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Parental Shame and Guilt Induction as Predictors of Adolescent Aggression: A Narrative Review

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Abstract. This narrative review integrates existing studies to show that it is more feasible to understand how parental induction of shame and guilt affects the behavior of adolescents and young adults in different stages in their development. According to the above, this review will introduce the psychological path of self-assessment, responsibility attribution and defense. Also, the culture and society have been shaping the direction of these pathways. Overall, it can be seen that the aggression of adolescents is not caused by negative emotions; rather, it is a defensive coping mechanism resulting from a loss of self-esteem after shame induction by parents, which also leads to a deviation in the sense of responsibility. At the same time, in terms of behavior and adaptation, guilt induction may also be a factor that induces defense mechanisms of children; however, it can also motivate empathy and prosocial behavior out of a need to correct behavior. Finally, this review has established the theoretical boundaries of shame, adaptive guilt and maladaptive guilt; it has put forward an operational framework for family parenting and interventions in school education, and put forward the main directions of future longitudinal studies.

Keywords: adolescents, shame induction, adaptive guilt, maladaptive guilt, aggression

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a key period when young people learn various behavioral norms in daily life from their families and schools, which affect their behavior at present and will influence them for a long time to come. The parenting styles and methods for their children at this time will have a long-term effect and may arouse feelings such as guilt and shame. Both guilt and shame are forms of self-awareness, but they have different roles in the psyche and behavior. Guilt focuses on the effect of one's own behavior on others and can arouse people's empathy and a sense of responsibility. Shame is about the perception of one's own deficiencies among children, and it usually leads to feelings of rejection and helplessness. The long-term effects of guilt and shame on the behavior development of adolescents have not been clearly and consistently explained in the previous research, as there are significant deficiencies in the integration of longitudinal development data distinguishing these two factors, and they are also prone to ambiguity when explaining their mechanisms of action.

It is necessary to clarify the importance of these emotional reactions, as existing studies on their influence on the behavior of young people have been sparse and lack details. Specifically, the

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current studies have a few missing parts. Although the previous studies [1] have shown that parents' emotional parenting styles affect adolescents' behavior to varying degrees, there are still some gaps in the current research because the concept of "guilt" often overlaps with that of "shame", and distinguishing between behavior-focused guilt and self-focused shame has not been done clearly in studies on their connections with aggressive behavior and externalization. On the other hand, because there has been no systematic study of the internal psychological factors, such as self-assessment, sense of responsibility, and defence regulation, in most previous research, it has been difficult to explain why the same emotional stimuli lead to all sorts of different emotional outcomes in different situations.

As a narrative review, this paper will collect and analyse the results of previous studies to examine how the induction of guilt and shame by parents differs in predicting aggression and emotional regulation issues in early childhood to adolescence. In addition, through the combination of the self-evaluation model, the responsibility attribution process and defensive regulation, this review will also examine how differently guilt and shame predict a person's behavior in their adolescence and early adulthood. Lastly, the purpose of this narrative review is to organize the current research results in a mechanism-based manner and clarify how the process of emotional socialization caused by parenting methods in different cultures affects and shapes different long-term behavioral development paths during the crucial period of adolescence to early adulthood.

2. Parental shame induction as long-term development risk factor

A large number of studies have shown that the use of shame induction by parents in the educational process is a huge developmental risk factor for aggressive and antisocial behaviors in adolescents and their early adulthood. Shame induction does not focus on a single behavior but is more likely to reflect an individual's sense of low self-esteem; thus, it often assumes that one is intrinsically negative-tempered or lacking in morals. The negative evaluations can harm the already weak self-esteem of young people and weaken their ability to regulate emotions, making them more likely to be defensive and aggressive for a long time.

There is a close relationship between the tendency to feel ashamed among young people and their emotional problems and behavior problems. Tangney et al. [1] showed that the two kinds of paths are different: Guilt tends to be a positive regulating factor, so people may feel guilt and apologize; shame is often linked to avoidance, denial and defensive anger. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon is that shame makes adolescents internalize the negative consequences of their own behavior as negative evaluations of themselves and thus leads to aggressive behavior. Lewis's [2] original idea is that shame makes a person believe they have serious flaws. This feeling of being worthless and "not being accepted" is very damaging at a time when one is forming an identity. In addition, One study conducted a longitudinal study [3] that early tendencies of shame are not only correlated with current emotional distress but also can be predicted early on to increase one's susceptibility to risk and delinquency behavior in later life. Therefore, it can be concluded that shame induction will result in long-term harm to mental health by damaging one's sense of self-worth, retaining the passive thoughts, and thus believing that they are flawed.

Repeated feelings of shame can damage their sense of self-worth and affect the children's emotional regulation. Adolescents are in a period of forming their own identity, and repeated exposure to shame-inducing remarks at them by their parents can easily harm their self-esteem and result in a sense of self-denial. This condition will reduce the sense of security for the children and make them less able to manage their emotions [4].

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Adolescents with an immature system of emotional regulation may feel that the pain of shame is too overwhelming, and in order to protect their fragile self-esteem, they alter the way they attribute the cause of the shame. Gold et al. [5] proposed in the model of "Transformation from Shame to Blame" that this is a form of defence. To ease self-blame, people may spread responsibility and thus exhibit hostile attribution bias. Adolescents who have been in such an emotionally socialized environment for a long time are highly likely to interpret neutral social interactions as provocations, thereby triggering retaliatory behaviors. Moreover, the shame experiences resulting from being excluded and humiliated are particularly likely to lead to illegal and aggressive behaviors among them [6].

3. The protective mechanism for adaptive guilt

Parents' guilt-inducing behavior is generally considered a kind of defence against aggression; therefore, the modern family education system usually moved away from shame induction. Guilt leads adolescents to focus on certain behaviors and their negative consequences for others, rather than feeling that the self-esteem is unstable, so they can learn to be moral. This difference is to be learned in order to understand why guilt and shame develop differently.

Research shows that there is a tendency for guilt in people with low levels of aggression and criminal behavior. Stuewig and McCloskey [6] noted that guilt tendencies can negatively predict deviant behavior among adolescents. Longitudinal studies have also found that the tendency for guilt in early adulthood is still protective against risky behavior and shows positive effects at all stages of development [3]. The first reason for the positive effect is related to cognition and emotion. Guilt is based on one's own behavior, and therefore one can still have a sense of self-worth after being reprimanded. Guilt proneness is often correlated with restorative behavior in the study of moral emotions; that is to say, when people feel guilty, they tend to apologize, make amends and resolve conflicts to repair their relationships with others and reduce aggressive behavior [1]. Evidence also shows that the impact of guilt induction varies based on the style of parent-child communication. When it comes to discipline, parents should explain why positive behavior or negative behavior is required, and show that such behavior affects others, in order to foster the sense of responsibility for one's actions among adolescents [7].

At the same time, not all forms of guilt induction function adaptively. New research has distinguished between adaptive guilt and maladaptive guilt with the latter is often associated with anxiety, excessive self-blame and shame [4]. Specifically, adaptive guilt is based on actual wrongdoing, and its purpose is to make people bear the consequences of their behavior for the sake of moral improvement. Maladaptive Guilt is an unreasonable type of self-blame. Although there is no actual fault, a person may still hold themselves responsible and be affected by chronic psychological problems in the long run. Dempsey [8] states that the form of guilt is determined by the way it is socialized and psychologically processed. If the degree of guilt is too high or it lasts for a long time, it will no longer serve to regulate behavior. Therefore, parents need to make sure that adaptive guilt is used reasonably to correct behavior and promote mental health development in the young.

4. Differentiated pathways of shame and guilt

Although guilt and shame are often discussed together as self-conscious emotions, developmental and clinical research have consistently demonstrated that they serve distinct psychological and behavioral functions. It should be pointed out that guilt and shame are totally different in the use of

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parenting styles. In addition, an increasing number of studies in developmental psychology, clinical psychology and social psychology have found that due to different fundamental paths of psychological action, their long-term behavior is entirely different, and the results of these differences are particularly obvious during adolescence. Based on the existing research, it has been determined that the long-term effect of parental emotional education on aggressive behavior can be explained by three linked pathways: one's own evaluation standards, the process of attributing responsibility, and the appearance of defensive aggression as a way to manage emotions. These mechanisms show that shame is more likely to be associated with externalizing behavior, and guilt can help people internalize morality and regulate their behavior in daily life.

4.1. Self-evaluation as a mechanism

At the base level, parental shaming and inductive guilt change a child's view of themselves and are affected by it. Lewis [2] pointed out that the crucial difference between shame and guilt is the "object of evaluation"; shame points to the whole self and considers it an inherent flaw, whereas guilt is about particular behavior violations. Therefore, when a person thinks that the "global self" is faulty, they feel shame. When a certain "specific behavior" is considered wrong, there will be a sense of guilt. The first assessment needs to be made to determine the rest of the emotional development path.

Guilt is about being motivated to rectify behavior; therefore, people can feel negative about doing something wrong but still have a healthy sense of self. The self-concept of adolescents is still in the stage of forming and growing, and they are more sensitive to their parents' words. Once it has been formed, it is very difficult to modify or change in the future. When parents use parenting methods that make a child feel ashamed, such as criticism, negative labels for personality or withholding emotional expression, these negative evaluations can be easily accepted by young people as facts about themselves and are therefore difficult to overcome [9]. Patrick and Gibbs [7] believed that adolescents could learn to distinguish between their own values and behavior through inductive discipline based on guilt; that is to say, parents would focus on the consequences of behavior but still provide emotional support.

It is also worth mentioning that when self-evaluation becomes overly rigid due to long-term negative influences, guilt usually evolves into maladaptive guilt and has negative effects. Van Eickels et al. [4] mentioned that although adaptive guilt is related to empathy and moral reasoning, maladaptive guilt often evolves into self-deprecation similar to shame. Based on the core difference between adaptive guilt and maladaptive guilt, if self-evaluation is rigid and vulnerable, guilt will lean towards shame, inducing anxiety and self-deprecation. Therefore, a positive and healthy self-evaluation system and the positive impact of maladaptive guilt are indispensable to each other.

4.2. Attribution of responsibility

Based on the self-evaluation model, the sense of shame and guilt further determine the responsibility attribution model of how adolescents allocate negative outcomes. The differences in this process are not merely behavioral choices, but rather stem from the distinct logics involved in the influence of shame and guilt on adolescents' emotional regulation and social behavior.

The core reason why shame leads to aggressive behavior is caused by unhealthy attribution of responsibility. Dodge et al. [10] mentioned that adolescents who are susceptible to shame are more likely to develop hostile attribution bias, interpreting interpersonal conflicts as intentional provocations from others. This situation is essentially due to the attribution model of extrapolation

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of responsibility, which leads adolescents to take psychological self-protection measures to avoid the wrong perception of themselves as losers when they lack the ability to regulate. Furthermore, Stuewig et al. [3] noted that early shame tendencies form a self-reinforcing cycle, in which the emotional distress intensified by negative self-evaluation forces adolescents to seek extreme coping strategies and is more likely to deal with negative emotions in an internalized way. This process reveals the transition from internalizing pain to externalizing aggression and has a strong correlation with aggression resulting from defensive mechanisms.

In contrast, guilt is more likely to guide adolescents onto the right track than shame when used properly. The fundamental reason is that guilt provides a non-threatening path for responsibility attribution by focusing on "specific behavior" rather than "negating the person as a whole." Stuewig and McCloskey [6] mentioned that guilt tendencies are negatively correlated with deviant behaviors in adolescents, highlighting the positive functions of guilt in emotional regulation and behavioral correction. Compared with a sense of shame, a tendency towards guilt can effectively curb juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior, which is attributed to its promotion of a healthy distribution of responsibilities. Since the core self-worth of individuals has not been attacked, adolescents do not need to seek psychological balance by blaming others. Even so, the establishment of this attribution model is highly dependent on the way parents guide. Patrick and Gibbs [7] mentioned that if parents cultivate their children's understanding of the consequences of their own behavior and a sense of responsibility (i.e., "adaptive guilt") through constructive communication methods, they can effectively suppress the occurrence of deviant behavior. On the contrary, if children experience maladaptive guilt, they may feel ashamed and excluded, thus deviating from the positive track of moral learning.

To sum up, the essential difference between the two attribution models lies in that shame internalizes painful emotions and evasive behaviors by attributing responsibility to one's overall personality flaws, while guilt provides constructive growth by attributing responsibility to the matter itself.

4.3. Aggression resulting from defensive mechanisms

As mentioned, from the deep perspective of developmental psychology, aggression is not a direct derivative of shame, but rather a defense mechanism initiated due to the internalization of responsibility resulting from attribution patterns. As Gold et al. [5] mentioned, persistent sense of shame can weaken self-esteem and trigger defensive attacks. When self-deprecation becomes intolerable, adolescents will activate an attribution shift mechanism, transforming their inner sense of shame into external anger and attempting to terminate the negative emotions caused by internalizing responsibility by external anger. Szentágotai-Tătar and Miu [11] stated that adolescents with a strong sense of shame often rely on maladaptive regulatory strategies such as suppression and rumination, especially when they have experienced interpersonal stress or parental criticism in their early years. This further indicates that when adolescents resist the inner pain brought by shame, they force their brains to launch defensive attacks as a "shortcut" to quickly divert their attention.

This defense mechanism will further be reflected in an individual's cognitive biases, thereby causing aggressive behavior. Dodge et al. [10] mentioned that adolescents who have long been troubled by shame tend to develop a "threat-oriented" social information processing model, which interprets vague clues as deliberate contempt or attack. Stuewig et al. [12] pointed out the association between shame and aggression is essentially caused by this attribution tendency to extrapolate responsibility to the "hostile environment." The persistence of this situation not only distorts adolescents' interpretation of social signals but also forcibly closes other possible cognitive

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pathways in the deep psychological structure, thereby more frequently leading to the occurrence of aggressive behavior and forming a vicious cycle.

In contrast, guilt focuses attention on specific behaviors rather than the overall self, which enables individuals to maintain a sense of self-worth and transform negative emotions into prosocial and corrective behaviors. Therefore, it is relatively difficult for individuals to form defense mechanisms to avoid the internalized and externalized phenomenon of "shame transfer." Tangney et al. [1] mentioned that people who have long been troubled by shame tend to avoid negative emotions such as anger, embarrassment, and sadness by establishing defense mechanisms and externalizing behaviors, while those affected by guilt are more inclined to take constructive actions, such as apologizing, making up for mistakes, and solving problems. Guilt is also related to the rules for keeping relationships with others. Adolescents who are in a state of guilt will tend to apologize, make amends, empathize with others, and thus reduce their aggressive behavior [13].

It should be pointed out that although guilt is often considered a protective factor because it limits negative evaluations to particular behavior, it can still have a certain risk of causing adverse effects. Van Eickels et al. [4] have reported that when adolescents feels guilt and shame in the meantime, the protective role of guilt may be lost; at this time, there is often a feeling of distress and aggression. This sense of guilt due to shame may induce adolescents to develop contradictory aggressiveness. It makes them show aggressive behaviors towards others and express their negative emotions externally, but at the same time they are internally repulsed by their own failure to live up to moral ideals.

5. Cultural and gender influence

It is essential to discuss the impact of cultural and gender differences when investigating factors affecting adolescent mental health. In fact, an increasing amount of evidence indicates that the outcome differences resulting from parental socialized parenting styles based on shame and guilt are largely systematically influenced by cultural norms, and to a lesser extent, by specific emotional socialization practices based on gender. Sznycer et al. [14] pointed out that compared with people in individualistic cultural backgrounds such as the United States or the United Kingdom, individuals in collectivist societies like Japan may show a higher sensitivity to shame. When a certain cultural framework attaches great importance to social image and interpersonal harmony, parents' use of shame is usually regarded as a mechanism for maintaining group harmony and fulfilling the responsibility of maintaining relationships. Therefore, it may increase adolescents' fear of negative evaluation in society and thus strengthen the psychological mechanism of self-doubt. Liang et al. [15] found that Chinese adolescents are very sensitive to the feeling of shame; therefore, they may perceive ambiguity in interpersonal communication as hostility, then shift the internal responsibility on others, especially when they believe their parents' criticism is more of a "rejection" than a "correction", and thus are more likely to activate the mechanism of "defensive aggression" to protect themselves in a collectivist society.

Compared with cultural differences, the gender differences in shame, guilt and aggressive behavior are relatively small. Chaplin and Aldao [16] proposed that adolescents of different genders would go through the same process of self-evaluation and attribution after experiencing shame and guilt. However, constrained by gendered social norms, they show differences in the ways they express and regulate these emotions. Else-Quest et al. [17] mentioned that when feeling ashamed, boys tend to externalize their inner pain through aggressive behavior. Girls, on the other hand, may internalize their sense of shame by retreating or showing depressive symptoms. This difference reflects the divergence in coping strategies recognized by society rather than the essential difference

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in emotional structure. It is worth noting that as Stuewig et al. [3] pointed out, if the communication style with parents is more positive and healthy, the gender differences presented in the association between shame and aggression will be significantly weakened. To sum up, the shaping effect of culture and family environment on the social and emotional development of adolescents, as well as the influence on the formation trajectory of their personal cognition, is far more profound than the influence of physiological gender.

6. Conclusion

This review discussed the features of parenting styles characterized by parental shame and guilt, as well as how they affect the development of aggressive behavior in adolescents and what underlying reasons lead to this phenomenon. At present, it is concluded that aggressive behavior is not a direct or inevitable result of shame, but rather a defensive response that gradually develops in situations where self-evaluation is impaired, responsibility attribution shifts, and threat perception increases. In contrast, guilt-inducing is more likely to reduce the risk of aggression by promoting the internalization of responsibility and the development of emotional regulation abilities.

The main theoretical contribution of this review is to provide a system of self-assessment and attribution for the essential differences among shame, adaptive guilt, and maladaptive guilt by systematically reviewing existing literature. This will help the subsequent research be more specific and detailed in its theoretical explanation and avoid confusion with the process of socialization of emotions that are completely different in nature.

This review can also offer some ideas for teachers at the educational level on how to guide students' behavior; they will be able to learn about the negative effects of shame and behavioral orientation under the influence of guilt. Teachers should not use labels such as "bad student", which refer to a person's entire character, but rather name the specific behavior that is problematic; for example, one could say that the student "did not meet the academic requirement at that time" to help students recognize that their value as a person is independent of mistakes, thus preserves their self-esteem and behavior correction drive. When students encounter academic failure, the educators are able to guide them consider the reasons for the failure and make an improvement plan as the intervention. Thus, the student can be more proactive in learning and will not be demotivated by emotions. When students exhibit aggressive behavior, teachers can choose to block the transformation path from shame to defensive aggression by providing supportive feedback and communication patterns.

The review also offers some practical suggestions for raising and parenting children. Compared with the risk of negative psychological development in adolescents due to parental shame induction oriented towards personality negation and emotional reproach, guilt-based discipline focuses on behavior and emphasizes the influence and retention of relationship between parent and children; thus, it can provide parents with an operational parenting framework and ensure the healthy and positive development of children's mental health.

In conclusion, the analysis in this review shows that the appearance of aggressive behavior in young people is not caused by negative emotions themselves but rather by their sense of self and the structure of responsibility attribution formed through certain emotional socialization. The direction of future research should be to extend the scope of investigation and clarify the boundaries among adaptive guilt, maladaptive guilt, and shame more precisely to prevent confusion among these different kinds of moral emotions. Therefore, longitudinal and cross-cultural studies need to be carried out to explore how different groups are affected by parenting styles in the patterns of

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emotional regulation, in the future so that parents and educators can determine whether shame induction in adolescents leads to aggressive behavior in young adulthood over time.

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