

The Impact of Parenting Behaviors on Adolescent Psychological Well-being and Substance Use

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ABSTRACT

Adolescent depression and substance abuse are common, growing problems in the United States. Negative family environments have proven to be significant predictors of depression, drug, and alcohol use. The current study aims to examine the effects of parenting style on adolescent well-being and substance use. This secondary analysis examined the United States Health Behavior in School-Aged Children dataset from 2009-2010. The current study included 8,875 participants grades seven through ten. Data collection utilized self-report questionnaires in classroom settings and was composed of health-related questions. Spearman’s Rho correlation was used to measure the relationship between parenting behaviors and psychological well-being. Mann-Whitney U Test was used to measure the relationship between parenting behaviors and substance use. Results indicated both males and females who reported negative parenting behaviors had lower scores of psychological well-being. Additionally, both males and females who reported negative parenting behaviors were more likely to report drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco. The results of the current study provide further understanding of the effect that negative parenting behaviors have on adolescents. It is imperative for social workers to develop curriculum and provide psychoeducation to promote family preservation and well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

- ❖ Longitudinal data suggests adolescent depression leads to problems of anxiety, substance use, major depression, and suicide (McLeod, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2016).
- ❖ Among 18-year-olds, 64% endorse the use of alcohol and 31% endorse the use of cigarettes (Reinherz et al., 2000).
- ❖ Parenting styles and behaviors are significant predictors of individual behaviors involving drug and alcohol use and feelings of well-being or hopelessness (Ebrahimi et al., 2017).

Purpose of Research

- ❖ The purpose of the current study is to examine the effects of parenting behaviors on adolescent psychological well-being and substance use.

Research Questions

1. Are negative parenting behaviors associated with decreased psychological well-being in female adolescents more than males?
2. Are negative parenting behaviors associated with substance use behaviors in male adolescents more than females?

Hypothesis

- ❖ It is hypothesized that female adolescents are more likely to have decreased psychological well-being than males due to negative parenting behaviors.
- ❖ It is hypothesized that male adolescents are more likely to develop substance use behaviors than females due to negative parenting behaviors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attachment Theory and Social Cognitive Theory

- ❖ Attachment theory suggests parent and child relationships are major predictors of childhood adjustment outcomes (Ebrahimi et al., 2017).
- ❖ Social cognitive theory suggests schemas serve as cognitive guides for adolescent health risk behavior (Bandura, 2001).

Parenting Styles, Depression, and Substance Use

- ❖ Attachment directly relates to parenting styles. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are associated with depressed mood, low self-esteem, and low self-control among children (Milevsky et al., 2007).
- ❖ Authoritative parenting styles are correlated with high well-being and high life satisfaction among adolescents (Ebrahimi et al., 2017).
- ❖ Family communication and support are protective factors for adolescents (Moore et al., 2018).

Gaps and Limitations

- ❖ Low generalizability across various studies.
- ❖ Uncontrolled factors may explain relationship between attachment and child behavioral outcomes and substance use.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

- ❖ This study is a secondary analysis of the data from the United States Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC) from 2009-2010.
- ❖ The HBSC is a cross-sectional study and explores subject matters to further understand and improve health of children.
- ❖ The original study administered surveys in classroom settings. School representatives conducted the survey and read scripted instructions before students began.

Sample and Sampling Method

- ❖ Cluster and stratified random sampling were conducted over three stages to obtain the sample of 12,642 participants.
- ❖ Participants consisted of male and female children grades five through ten.
- ❖ All fifth and sixth grade students (n=3,767) in the original study were omitted from the current study. The current study examines specific questions that were not asked on the fifth and six grade survey. The sample size of the current study is 8,875 participants.
- ❖ Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the study’s sample.

Measures

- ❖ Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the study variables.
- ❖ The independent variable was perceived parenting behavior. Perceived parenting behavior was measured by the sum of responses to two positive items and two negative items. The two positive items were reverse scored so that higher scores represented positive perceived behavior. A positive item asked participants if their parents let them do what they like to do (1=almost always – 3=almost never). A negative item asked participants if their parent tries to control everything they do (1=almost always – 3=almost never).
- ❖ The first dependent variable was psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was the sum of responses to five items. One question asked the participant if they have felt sad over the last week (1=never – 5=always). Higher scores reflected higher levels of well-being.
- ❖ The second dependent variable was alcohol use. Alcohol use was measured by the response to one item indicating how often one drinks alcohol (1=every day – 5=never).
- ❖ The third dependent variable was tobacco use. Tobacco use was measured by the response to one item indicating how often one smoke’s tobacco (1=every day – 4=I do not smoke).

RESULTS

Spearman’s Rho Correlation

- ❖ The relationship between perceived parenting behaviors and psychological well-being in male and female participants was examined using Spearman’s Rho correlation analysis.
- ❖ The results for male participants indicated a positive and statistically significant association between perceived parenting behavior and psychological well-being, as seen in Figure 1 ($r_s(4,305) = .315, p < .001$).
- ❖ The results for female participants indicated a positive and statistically significant association between perceived parenting behavior and psychological well-being, as seen in Figure 2 ($r_s(4,157) = .356, p < .001$).

Mann-Whitney U Test

- ❖ A Mann-Whitney U Test was used to examine the difference in perceived parenting behavior of participants who smoke tobacco or drink alcohol and those who do not smoke or drink.
- ❖ Table 4 summarizes these results.

Table 4			
Perceived Parenting Behavior Difference between Participants Who Smoke and Drink			
Variables	Mean rank	U	p
Do you smoke (male)		851,524.5	< .001
No	2,160.65		
Yes	1,925.16		
Do you smoke (female)		582,803	< .001
No	2,098.39		
Yes	1,618.15		
Do you drink (male)		1,453,084	< .001
No	2,140.58		
Yes	1,995.21		
Do you drink (female)		1,192,650	< .001
No	2,143.92		
Yes	1,729.28		

Table 1		
Sample Characteristics (N=8,875)		
Characteristic	f	%
Gender		
Male	4,586	51.7
Female	4,287	48.3
Age in years	$M = 13.81$	$SD = 1.285$
Grade in school		
Grade 7	2,241	27.3
Grade 8	2,475	27.9
Grade 9	2,072	23.3
Grade 10	1,907	21.5
Race		
Black or African American	1,539	17.9
White	4,106	47.7
Asian	393	3.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	167	1.9
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	77	0.9
Two or more races	604	7.0
Hispanic	1,804	21.0
Family Affluence	$M = 5.91$	$SD = 1.96$
Adult responsible for your care		
Both mother and father	7,103	57.0
Mother only	2,631	21.1
Father only	396	3.2
Mother / stepfather	1,387	11.1
Father / stepmother	304	2.4
Grandparent(s)	220	1.8
Other arrangement	411	3.3

Table 2		
Descriptive Statistics: Study Variables (N=8,875)		
Variables	f	%
Perceived Parenting Behaviors	$M = 9.19$	$SD = 2.19$
Psychological Well-being	$M = 18.47$	$SD = 4.099$
Smoking		
No	7,607	88.8
Yes	957	11.2
Drinking		
No	6,549	77.1
Yes	1,947	22.9

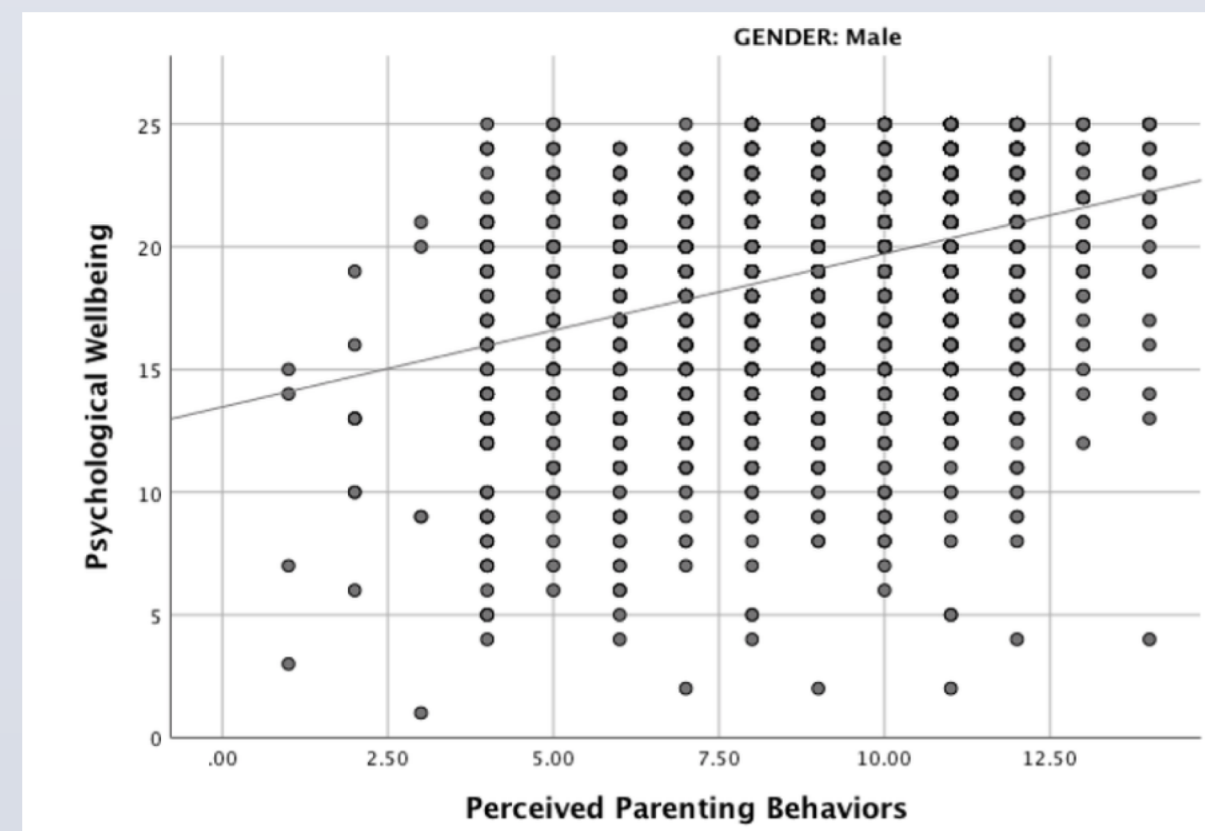


Figure 1. Simple scatter plot of psychological well-being by perceived parenting behaviors in male participants.

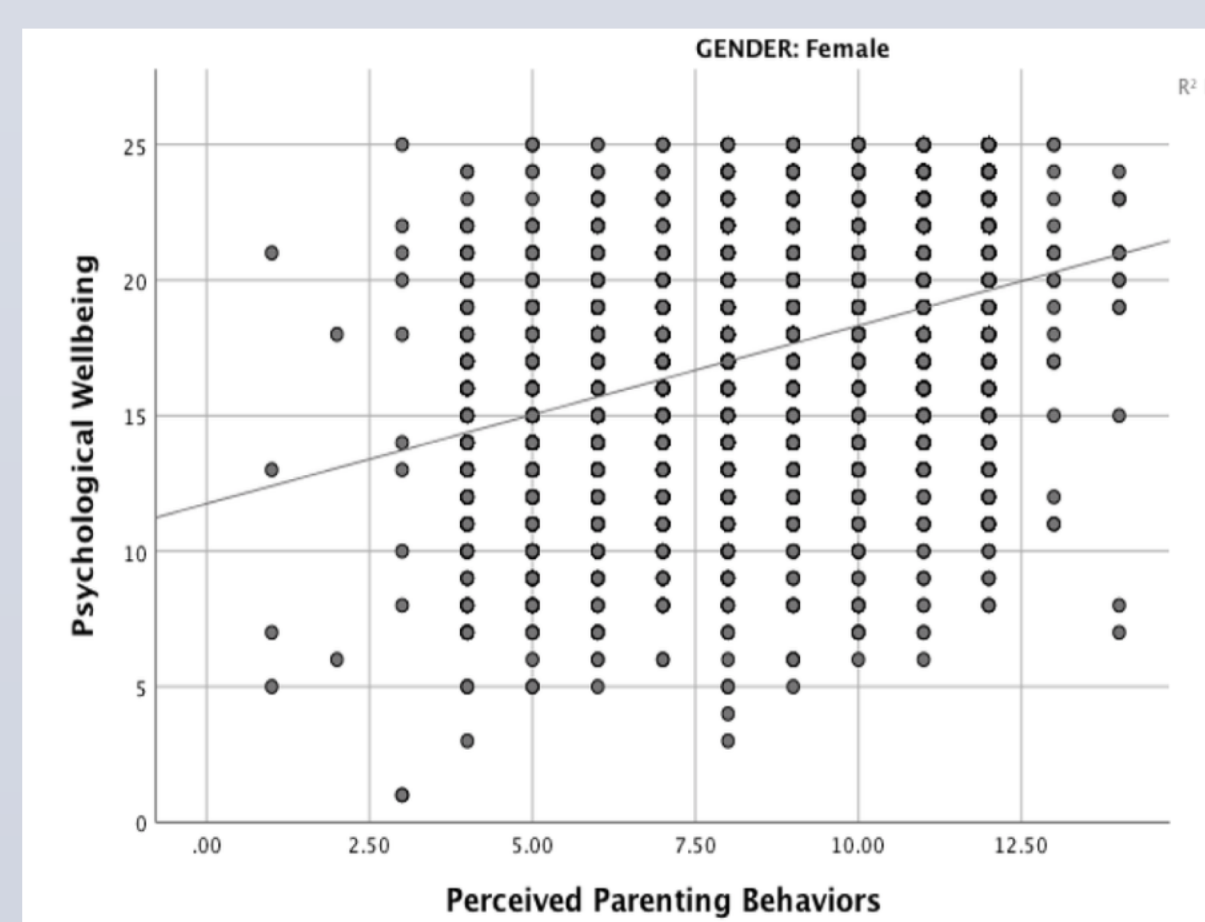


Figure 2. Simple scatter plot of psychological well-being by perceived parenting behaviors in female participants.

Smoking

- ❖ Male participants who smoke had significantly lower perceived parenting behavior scores (M=1,925.16) than those who do not smoke (M=2,160.65, $U=851,524.5, p < .001$).
- ❖ Female participants who smoke had significantly lower perceived parenting behavior scores (M=1,618.15) than those who do not smoke (M=2,098.39, $U=582,803, p < .001$).

Drinking

- ❖ Male participants who drink had significantly lower perceived parenting behavior scores (M=1,995.21) than those who do not drink (M=2,140.58, $U=1,453,084, p < .001$).
- ❖ Female participants who smoke had significantly lower perceived parenting behavior scores (M=1,729.28) than those who do not drink (M=2,143.92, $U=1,192,650, p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The findings of the current study provide evidence that there is an association between parenting behaviors, psychological well-being, and substance use. There were three prominent findings.

- ❖ The first finding indicated a positive, significant association between parenting behavior and levels of psychological well-being in both males and females. This finding was inconsistent with the first hypothesis that females were more likely to develop low psychological well-being due to negative parenting behaviors. These findings are consistent with research from Leslie & Cook (2015) and Milevsky et al. (2007).
- ❖ The second and third key findings indicated a significant association between negative parenting behavior and increased levels of smoking and drinking in both males and females. The second and third findings are inconsistent with the hypothesis that males are more likely to develop substance use behaviors due to negative parenting behaviors. These findings are consistent with Reinherz et al. (2000).

Practice and Policy Implications

- ❖ Future research should address the unique risk parenting behaviors have on gender to understand additional correlates that may contribute to adolescent depression and substance use.
- ❖ Future studies should utilize standardized measures when conducting research to promote reliable and valid data.
- ❖ The significant findings of this study are critical in social work practice, as it contributes to the evidence based foundation clinicians practice on.
- ❖ Findings found in this study will help social workers improve relationships between families to promote well-being.

Strengths

- ❖ The sample was large and demographically diverse, which contributed to the data’s generalizability.

- ❖ The current study utilized multiple inferential analyses to evaluate data.

Limitations

- ❖ Non standardized measures were utilized in the current study. This may have contributed to inferring inaccurate relationships between variables.
- ❖ Utilizing a cross-sectional design made it difficult to understand the lasting effect of parenting behavior on adolescents.
- ❖ Data was collected using a self-report measure which may have contributed to response bias.

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