

The Relationship between Emotional Maltreatment, Internalizing Problem Behavior, Self-Esteem, Social Support of Adolescents

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Abstract

This is study correlation research to analyze the association among emotional maltreatment, internalizing problem behavior, self-esteem, and social support in adolescents. Data were collected from 170 middle and high school student. The collected data were processed by using an SPSS 24.0 program to perform descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation. The results showed that correlation analysis between Emotional maltreatment and internalizing problem behavior revealed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.473$, $p<.001$). Also, Emotional maltreatment and self-esteem ($r=-.327$, $p<.001$), social support ($r=-.436$, $p<.001$) revealed a statistically significant negative correlation. In conclusion necessary to eradicate emotional maltreatment and develop integrated health education programs that can improve self-esteem and social support with the objective of preventing internalizing problem behavior in adolescence.¹

Keywords: Adolescent, Emotional Maltreatment, Internalizing Problem Behavior, Self-Esteem, Social Support

1. Introduction

Adolescence is the developmental transition period between childhood and adulthood and is characterized by physically rapid changes and psychological sensitivity. They can experience conflicts in relationships with their parents and peers as well as lots of changes, including emotional instability, because they can easily be affected by changes in the social environment [1]. Adolescents see their self-consciousness develop but are poor at controlling or delaying it and can make various types of internalizing problem behavior [2]. Physical and mental development in adolescence may have a crucial impact on healthy life in adulthood [4]. For this reason, adolescents' internalizing problem behavior, which can be expressed psychologically, is one of the issues to be addressed seriously. Adolescents' internalizing problem behavior is caused by a combination of several factors, including personal, social, family, and peer relations [4]. Of these, parenting behavior and attachment have the strongest impact on adolescents' internalizing problem behavior [5].

It is therefore essential to address emotional maltreatment and neglect as principal factors affecting internalizing problem behavior in adolescence. However, every adolescent exposed to maltreatment does not show internalizing problem behavior. Individuals' socio-

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psychological protective factors can serve as protective factors to reduce internalizing problem behavior in adolescence. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of emotional maltreatment on internalizing problem behavior in adolescence and the relationship of self-esteem and social support.

2. Method

2.1. Study design

This study is a correlation study investigating the relationship between emotional maltreatment, internalizing problem behavior, self-esteem, social support of adolescent.

2.2. Subjects and data collection

The data were collected in August 2016 and the purport of the research and the contents of the questionnaire were explained to the principals and health teachers of their schools and approval was obtained from them before starting the research. A total of 170 adolescents randomly selected by the researcher. Of them, 16 students who gave insufficient answers were excluded, leaving a total of 154 subjects for data analysis.

2.3. Instrument

2.3.1. Emotional maltreatment: Emotional maltreatment perceived by adolescents was measured by using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) [6] developed by Straus and then translated and adapted by Shin et al. [7]. A higher score meaning being more maltreated. For reliability, Cronbach's $\alpha=.87$ in literature review and Cronbach's $\alpha=.87$ in this study.

2.3.2. Internalizing problem behavior: Internalizing problem behavior in adolescence was measured by using the Korean Youth Self-Report (K-YSR) [8] of the Korean Child Behavior Checklist (K-CBCL), which was manufactured by Oh et al., who translated and standardized CBCL developed by Achenbach [9]. This scale is higher score meaning more problem behavior. For reliability, Cronbach's $\alpha=.86$ in literature review and Cronbach's $\alpha=.94$ in this study.

2.3.3. Self-esteem: Self-esteem was measured by using the self-esteem scale developed by Choi et al. [10]. This scale is composed of four sub-factors. A higher score meaning a high level of self-esteem. For reliability, Cronbach's $\alpha=.91$ in literature review and Cronbach's $\alpha=.91$ in this study.

2.3.4. Social support: Social support perceived by adolescents was measured by using the scale developed by Kim [11], which was a combination of the scale developed by Dubow et al. [12] and the social support in childhood scale developed by Harter et al. [13]. This scale is higher score, the higher level of social support perceived by them. For reliability, Cronbach's $\alpha=.84$ at the time of its development and Cronbach's $\alpha=.94$ in this study.

2.4. Data analysis

The data were analyzed by using an SPSS 24.0 program. The respondents' general characteristics and internalizing problem behavior were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. A Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to analyze correlation among emotional maltreatment, self-esteem, social support, and internalizing problem behavior.

3. Results

3.1. General characteristics

Males accounting for 55.8% of the subjects and females 44.2%. In friendship, good accounts for 77.9%. In self-reported academic stress level, a large number of students showed high and usually accounts for 80.5%. In economic status, middle accounts for 57.8%, low 23.4%, and high 18.8%. In Parent’s education level, high school or lower accounts for 51.3% for fathers and 49.4% for mothers [Table 1].

Table 1. General characteristics

(N=154)

Variables	Categories	n(%)	IPB (M±SD)
Grade	2nd M.S	29(18.8)	10.48±9.71
	3rd M.S	25(16.2)	20.40±18.30
	1st H.S	42(27.3)	15.60±13.57
	2nd H.S	53(34.4)	19.75±12.70
	3rd H.S	5(3.2)	16.80±11.43
Gender	Male	86(55.8)	15.01±14.24
	Female	68(44.2)	19.25±12.95
Friendship	Good	120(77.9)	14.12±12.31
	Usually	29(18.8)	26.17±14.83
	Bad	5(3.2)	29.40±13.72
Academic Stress	High	35(22.7)	28.20±14.69
	Usually	89(57.8)	12.90±10.95
	Low	30(19.5)	15.50±13.52
Economic Status	High	29(18.8)	18.17±13.02
	Middle	89(57.8)	13.28±12.18
	Low	36(23.4)	24.75±12.03
Paternal Education*	≤H.S	19(51.3)	15.53±13.89
	≥College	70(45.5)	18.81±13.57
Maternal Education*	≤H.S	76(49.4)	18.59±15.87
	≥College	72(46.8)	15.04±11.25

* Missing , IPB: Internalizing Problem Behavior, M.S: Middle School, H.S: High School

3.2. Correlation among emotional maltreatment, self-esteem, social support and internalizing problem behavior

The correlation among emotional maltreatment, self-esteem, social support, and internalizing problem behavior is as follows [Table 2].

Table 2. Correlation among emotional maltreatment, self-esteem, social support and internalizing problem behavior

	(N=154)			
	Emotional Maltreatment	Self-Esteem	Social Support	IPB
Emotional Maltreatment	1			
Self-Esteem	-.327**	1		
Social Support	-.436**	.773**	1	
IPB	.473**	-.499**	-.415**	1

*p<.05, **p<.01, IPB: Internalizing Problem Behavior

Emotional maltreatment was significantly negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r=-.327$, $p<.001$) and social support ($r=-.436$, $p<.001$). It was significantly positively correlated with internalizing problem behavior ($r=.473$, $p<.001$). This result demonstrates that the more exposed to emotional maltreatment, the lower level of self-esteem and perceived social support and the more likely to show internalizing problem behavior.

4. Discussion

This study analyzed the level of internalizing problem behavior, the relationship of emotional maltreatment on internalizing problem behavior, and self-esteem, social support.

As for correlation among emotional maltreatment, internalizing problem behavior, self-esteem, and social support, significant positive correlation was found between emotional maltreatment and internalizing problem behavior and significant negative correlation was found among emotional maltreatment, self-esteem, and social support. This result is consistent with the finding that emotional maltreatment is positively correlated with externalizing and internalizing problem behavior in adolescence and is negatively correlated with self-esteem [14]. It also supports the finding that child maltreatment negatively affects growth and development and is negatively correlated with perceived social support [14][15]. In other words, the more exposed to emotional maltreatment, the more internalizing problem behavior and the lower level of self-esteem and social support perceived by adolescents. It is therefore necessary to eradicate emotional maltreatment with the objective of reducing internalizing problem behavior and improving self-esteem and social support in adolescence.

It is therefore necessary to teach good discipline to those parenting children and adolescents and to develop health programs for caregivers as well as for adolescents so that they can realize the fact that emotional maltreatment actually differs from discipline.

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