



The Effects of Emotion Socialization on Adolescents' Social Adjustment and Mental Health



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Introduction

- Parental emotion socialization has been linked to a variety of developmental outcomes for children, including social and psychological adjustment (Eisenberg, Fabes, Carlo, & Karbon, 1992). Children whose parents value their emotions and actively help them deal with their emotion experience tend to be better adjusted, while parental practices that are punitive or devalue children's emotional experiences are associated with negative outcomes (Eisenberg et al., 1992).
- Yet missing from extant research is the exploration of these links in non-western cultures and in adolescence. The current study is to explore the associations between parental emotion coaching and adolescents' social adjustment and mental health outcomes in the context of urban China.
- Hypotheses:
 - Parental emotion socialization would positively predict adolescents' close same-gender friendship quality and self-esteem concurrently and prospectively.
 - The effect of parental emotion socialization on youth adjustment will be moderated by gender. The associations will be stronger for boys than for girls in urban China.
 - The longitudinal effect of W1 parental emotion socialization on W3 youth outcome will be mediated by W1 youth outcome.
 - The effect of parental emotion socialization on youth friendship quality will be mediated by youth self-esteem.

Methods

- Participants**
 - 709 middle school students (49.9% boys, n=354, 50.1% girls, n=355) and their parents; longitudinal data from the same cohort since 7th grade to 9th grade.
 - Students were from three public middle schools in Nanjing. The same cohort completed the surveys each year since 2006 to 2008. At 9th grade, there were 669 students still participating in the study (50.3% boys and 49.7% girls).
- Measures**
 - Emotion socialization: an 8-item scale (e.g., "I encourage my child to talk about his/her moods and feelings" or "My parents encourage me to talk about my moods and feelings", depending on the reporter) assessing the level of emotion coaching.
 - Close same-gender friendship quality: the Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985).
 - Self-esteem: The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1979).
- Analytic procedures**
 - The structural equation model was fitted to the data using the method of maximum likelihood with missing values in STATA/IC 13.0. We also conducted multi-group analysis to determine whether the path coefficients are the same for girls and boys. In addition, we tested the indirect effects of emotion coaching on youth's self-esteem and friendship quality.

Discussion

- Our results supported that parents' emotion coaching are positively related to adolescent friendship quality and self-esteem: the higher level of emotion coaching, the better friendship quality adolescents would have with the close friends and the higher self-esteem they hold toward themselves, which is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Hunter, et al., 2011; Katz et al., 2004). For self-esteem, parental emotion coaching also can directly predict adolescent self-esteem over a three-year period, even after controlling for stability. Despite the lack of significance for the longitudinal association between parental emotional socialization and youth friendship quality, the results did provide some evidence for the indirect influences. Higher levels of parental emotion coaching can ultimately contribute to better friendship quality at later years via its effect on youth self-esteem and earlier friendship quality.
- Against our hypothesis, however, gender does not moderate the associations between parental emotion socialization and youth adjustment. But the absence of gender's moderation effect is likely to suggest that boys could benefit as much as girls do from parents' emotion coaching. It is equally beneficial for parents to be aware of, to accept and to coach their son's emotions as they do with their daughters, instead of trying to raise "a typical masculine son" (e.g., emotion stoic).
- Longitudinal data were used in this study so we could have more confidence about the direction of the effect. Most importantly, both adolescent report and parent report were included in the model. Research has shown that parents' and children's perceptions of parenting practices, although significantly correlated, were not strongly associated (Pasch, Stigler, Perry, & Komro, 2010), which is also true in our sample. By using various reporters, we relieved some concern about the common-method bias.

Results

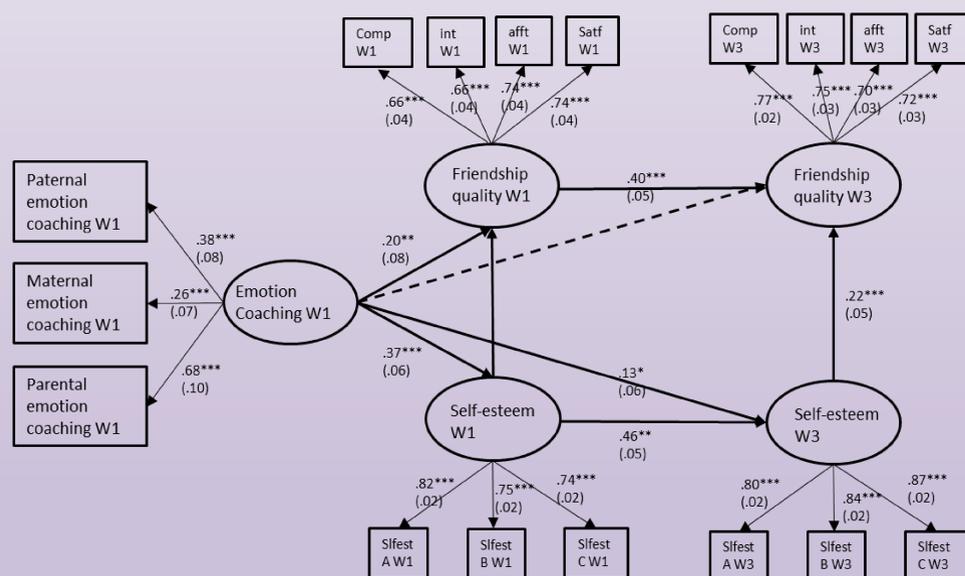


Table 1

Results of the indirect effects test

Hypothesis	Indirect Effects	B	S.E.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
III	Emos1→NRI1→NRI3	.09*	.04	.005	.175
	Emos1→SelfEsteem1→SelfEsteem3	.14***	.04	.065	.217
IV	Emos1→SelfEsteem1→NRI1	.11**	.03	.048	.178
	Emos1→SelfEsteem3→NRI3	.03 ⁺	.02	-.003	.067
	Emos1→SelfEsteem1→SelfEsteem3→NRI3	.04**	.01	.014	.070
	Emos1→SelfEsteem1→NRI1→NRI3	.04**	.01	.017	.071

Note: *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure 1. The results of the structural equation model. The path coefficients were standardized and standard errors were presented in the parentheses.

