Wylie et al., 2023). This may encourage teenagers to communicate their feelings in a variety of social circumstances, as they may feel more comfortable discussing their authentic emotional experiences. In all, adolescent MH and HSB benefit from familial emotional expression.

Lohman and Jarvis (2000) demonstrated that positive family connection and the perception that the parent cares about their child stressors reduce adolescent internalization and externalization of their problems. Specifically in father-child relationships, when the parent was aware of the stressors in their son or daughter's life, the adolescent was more likely to use helpful coping strategies (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). Conversely, when these dyads would conflict, adolescents followed avoiding dealing with the stressor. However, this was not observed in mother-adolescent dyads (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). The positive interaction between mother and daughter decreases relatively quickly after females have their first menarche (Flannery et al., 1994). On the spectrum of both gender roles, disruptive relationships between mother or father and adolescents followed a lack of effective problem-solving skills across elementary, middle, and high school-aged children (Flannery et al., 1994). This outcome could be due to the family function specifically used in this study and therefore should be researched in other contexts. Supported by previous research, this establishes a positive correlation between family cohesion and adolescents' active coping.

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Fallon and Bowles (2001) conversely found sex and age were not associated with the frequency of help-seeking behavior. Rather, it suggests a linkage between adolescent family function and problem type rather than help-seeking behavior itself. This subjective opinion followed when participants also believed their family demonstrated poor emotional expression and communication. Another study measured if those who had a positive outlook on their family's ability to communicate also followed a positive outlook on their family as a whole. Cierpka (2014) measured the features of identity narratives in adolescents and their association with their perspective on the participant's family functions. Participants who did not see their family as emotionally adequate tended to describe their family negatively (Cierpka, 2014). When emotional behavior was expressed adequately this positive view of the family also linked to a positive self-assessment of the participant (Cierpka, 2014). Across multiple dimensions of problem types, all research articles previously mentioned argue if rather HSB comes from gender roles or from the type of altercations exposed in an emotionally expressive versus emotionally suppressive home.

While several concepts on the family impact in MH and HSB support having an emotionally mature parent-adolescent dyad, research contradicting the claim arises as well. Several sources that support and contradict the claim come from articles exploring similar but differentiating topics. Therefore, this current article is a strong first step in the exploration of the impact of familial expressions and their impact on adolescent MH and HSB.

References

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