A Study on the Factors that Influence the Mental Health of Middle School Students: Focusing on Family Relationships and Conversation with Parents

Jae-Woo Oh[1*], Mi-Yea Lee[1] and Hye-Sun Bang[2]

[1]Department of Nursing, Chungbuk Health and Science University, Cheongju - 363-794, South Korea;
unasyn7@chsu.ac.kr, miyea20@hanmail.nett
[2]Cheongju Welfare Foundation, Cheongju, 363-794, South Korea;
dorltpwnfskql@hanmail.net

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the relevance among the factors that affects the mental health of middle school students by focusing on the family relationship and the conversation with parents and by exploring the influence on the mental health of middle school students by focusing on the family relationship and the conversation with parents perceived by the middle school students and to attempt to provide the basic data for the development of nursing interventions for mental health, preventing problems and well adapting to a rapidly changing development process of middle school students who are becoming teenagers. This study is the correlation research conducted by targeting the 153 middle school students residing in the C City and the data collection period was June to October, 2013. Collected data was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, Pearson's correlation coefficient and phased multiple regression analysis. Study results showed first, the family relationship perceived by the middle school students was 4.21 points in average and the degree of conversation with children was 3.53 points in average. Second, the degree of conversation with parents perceived by the middle school students has shown a negative correlation with the mental health and the family relationship has shown a positive correlation. Third, for influence by the degree of conversation of parents on the mental health of middle school students, the family relationship had a significant impact on the mental health of middle school students and the explanatory power of these variables were 96%, and the family relationship had a significant impact on the mental health of middle school students and the explanatory power of these variables were 65%. For the mental health of middle school students, the time of having a conversation with parents should be increased and the satisfaction of the family relationship perceived by middle school students should be elevated. Furthermore, in order to reduce the mental health in other words, the problem of stress and depression of middle school students, as an active counter measures on the mental health, a proactive development of mental health services at the level of prevention and health promotion and the development of an effective nursing intervention methods focused on the field through a variety of medium as well as the school is needed.

Keywords: Family Relations, Mental Health, Mothers with Infants, Social Support

1. Introduction

Our society's rapid industrialization and development of science and technology has given rise to a materialistic wealth and sadly, a spiritual poverty to the individuals of 21st century. Because of this, we are able to enjoy the cultural life and own many things compared to the past, however, more psychological problems are occurring and this is appearing more prominently in the youth who is at a transitional stage of developmental. The adolescent period is accompanied by severe social and psychological conflicts due to rapid physical growth and physiological changes. It is the time when the basis of maturity is formed by integrating internal and external experiences, it is also a precarious period where a major onset of mental illnesses can occur due to the various difficulties of adaptation[1].

* Author for correspondence

Today's teenagers, are experiencing a transformation of the social structure and changes in traditional values such as values of materialism, standardized education system, success-oriented and competitive social atmosphere, the gap between the generations, dual career couples etc. They feel emotional conflict and anxiety caused by desire frustration. As such, the teenagers greatly experience psychological conflict and desire frustration due to various factors and these become the factors that threaten the emotional stability of teenagers[2].

Teenagers, unlike adults, tend to experience and express a unique set of stresses which are not experienced by other groups. They have severe emotional ups and downs, they lack consideration for values, they have a greater tendency to judge by emotion rather than reason, and they are in a special situation where radical and violent actions are easily expressed. Teenagers especially, are influenced by their parents; their growth processes such as emotional independence, sexual impulse or emotional control and forming a positive self-concept develops within the interaction with the family. The family has an important influence in the development of the mental health of teenagers[3]. However, a recent drastic change in Korea has changed the family structure and its function, causing problems and maladjustment such as values, behavior patterns and living attitude[4]. Family problems such as dual-income parents, too much expectation on children and decreased conversation between family members has significantly influenced the mental health of physically and mentally immature teenagers[5].

According to online survey statistics of health behaviors of teenagers conducted on 76,937 middle and high school students in 2009 by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, out of all teenagers 43.2% have expressed that they normally feel a lot of stress, 37.5% had experienced depression and 19.1% have answered that they thought of suicide in the last 12 months. Looking at such results, we can see that the mental health of our country's teenagers are at a critical state.

According to a study on the influence on the mental health by domestic violence[6], a study on the suicide of teenagers[7, 8], alienation and environmental maladjustment of teenagers is seen as a mental health problem that can lead to depression and even a suicide. A variety of studies, such as a study on the influence of depression and stress by family adaptation and social support[6] has been published in relation to the mental health of depression and stress of teenagers.

As such, partial studies on social support and domestic violence related to mental health are being conducted, however, studies that examine the mental health of the middle school students during the critical time of personality and behavior development focusing on the family relationships and conversation with parents are insufficient. Therefore, this study was attempted to provide the basic data for the development of nursing interventions for the middle school students who are developing into teenagers, to help them adapt to the rapidly changing stages of development, prevent the problems and to promote their mental health.

2. Methods

2.1 Study Subjects and Data Collection Methods

This study is a correlation research and the data collection was conducted from June 1st to October 30, 2013 targeting 153 middle school students residing in C city. This research determined the minimum number of samples was 95 at significance level of 0.05 and power 0.95 in regression model. The researcher visited the student samples and collected data after explaining the purpose and method of this study. Questionnaires were distributed to those student samples that consented to participation in this research. The respondents were given directions before beginning to answer the questions. The explanations were given to them according the ethics of research before data collection, hey include: purpose of research, privacy policy and confidentiality in handing their personal data. Only consenters among the student samples were included in the survey.

2.2 Research Tool

The study tools consisted of: a questionnaire composed of the scale used on the survey of Korea Welfare Panel Study for the degree of conversation with parents and family relationship and the Korean version scale by Lee, Young Ho and Song, Jong Yong (1991) adapted from Beck (1967) to measure the mental health.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed with SPSS program to obtain general characteristics in real numbers and percentages. Pearson correlation coefficients acquired the correlation between degree of conversation with parents,

Table 1. The general characteristics of the subjects   N=153

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	36	23.5
	Female	117	76.5
Religion	Catholic	21	14.4
	Protestant	36	24.7
	Buddhism	27	18.5
	None	60	41.1
	Others	2	1.4
Family structure	Nuclear family	130	84.9
	Expanded family	23	15.1
Average monthly income of a family	500,000 -1,000,000 >	5	3.3
	1,000,000 -1,500,000 >	6	4.0
	1,500,000 -2,000,000 >	18	11.9
	2,000,000 -3,000,000 >	27	17.9
	3,000,000 - 4,000,000 >	47	31.1
	4,000,000 - 5,000,000 >	16	10.6
	5,000,000 < 6,000,000 >	13	8.6
	6,000,000 <	19	12.6

Do			Average daily consumption of time (in minutes)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Average	Standard deviation
Watch TV or Video	121	82.9	77.5	40.2
Study room	14	10.5	135.0	68.3
Game or Internet	114	80.9	67.6	37.9
Part time job	7	5.3	340.0	124.9
Religious activities	21	15.8	67.2	33.3
Sports	38	28.6	52.7	20.5

family relationships and mental health perceived by middle school students. In addition, regression analysis was carried out to confirm the impact of those variables on the mental health of middle school students.

3. Results

3.1 The General Characteristics of the Subjects

The general characteristics of the subjects who participated in this study are listed in Table 1. In the gender category there were 36 males (23.5%) and 117 females (76.5%). In the religion category, 60 people (41.1%) had no religion. In the family structure category, the nuclear family was the highest with 130 people (84.9%).

In the average monthly income of a family category, 3~4 million were the highest earned with 47 families (31.1%). Finally, in the activities after school category, those that answered games and Internet was the highest with 114 people with the consumption of an average of 1 hour per day.

3.2 The Degree of Conversation with Parents, Family Relationships and Mental Health Perceived by Middle School Students

The degree of conversation with parents, family relationships and mental health perceived by middle school students categories are shown in Table 2. The degree of conversation with parents showed an average of 3.53 points, the family relationships showed 2.21 out of 3 points total and the mental health showed an average of 5.73 points.

Table 2. Degree of conversation with parents, family relationships and mental health perceived by middle school students   N=153

	Min Value	Max Value	Average	Standard deviation
Degree of conversation with parents	2.00	4.00	3.53	0.57
Family relationships	1.00	3.00	2.21	2.52
Mental health	0.00	27.00	5.73	6.24

3.3 Correlation between Degree of Conversation with Parents, Family Relationships and Mental Health Perceived by Middle School Students

The correlation between degree of conversation with parents, family relationships and mental health perceived by middle school students categories are shown in Table 3. The degree of conversation with parents perceived by middle school students has shown a positive correlation and the family relationships have shown a negative correlation with the mental health.

Table 3. Correlation between degree of conversation with parents, family relationships and mental health

N=153

	Degree of conversation with parents	Family relationships	Mental health
Degree of conversation with parents	1.00		
Family relationships	-.07 (p=.423)	1.00	
Mental health	-.30*** (p=.000)	.28** (p=.001)	1.00

3.4 Influence on the Mental Health of Middle School Students by the Degree of Conversation with Parents and Family Relationships

Influence on the mental health of middle school students by the degree of conversation with parents and family relationships are shown in Table 4. In the degree of conversation with parents category, there was a significant influence with explanatory power of 96%. In addition, the family relationships category has shown a significant influence on the mental health with an explanatory power of 65%.

Table 4. Influencing factors of mental health N=153

	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	Level of significance
	B	Standard deviation	Beta		
Degree of conversation with parents	-3.165	0.839	-0.293	-3.774	.000
Family relationships	0.069	0.021	0.256	3.298	.000

Based on the study results, the degree of conversation with parents, family relationships and the degree of mental health perceived by middle school students was verified as the major factors that significantly influence the mental health of middle school students.

4. Discussion

By examining the study results, the degree of conversation with parents had a significant influence on the mental health of middle school students and shown a negative correlation. Although, a direct comparison is not possible because there are no previous studies on the influence on the mental health of middle school students by the degree of conversation of parents, Cho[9] said among the interpersonal distance between parents and children, psychological distance and communication, the variable with the biggest independent influence on the family relationships and the family cohesion is the communication between parents and children. Also, according to Kim[10], the student's problem behavior has no relationship with the social class which is the background factor of students, but it has a relationship with the level and frequency of communication between parents and children. In addition, since the conversation between parents and children is very important and influences all aspects such as: problem behavior of children, internal-external control, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, self-expression, cohesion and adaptability of the family, social ability, mental health, etc., parents should be in constant communication with their children and support them to express the values, thoughts, feelings felt between parents and children. An intervention to maintain mental health by acquiring the confidence and sense of security on the establishment of correlation and confirming relationship through the sharing of experience with parents through communication is needed.

Even the family relationships had a significant influence on the mental health of middle school students and shown a positive correlation. It is difficult to directly compare the influence on the mental health of middle school students by family relationships because there are no previous studies, however, family is the network of interlocking relations that acts cohesively through as a system that shares emotions and constantly interact Cho[11]. Kim[12] said, in order to maintain a healthy family system, family relationships and family function should

be smooth and the family system must be stable and balanced. In addition, if family relationships are smooth, the closeness and bonding between family members are high with effective communication and adapts well to the changes in the environment and actively solves the problems during crises but, if family relationships are not smooth, the communication between the family will be disconnected, closed and rigid, causing avoidance of conflict and in the process of solving problems and it will influence the mental health because it will be difficult to cope with environmental changes (Kim, Soo Jung[12]). Therefore, a family is not just a gathering of individual characteristics of family members, but has its own culture, values and norms in which it is an open system that is negatively and positively affected within the family culture. For the mental health of middle school students, an intervention that can improve the family relationships through education and support is needed for finding communication improvement methods between the family, providing consultation for mutual understanding between the family members to promote bonding and to utilize the surrounding relationship and human resources.

In conclusion, for the mental health of middle school students, a time and method of communicating with parents must always be kept. In addition, the family relationships should function smoothly, and in order to relieve the conflict and stress of middle school students, the family members should have emotional ties within the family forming a structure that can adequately adapt to the changing environments. Therefore, in order to improve the family relationships, a development of intervention program and educational support at school should be simultaneously established.

5. References

1. Kim TS. A study on the factors that influence the mental health of teenagers: focusing on the family functioning factors, social relationship factors, self-factors, psychological factors [Ph D dissertation]. Hanse University; 2013.
2. Lim EH. A study on the mental health problems of teenagers. Hanyoung Theological University Academic Journal. 2004; 8:303–24.
3. Lee YJ. Changes and problems of parents-children relationships. Chungang Juksung Publisher. 1988.
4. Lee GU. The relationship between family support and mental health perceived by teenagers [Master's Thesis]. Kyungpook National University; 1993.
5. Moon HL. Influence on the interpersonal tendencies of children by family functionality [Master's Thesis]. Ewha Women's University; 1994.
6. Yu SK, Hong SH, Choi BY. Verifying the mediating effect of actual spirituality, self resiliency and attachment in the relationship of adaptation and the risk factors of family. Korea Society of Educational Psychology. 2004; 18(1):393–408.
7. Lee ES. Structural model related to the alienation, depression and the thoughts of suicide [Ph D Dissertation]. Kyung Hee University; 2002.
8. Kim BY. Depression and suicide of Korean teenagers. Korea Journal of Psychology: Social Issues. 2004; 10:55–68.
9. Cho EK. An influence on the cohesion and adaptability of family by the interpersonal distance between parents and teenagers, psychological distance and communication [Ph D Dissertation]. Hanyang University. 1992.
10. Kim YK. Communication between parents and children and the relationship between academic self-concept and behavior problems [Graduate School Master's Thesis]. Korea National University of Education; 1993.
11. Cho SJ. A correlation between the level of satisfaction, social support recognition and family function recognition on the collaboration with the special education teacher of parents of high school students with disabilities in special schools [Master's Thesis]. Ewha Women's University; 2003.
12. Kim SJ. An influence on the evaluation of caring of mother by levels of maladaptive behavior of disabled children, marital satisfaction and family function [Master's Thesis]. Sogang Graduate School; 2009.