

The Influence of Parenting style on Help-Seeking Behaviors and Mental Health in Adolescence

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Introduction

- Despite increasing access to mental health services, relatively few adolescents are receiving professional support (Lipari et al., 2016).
- Parenting style can greatly impact adolescent mental health (Nunes & Mota, 2016; Pace & Zappulla, 2010).
- Adolescents with weak support networks were more likely to suffer from depression and suicidal tendencies and less likely to have knowledge of available mental health services (De Luca et al., 2019).

The Methodology

Design: Anonymous online survey

Sample: 217 Central Michigan University students.

- Average age: 20 ($sd = 2.16$).
- Parents relationship status: 68.5% married/cohabiting; 20.7% separated/divorced.

Mental health and help-seeking behaviors:

8 items assessing mental health and suicidality, parental support in finding mental health services, and family history of mental illness.

Parenting style: 32 items from PSDQ-Short Form adjusted to be in past tense and from child's perspective and 1 item to identify who the participant was thinking of while answering

Covariates: Age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and parents' highest level of education

Analyses: Logistic and multinomial regression

The Research Question

How do parenting styles impact adolescents' mental health and help-seeking behaviors?

Figure 1. Suicidal ideation stratified by parenting style

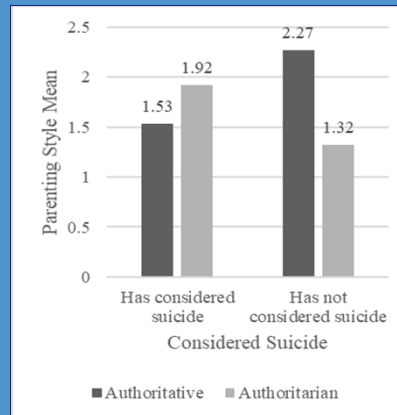


Figure 2. Attempted suicide stratified by parenting style

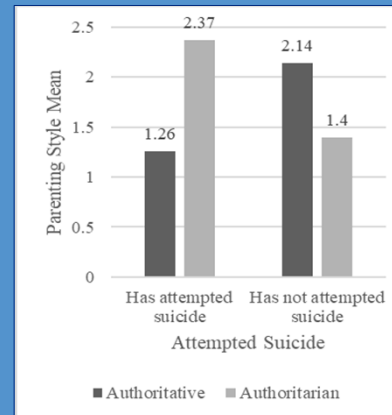
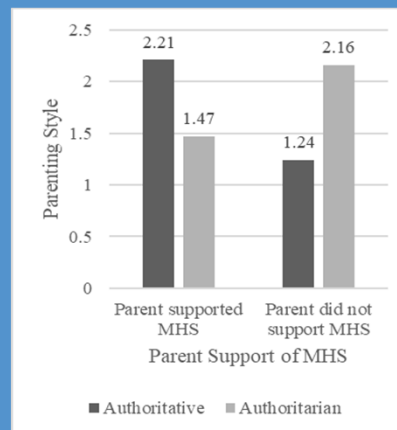


Figure 3. Parent support for seeking mental health services stratified by parenting style



Note. MHS = mental health services



Table 1. Parenting styles

| Parenting Style | Warmth | Demandingness | Autonomy Granting |
|-----------------|--------|---------------|-------------------|
| Authoritative | High | High | High |
| Authoritarian | Low | High | Low |
| Permissive | High | Low | High |

Results

- Participants with more authoritarian parents were nearly twice as likely to have multiple mental illnesses, 2.5 times as likely to consider suicide, and 4 times as likely to attempt suicide than those with less authoritarian parents.
- Participants with more authoritative parents were at lower risk of having multiple mental illnesses and lower odds of considering or attempting suicide.
- More authoritarian parents were 2.5 times as likely to not support their children in finding mental health services than less authoritarian parents.
- More authoritative parents were 3 times as likely to support their children in finding mental health services than less authoritarian parents.

Conclusion

Parenting style may influence adolescents' mental health and help-seeking behaviors. Being proactive and responsive to mental health needs can help reduce stigma and help adolescents engage in help-seeking behaviors when needed. The current study demonstrates that authoritative parenting is associated with help-seeking behaviors. Therefore, parenting style is associated both with adolescents' mental health, as well as whether or not adolescents have support connecting to mental health services.

References

- De Luca, S. M., Lim, J., & Yueqi, Y. (2019). Young adolescents' help seeking behaviors and attitudes: An examination of an underserved community. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 36(6), 599-607.
- Lipari, R. N., Hedden, S., Blau, G., & Rubenstein, L. (2016, May 5). Adolescent mental health service use and reasons for using services in specialty, educational, and general medical settings. *The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*.
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- Pace, U., & Zappulla, C. (2010). Relations between suicidal ideation, depression, and emotional autonomy from parents in adolescence. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19(6), 747-756.