

The Effect of Parent-child Attachment on the Subjective Well-being of Junior High School Students

-- A chain intermediary model

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Abstract: The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized that we should adhere to the people-centered ideology and continuously improve the people's sense of gain, happiness and security. Enhancing the people's sense of happiness is the core and purpose of the development of China's socialist cause. Moreover, since United States psychologists first proposed the concept of "positive psychology" at the beginning of this century (Seligman & Czikszentmihalyi, 2000), advocating the exploration of the potential positive power of human beings, rather than just studying psychological or behavioral problems. The mainstream of psychological research has also begun to trend towards positive psychology, instead of studying negative psychological states such as depression and anxiety as in the early days, more and more psychologists are committed to focusing on positive human qualities and emotions such as happiness and joy, in order to eventually make human beings happy. Subjective Well-being (SWB) is the main content of people's quality of life, and as one of the three major research objects of positive psychology, it has attracted great attention and attracted more and more researchers. By studying the relationship between attachment, comprehension of social support, self-esteem and subjective well-being, it is hoped that it can provide some help and inspiration for the mental health education of junior high school students, so as to promote their physical and mental health development.

Keywords: Parent-Child Attachment; Subjective Well-Being; Perceived Social Support; Esteem.

1. Parent-Child Attachment

1.1. The Concept of Parent-Child Attachment

Attachment refers to the social connection between an individual and his caregiver, which is an important marker of an individual's emotional socialization (Bowlby, 1982). At first, the definition of attachment was limited to explaining the emotional response between mother and child, and then with the enrichment of attachment theory, attachment objects gradually developed into father-son, caregivers, etc. According to Bowlby, attachment is a strong, continuous emotional connection between an individual and a significant other, which provides security and comfort to the individual. During the critical period of attachment relationship establishment, an individual's attachment partner is primarily a parent or other primary caregiver. Beginning in the mid-80s, researchers shifted attachment from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. In 1987, Hazan and Shaver applied attachment style theory to adult relationships, after which the study of attachment expanded from children to adolescents and adults. Parental attachment refers to the attachment object in the attachment relationship is the parents, but not all parent-child relationships are attachment relationships, and parent-child attachment is a long-lasting and intimate emotional bond.

In this paper, parent-child attachment is defined as the formation of a lasting and intimate emotional connection between junior high school students and their father and mother.

1.2. The Theory of Parent-Child Attachment

United Kingdom psychologist Bowlby made a systematic review and summary of the exploration of attachment

relationships, which laid a solid foundation for attachment research. First, he believes that the intimate emotional connection between people is not only biological but also in the first place, that is, the parent-child attachment relationship is the basis of all relationships, and the initial stable attachment relationship between the individual and the key caregiver because of the survival needs of the individual. Second, the way of interaction with children will affect their development and future personality functioning, that is, if an individual does not form a good attachment relationship in childhood, it will restrict the physical and mental health of the subject in adulthood. Third, the organizational system includes the part of attachment behavior, which will guide behavioral plans and expectations by using the internal working model of others and the self, that is, the evaluation criteria of the quality of attachment relationship are not limited to the individual or others, but a mutual and stable cognition formed between the early individual and the primary caregiver, which not only restricts the development of the early subject, but also has an impact on his social relations in adulthood. Fourth, people will always be affected by adversity and good times throughout their lives, and although attachment behavior is resistant to change, it has the potential to continue to change, that is, although the attachment relationship is stable, it will also change accordingly for some reason. United Kingdom psychologist Bowlby made a systematic review and summary of the exploration of attachment relationships, which laid a solid foundation for attachment research. First, he believes that the intimate emotional connection between people is not only biological but also in the first place, that is, the parent-child attachment relationship is the basis of all relationships, and the initial stable attachment relationship between the

individual and the key caregiver because of the survival needs of the individual. Second, the way of interaction with children will affect their development and future personality functioning, that is, if an individual does not form a good attachment relationship in childhood, it will restrict the physical and mental health of the subject in adulthood. Third, the organizational system includes the part of attachment behavior, which will guide behavioral plans and expectations by using the internal working model of others and the self, that is, the evaluation criteria of the quality of attachment relationship are not limited to the individual or others, but a mutual and stable cognition formed between the early individual and the primary caregiver, which not only restricts the development of the early subject, but also has an impact on his social relations in adulthood. Fourth, people will always be affected by adversity and good times throughout their lives, and although attachment behavior is resistant to change, it has the potential to continue to change, that is, although the attachment relationship is stable, it will also change accordingly for some reason.

2. Subjective Well-Being

2.1. The Concept of Subjective Well-Being

The expression of "subjective well-being" first appeared in Wisloian's book "Factors Associated with Self-Claimed Well-Being (1967)", which is considered by researchers to be the starting point of the study of "subjective well-being" (Li Zhi, 2019). For more than decades, researchers have elaborated on the connotation of subjective well-being. For example, Bandura believes that emotional experience can bring subjective well-being, including positive and negative emotions, and subjective well-being occurs when the positive emotions of individuals are higher than the negative emotions (Bradburn, 1969), which is consistent with the views of Wang Jisheng and Ding Xinhua (2009). Ryff et al. (1995) believe that subjective well-being includes happiness and satisfaction, and is the experience of individuals constantly exploring and realizing their own potential. Different from previous studies is Diener's (1999) view, which believes that individuals first have a standard of quality of life and will consider whether they meet their expectations against this standard, and he advocates that subjective well-being is a key indicator of mental health, which is consistent with Chang Shumin (2017). In addition, the Chinese scholar Xing Zhanjun (2002) believes that subjective well-being is the positive and satisfying state experienced by individuals in life, which is the result of the joint action of objective conditions and their own needs and values.

In summary, this study adopts the view of Xing Zhanjun (2002), that is, subjective well-being (SWB) is the positive state of satisfaction experienced by individuals in life, which is the result of the joint action of objective conditions and their own needs and values.

2.2. Factors of Subjective Well-Being

Diener (1984) argues that the influencing factors of an individual's subjective well-being include internal factors, such as personality factors (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Yang Xiujun & Kong Keqin, 2003) and self-esteem (Joshnloo & Afshari, 2011; Xu Weidong, Wu Mingzheng, Qiu Fudong, 2005); External factors, such as life events (Suh, Diener, & Fujita, 1996; Wang & Ding, 2003).

Diener et al. (1995) surveyed subjective well-being in 55

countries and found that the level of subjective well-being was correlated with the social, economic and cultural characteristics of those countries, and that there was a strong correlation between high income, individualism, human rights and social equality, and that subjective well-being was strongly correlated in different surveys. Pinqart et al. (2000) used a meta-analysis method and found that living environment was positively correlated with subjective well-being, and that high-quality social contact led to higher levels of subjective well-being. A detailed review of the literature by Dolan, Peasgood, and White (2008) found that poor health, separation, unemployment, and lack of social contact were all significantly inversely associated with subjective well-being. Diener & Chan (2011) found that high subjective well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, absence of negative emotions, optimism, positive emotions) leads to a long and healthy life. The OECD (2013) considers subjective well-being to be an important indicator of social progress, representing quality of life and other levels of social and economic dimensions.

3. Perceived Social Support

3.1. The Concept of Perceived Social Support

Individuals are born with social relationships. In the process of maturity, relying on one's own ability alone does not conform to the laws of nature and the rules of survival, but relies on the continuous connection with the external environment to acquire experience. Connecting with the outside world is essentially a process of helping each other and getting support from each other. The material and moral support that individuals receive from within their families, relatives, school friends, networks, communities, and other social environments outside of themselves during their growth is collectively referred to as social support (Cullen, 1994). Xiao Shuiyuan (1987) divides social support into objective support, subjective support, and utilization of support.

With the deepening of research, some scholars have gradually realized that the support given by the outside world to the individual may not be perceived by the individual, and the same external support will play different roles in different individuals, and the research on social support should take into account the influence of individual cognitive factors. Thus, the concept of perceived social support was developed (Swickert, Hittner & Foster, 2010). Objective social support mainly refers to the actual material help or activity participation that objectively exists and can be seen by people. Subjective social support refers to a subjective evaluation and emotional experience, emphasizing the individual's experience and understanding of external support, so it is also called cognitive social support.

Recognition of social support is an intrinsic, stable trait, which means that individuals have relatively solid beliefs about the quality of their relationships with the outside world (Lakey & Cassade, 1990). Recognize that social support is beneficial for mental health (Calsyn, Winter, 2005). A high level of perceived social support can relieve stress, inhibit or even overcome negative emotions in individuals (Yip, 2006).

Combined with the research results of the above scholars, in this study, comprehension social support refers to the comprehension ability of junior high school students to accept the help and support given by external social relations through their own subjective feelings. This trait or ability is relatively stable.

4. Esteem

4.1. The Concept of Esteem

Self-esteem is an innate psychological need of human beings, which has a profound impact on the psychological activities of individuals such as receiving information, generating behavioral motivation, changing cognition, balancing the relationship between themselves and the outside world, and regulating various emotions. Self-esteem has important psychological significance, and its development promotes the integrity of the individual's personality and mental health. Self-esteem can vary from individual to individual, and the level of self-esteem within the same individual can vary over time.

James (1980) proposed a formula for self-esteem: self-esteem = success/ambition level, and he believed that an individual's self-esteem is the ratio of actual achievements to ideal aspirations. If an individual feels good about himself, has self-confidence, and achieves outstanding achievements, he will have high self-esteem. According to Rosenberg (1990), the most important component of self-esteem is the sense of worth, and self-esteem reflects the difference between the individual's perceived self-orientation in reality and the self-orientation in the ideal or desired state. Chinese scholars have also given a definition of self-esteem based on their own culture. Zhu Zhixian (1989) wrote in the Great Dictionary of Psychology that self-esteem is a reflection of the relationship between social evaluation and personal needs. Lin Chongde (1995) pointed out that self-esteem is an important part of individual self-awareness, which not only plays a role in evaluating self, but also one of the important indicators to evaluate individual mental health. Xue Wenxia (2008) concluded that self-esteem is an evaluative and emotional experience of self.

5. Relationship between Parent-Child Attachment, Subjective Well-Being, Perceived Social Support and Esteem

5.1. Relationship between Parent-Child Attachment and Subjective Well-Being

Min & Shin (2007) showed that parent-child trust had a positive impact on life satisfaction, while parent-child alienation had a negative impact on life satisfaction. Yang Anbo and Wang Dengfeng (2008) explored the relationship between parental attachment, parenting and adolescent subjective well-being, and the results showed that adolescents with secure attachment had higher subjective well-being, and parent-child alienation had a negative predictive effect on adolescents' subjective well-being. Ma & Huebner (2008) found that parental and peer attachment was positively correlated with life satisfaction, but parental attachment was the only predictor of strong life satisfaction. Li Xiaowei and Liu Yan (2013) concluded that the correlation between parent-child attachment and subjective well-being reached an extremely significant level in a study of left-behind children in rural areas with the absence of paternal education, and that parent-child attachment in left-behind children can directly predict subjective well-being. Deng Linyuan, Ma Bohui and Wu Yongxin (2015) found that the higher the level of parent-child attachment, the stronger the degree of subjective well-being, and parent-child attachment significantly positively

predicted the positive emotions and life satisfaction of junior high school students, and negatively predicted the negative emotions of junior high school students. Bae and Doh et al. (2016) showed that parent-child attachment and mother-child time sharing have a direct impact on children's subjective well-being, and children who form secure attachment relationships and spend more time with their mothers show higher subjective well-being. In addition, when children maintain a good relationship with their mothers, they can positively recognize their abilities and worth, and therefore have a higher subjective sense of well-being. Similarly, Guo Mingjia, Liu Rude, Zhen Rui, Mou Xiaohong, and Zhuang Hongjuan (2017) also found that parent-child attachment is closely related to the subjective well-being felt by middle school students, and the better the parent-child relationship, the higher the level of perceived subjective well-being.

5.2. Relationship between Perceived Social Support and Subjective Well-Being

In the 80s of the 20th century, Sorias proposed that perceived social support is a person's overall feeling about whether their social support system is sufficient, and the perceived social support reflects the degree of affirmation of an individual's self-worth. People who are thought to be loved, welcomed, and found in all areas of life in their time of need, get more support. For example, the Kalaitzaki study confirmed that social support has a significant alleviating effect on individuals' perceived stress. Harrison research shows that the more social support an individual perceives, the more pronounced the inhibitory effect on his or her negative emotions¹. Singstad Marianne Tevik's study of adolescents found that adolescents who understood more support had a higher quality of life, greater life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

5.3. Relationship between Esteem and Subjective Well-Being

Diener argues that an individual's subjective well-being increases with self-esteem, and that individuals with high self-esteem tend to experience more happiness. According to Muhlenkamp et al., self-esteem comes from the degree of support given to oneself by other individuals in different roles, such as love and support from relatives and friends, and that individuals can gain affirmation and value from these supports. Simse said that individuals who were more positive and more receptive to their self-esteem tended to be more optimistic and experienced more happiness^{6R}, similar to the Firdevs study.

The results of domestic studies are consistent with those of other countries, and the correlation between individual self-esteem and subjective well-being is in different groups. Zhu Xiaowen's research shows that an individual's evaluation of their socioeconomic status has a significant relationship with their recognition of themselves, and it is also an important factor affecting their well-being." Gao Min believes that individuals with high emotional intelligence have stronger self-esteem and well-being, and that individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to have more positive emotional experiences in social interactions¹. In addition, the family is the harbor for the formation of individual happiness, especially in the group of minors, Wei Xiurong believes that a good family role is an important factor in the formation of adolescents' happiness, and the role of self-esteem in it cannot be ignored. After surveying left-behind children, He Mei

found that there was a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and subjective well-being, and left-behind children with high self-esteem tended to have better emotional regulation and a stronger sense of happiness when coping with loneliness after their parents left home."

5.4. Relationship between Parent-Child Attachment, Subjective Well-Being, Perceived Social Support and Esteem

At this stage, there are many valuable research results on subjective well-being, but there are many studies on the elderly, adults or college students, while the study of subjective well-being of junior high school students is still in its infancy, and there are few studies. However, the heightened self-awareness of adolescents in junior high school is a critical period for physical and mental development. It is of great significance to study and discuss the influencing factors of subjective well-being of junior high school students, so as to develop their mental health and prevent related psychological problems.

Diener (1984) argues that the influencing factors of an individual's subjective well-being include internal factors, such as personality factors (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Yang Xiujun & Kong Keqin, 2003) and self-esteem (Joshnloo & Afshari, 2011; Xu Weidong, Wu Mingzheng, Qiu Fudong, 2005); External factors, such as life events (Suh, Diener, & Fujita, 1996; Wang & Ding, 2003). For middle school students, their subjective well-being is mainly affected by three factors: family, school and individual. Specifically, in terms of external factors influencing adolescents' subjective well-being, in addition to life events, family and peer factors were the factors that researchers paid the most attention to. Parent-child attachment has been found to be an important family influencing factor (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004; Deng Linyuan; FANG Xiaoyi, WU Mingming, ZHANG Jintao, LIU Qinxue; 2013). The more secure the parent-child attachment, the stronger the subjective well-being experienced by adolescents; Adolescents with insecure parent-child attachment experience more negative emotions such as anxiety and depression, accompanied by more problem behaviors (Cassidy, 1996; Yang Ling, Lu Aitao, Lian Songzhou, Zhang Meichao, 2013; Jin Jing, 2012; Wang, 2010).

In the school system, teachers and classmates are important factors involved in the physical and mental development of junior high school students. When an adolescent does not receive appropriate social support from his parents, he can turn to his teachers or peers for appropriate help elsewhere (Garcia, 2009; Hombrados-Mencieta et al., 2012; McMahon et al., 2010; Mcneely & Barber, 2010). Currently, there are two models in which social support is thought to affect an individual's mental health. According to the assumption of the main effects model, an individual's social support has a general beneficial effect on their physical and mental health (House et al. 1988). Studies have supported this hypothesis: the more social support secondary school students receive from their parents, teachers, and peer groups, the less likely they are to develop mental health problems (Gao, 2013). The buffer model proposes that social support regulates an individual's physical and mental health in an indirect way, and only works when the individual feels stressed (Hyde et al., 2011) to avoid the effects of stressful events (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Perceived social support is relative to actual social support, which is an individual's subjective feeling and

evaluation of the degree of support from the outside world. Some studies believe that the perceived social support is more important than the actual gain, and the perceived social support has a significant positive impact on the individual's well-being, and the dimensions and total scores of perceived social support are significantly positively correlated with subjective well-being, and the improvement of the perceived social support level can improve the subjective well-being of individuals.

At present, the research on subjective well-being mainly focuses on the relationship between subjective well-being and its influencing factors, or regression analysis of its influencing factors in a juxtaposition manner, and rarely considers the interaction of multiple mediating variables in the influencing mechanism of subjective well-being (Kong Feng, Wang Tingzhao, Li Caina, He Juan, Wang Jin, You Xuqun, 2012). The purpose of this study was to explore the mechanism of parent-child attachment on subjective well-being in a more comprehensive and systematic way on the basis of existing research: the chain mediating role of social support and self-esteem in this relationship. Perception affects the self-esteem of middle school students, and when they also act on the effect of parent-child attachment on subjective well-being, they may not be completely independent of each other, and there is an interaction between mediating variables. In summary, this study makes the following three hypotheses: (1) parent-child attachment in junior high school students can directly predict subjective well-being; (2) Parent-child attachment in junior high school students could affect subjective well-being through the mediating role of comprehension and self-esteem, respectively. (3) Parent-child attachment in junior high school students can affect subjective well-being through the chain mediating effect of comprehension-self-esteem.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Theoretical Implications

This study took junior high school students as the research object, explored their relationship with subjective well-being from three aspects: parent-child attachment, perceived social support, and self-esteem, integrated the four variables of parent-child attachment, perceived social support, self-esteem, and subjective well-being, studied the correlation between the four, and studied the impact of parent-child attachment on subjective well-being through regression analysis, and explored whether perceived social support and self-esteem play a chain mediating role in the impact of parent-child attachment on subjective well-being. This study can verify and promote the relevant research in the field of subjective well-being of migrant children, and provide theoretical support for providing adolescent subjective well-being.

6.2. Practical Implications

First of all, it is of great practical significance to study the effects of parent-child attachment and understanding of social support and self-esteem on subjective well-being, so that adolescents can understand subjective well-being and understand the influencing factors of subjective well-being, so as to improve subjective well-being and self-regulation for junior high school students. It is beneficial to promote the mental health of junior high school students.

Secondly, the study of the relationship between parent-child attachment, perceived social support, self-esteem and

subjective well-being can provide a scientific basis for the mental health education of middle school students, which can provide a basis for the improvement of psychological counseling in schools, so that they can better understand the characteristics of students, and effectively promote the development of students' learning and school psychology.

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