GENDER-ORIENTED REGULATION OF ADOLESCENTS' EMOTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper clarifies the terms "emotion", "emotions' regulation", "adolescence" and the theories related to the above terms. The aim of this work is to point out why the parental supportive style is considered important for the regulation of adolescents' emotions, but also practices for achieving it. It presents findings of modern notable research studies that evaluate strategies for achieving emotions' regulation in adolescents, using appropriate psychometric tools. More specifically, the basic terms and the relevant theories are clarified, and the factors are defined that play a role in regulating emotions, such as society and family. Finally, realistic proposals are pointed out with the perspective of gender that contribute to its achievement in an educational context.

KEYWORDS

Emotion Regulation, Family, Adolescence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotions' regulation is a critical function of the psychological development of individuals, especially during adolescence. The term "emotion" describes anything that persons feel associated with a particular event and has significant effects on both their body and their behaviour. That is, they are deeply ingrained psychological and biological phenomena inextricably linked to our relationships, the sense of purpose and meaning, and the exertion of power (Lasky, 2000). In addition, the term "Emotion Regulation" means the process by which we affect the emotions we have, the modification of the manner and time we experience and express those (Gross, 1998). This particular term refers to the manner they are externalized, how persons modify and manage them effectively, significantly improving their living conditions (Gross & John, 2003), but also their ability to understand how emotions affect their behaviour.

The regulation of emotions is of particular importance during adolescence, as it is a period of identity formation and sexual maturation (Cole & Cole, 2002; Herbert, 1996; Triantafyllou, 1998). This is the transitional period between childhood and majority of a person, during which significant, physical and hormonal changes take place that also cause corresponding psychosomatic changes (Paraskevopoulos, 1984; Manos, 1986).

2. REGULATORY FACTORS

In the regulation of emotions, the social and family context plays a decisive role. The social context, values and institutions of society, such as culture, religion, but also political and economic conditions affect the values adopted by adolescents, their behaviour, their feelings and the manner that these are handled. In addition, social expectations affect adolescents in terms of expressing emotions (Paraskevopoulos, 1984). Indicatively, in the case that adolescents experience the negative effects of significant social problems, unemployment, poverty, discrimination, violence, associated with the absence of support and abandonment by society, they find it difficult to regulate their negative emotions and therefore they may adopt antisocial behaviour (Papageorgiou, 1998).

2.1. The Family Context

Regarding the family context, it is found that the parents with their behaviour determine the behaviour of their children, since they are the object of their constant observation. According to the theory of social learning (Bandura, 1971), learning is achieved by children not so much by strengthening but mainly by observing and imitating the behaviour of their parents. The regulation of emotions is involved in parallel with the complex interaction of biological processes, which directly affect the maturity, the emotional reactions of adolescents in socio-cultural processes related to gender, and the interactions within the family context/environment. Thus, family plays an important role in the complex process of regulating emotions, as parents influence adolescents to manage their emotions and mitigate their impulses, depending on their parenting style. This specific term indicates the form of method or practice that parents follow in raising and educating their child. Namely, it is the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour that parents adopt towards their children, that form the general emotional climate that exists in their relationship, determine the interactions between them, and are defined by the differences that exist in harmony, autonomy and conflicts in their relationship. Their purpose is to strengthen the conditions and create the appropriate psychological and emotional context, in which their child grows up (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Glasgow et al., 1997; Spera, 2005).

2.2. Emotion Regulation & Parenting Style

Consequently, it follows that the parenting style, as adopted by parents, is directly related to the management of adolescents' emotions. In particular, the three parental styles, accepted by the Baumrind model (1991, in Cole & Cole, 2002, p. 126), the authoritarian, the authoritative, and the permissive one, exhibit diametrically opposite effects on adolescents, on managing their emotions. According to Baumrind (1966), the authoritative style is considered more effective in managing emotions. Adolescents living in a supportive parental environment receive significant positive elements (Richman et al., 2004; Woolley & Bowen, 2007). The family cohesion and balance, a substantial support among family members, a creative and guiding parental control, and a healthy emotional frame of parenting are important elements in empowering, promoting and cultivating

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adolescents' individual skills, such as the emotional well-being and the effective emotion regulation (Garbarino & Ganzel, 2000). All of the above are confirmed by the research of Kocayörük & Şimşek (2016), having found that adolescents wanted their fathers to show emotional closeness, such as support, participation and expression of love, but at the same time they appreciated the existence of independence and the respect for their uniqueness.

In particular, the supportive parents respect the needs of adolescents for personal space and provide a perceived autonomy. They are mostly discuss with the teens about the changes that are happening in their body, their worries about problems at school or other problems they may be facing. They formulate strong argumentation, but also make the appropriate explanations whenever needed. At the same time, they encourage adolescents to participate in family decisions, to take responsibility and to take initiatives in family matters (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Spera, 2005). Thus, the emotional competence of adolescents is achieved, which is related to their ability to effectively manage their emotions (Chatzichristou, 1991). It is pointed out that according to social rather than biological theories of gender, the parental role is adopted by the parents regardless of their gender, since achieving substantial gender equality presupposes an equal participation of the father in the education of children (Tsilipanou, 2017).

2.3. Strategies for Regulating Emotions within Family

One of the most effective strategies presented in the literature is reframing or cognitive reassessment. It is considered effective because it intervenes in the initial phase of creating emotions and modifies both emotions and behaviour. The goal is to reinforce positive emotions and reduce negative ones. The same researchers believe that by being optimistic about difficult situations and re-interpreting the stressing events, it is an essential effort for the improvement of bad mood.

The second strategy is the expressive suppression, which intervenes after the creation of emotions. Adolescents feel that they are hiding their deepest feelings and avoiding emotional manifestations. They also feel that they are misleading others about their true selves and that they are not authentic. Attempts to suppress the expression of emotion have been shown to weaken memory, during the period of suppression (Richards & Gross, 1999).

Appropriate psychometric tools have been tested to evaluate the strategies for emotion regulation of adolescents. Niven et al. (2011) have created the "Emotion Regulation of Others and Self (EROS)" questionnaire and came up with the four-factor model, which are the improvement of emotion, the deterioration of emotion, the improvement of the emotion of others and the deterioration of the emotion of others. The most important positive element of this questionnaire is that it focuses on adolescents who are sensitive to negative psychological, physiological and social consequences. Similarly, Gullone & Taffe (2011) apply the valid and reliable ERQ psychometric assessment tool to its revised version, which is for children and adolescents. They prove that ERQ-CA specializes in evaluating two well-researched Emotion Regulations strategies, these of cognitive reassessment and expressive suppression. The findings of this study confirm that ERQ-CA has an internal consistency, stability and validity that varies in groups with differences in age and gender.

In the bibliography, the systemic approach highlights the need for collaboration between different actors/frameworks/systems, aimed at empowering and supporting adolescents to achieve effective

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emotion management (Dunst & Trivette, 1996; Kourkoutas, 2001; 2007). That is why the implementation of school programmes is proposed for emotional health education, which aim at utilizing the positive action of emotions and limiting the effect of negative ones, thus creating healthy social relationships (Chatzichristou et al., 2006; 2008).

3. CONCLUSIONS

This paper demonstrates the important role that parents play (both fathers and mothers) in the emotional regulation of adolescents. In particular, it has been confirmed that the supportive parenting style is a key factor in effectively managing adolescents' emotions, according to Baumrind (1991), where fathers are equally involved in educating adolescents. Among the strategies with more positive results is considered the reframing or cognitive reassessment. In addition, to achieve effective emotion regulation, documentation is needed by applying appropriate psychometric tools. Finally, school plays an important role in empowering and supporting adolescents to effectively manage their emotions.

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