

Family Processes and Developmental Outcomes in Chinese Adolescents

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Abstract

Studies on family processes and developmental outcomes in Chinese adolescents conducted by the author are reviewed in this study. Several observations can be highlighted from the review: 1) positive parenting styles were related to better adolescent adjustment; 2) higher parent-adolescent conflict was related to poorer adolescent adjustment; 3) positive parent-adolescent communication was related to better adolescent adjustment; 4) positive parent-child relational qualities were associated with better adolescent adjustment; 5) better perceived family functioning predicted positive adolescent development; 6) relative to mothers, fathers exerted a stronger impact on the development of Chinese adolescents; 7) family influences exerted a stronger impact on adolescent girls than on adolescent boys; 8) the impact of family processes on adolescent developmental outcomes was found in families with and without economic disadvantage. The above observations underscore the importance of family antecedents of adolescent development on both theoretical and practical levels.

Key words

Adolescents; Chinese; Developmental outcomes; Family processes; Review

Introduction

What are the relationships between family processes and adolescent development? While there have been a growing number of studies in this area, there are four limitations of the available literature. First, research studies on the linkages between some family processes (such as family functioning and parent-adolescent communication) and adolescent adjustment are under-researched.^{1,2} Second, although studies have been carried out to examine different family processes and adolescent adjustment, most of the

available studies are conducted in the Western context and there are few Chinese studies.³ For example, very few studies have been conducted to examine the linkage between parent-adolescent communication and the psychosocial adjustment of Chinese adolescents experiencing economic disadvantage. With reference to the PsycINFO database up to November 2003, there were 171 citations under "parent-adolescent communication". However, there were only 4 citations when the search terms of "parent-adolescent communication" and "Chinese" were used. Third, to better assess the causal relationship between family processes and adolescent adjustment, longitudinal studies are indispensable. However, longitudinal studies in the field are not adequate and this is even more so in the Chinese culture. Fourth, there have been very few studies examining the differential impact of fathers and mothers on the changes in adolescent adjustment over time.

Against the above background, the purpose of this paper is to review and integrate the research findings based on the studies conducted by the author in the past few years with reference to the basic question of what are the linkages between different family processes and adolescent adjustment. In this review, the relationships

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between different family processes, including dyadic processes (such as parenting, parent-adolescent conflict, parent-adolescent communication, and parent-child relational qualities) and systemic processes (such as family functioning) and adolescent adjustment are examined. As far as the indicators of adolescent adjustment are concerned, different indicators including psychiatric symptoms, positive mental health (such as life satisfaction, existential well-being and mastery) and problem behaviour (such as delinquency and substance abuse) are examined.

Datasets Under Review

The findings emerging from several datasets developed by the author were reviewed in this study.

Dataset A

This dataset was based on the Wave 1 and Wave 2 data of a longitudinal study examining family factors and adolescent adjustment in Hong Kong. The adolescent participants (aged between 12 to 16) were selected from secondary schools in Hong Kong by the stratified-cluster sampling method, with the academic ability of the students as the stratifying factor. After a school agreed to participate in the study, invitation letters were sent to the parents of all Secondary 1 students. Amongst the consenting families, data were collected from 429 adolescents (males=217 and females=212) and their parents at Time 1. The second assessment (Time 2) occurred one year after the first assessment (Time 1) where adolescents and parents were asked to respond to the same questionnaire used at Time 1. Follow-up data could be obtained from 378 families at Time 2. This group of 378 families, from whom the Time 1 and Time 2 data were collected, constituted the longitudinal sample for the study.

During the visit(s) to a family at Time 1 and Time 2, the parents were requested to complete a Parent Questionnaire that contained measures of family processes and psychological well-being. The adolescent concerned was required to complete an Adolescent Questionnaire that measured family characteristics (including scales assessing perceived family functioning, parenting, and parent-adolescent conflict) and well-being (including scales assessing hopelessness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, purpose in life, and psychological morbidity) in a self-administration format. The participants, data collection procedures and assessment tools used in this study can be found in the papers generated from this dataset.^{2,4-18}

Dataset B

This dataset was based on the responses of 3,649 adolescents in Hong Kong. The participants were Secondary 1 (N=880), Secondary 2 (N=898), Secondary 3 (N=930) and Secondary 4 (N=941) students. They were selected from secondary schools in Hong Kong by the multiple stage stratified random sampling method, with school banding (i.e. ability of the students) as the stratifying factor. A total of 26 schools from different parts of Hong Kong participated in this study. The participants could be considered as heterogeneous for they came from different areas and socio-economic classes in Hong Kong. The mean age of the participants was 14 years.

The students participating in this study were invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire included translated and indigenously developed measures of family functioning and measures of adolescent adjustment (measures of existential well-being, mastery, life satisfaction, and general psychiatric morbidity). Further information on the participants of this study, data collection procedures and instruments used in this study can be seen in the previous studies.¹⁹⁻²³

Dataset C

This dataset was based upon the responses of 1,519 secondary school students aged between 11 to 18 years (733 males and 762 females). They were all Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 students recruited from four schools in Hong Kong. Regarding the economic status of the participants, the respondents were asked to indicate whether their families were receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or full Textbook Allowance (TBA). In Hong Kong, families receiving CSSA or full TBA can be regarded as families with financial difficulty. Among the participants, 80 adolescents responded that their families were receiving CSSA and 88 adolescents were receiving full TBA. These participants formed the Poor Group (N=168). For participants who did not receive CSSA or TBA, they formed the Non-Poor Group (N=1,307). There were no differences between the two groups in terms of mean age (13.5 and 13.5 in the Poor Group and Non-Poor Group, respectively), gender ratio (47.6% and 49.2% of the participants were boys in the Poor Group and Non-Poor Group, respectively), and mean number of persons in the family (4.4 and 4.4 in the Poor Group and Non-Poor Group, respectively).

The students participated in the study were required to respond to a questionnaire in the context of a school survey, in which measures of family functioning, parent-child

relational qualities (parenting, parental support, parental conflict and parent-child relationship), psychological well-being (including existential well-being, life satisfaction, mastery, self-esteem and psychological morbidity) and problem behaviour (delinquency and substance abuse) were included. Further information on the participants, instruments used and data collection procedures of the study can be seen in the papers generated from this study.²⁴⁻²⁷

Dataset D

The data for the present analyses were derived from the Wave 1 and Wave 2 data (i.e. Time 1 and Time 2 data) of a longitudinal study examining the relationships between family factors and adolescent adjustment in families with economic disadvantage in Hong Kong. At Time 1, the data were collected from 229 adolescents (males=107 and females=122) and their parents. The mean age of the adolescent, father and mother participants were 14.2, 55.1 and 44.1, respectively at Time 1. The second assessment (Time 2) occurred one year after the first assessment (Time 1) where adolescents and parents were asked to respond to the same questionnaires used at Time 1. Follow-up data could be obtained from 199 families at Time 2. This group of 199 families, from whom the Time 1 and Time 2 data were collected, constituted the longitudinal sample for the study. The participants for the present study were recruited from families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA sample) or full Textbook Allowance from the Government (TBA sample). There were 167 families receiving CSSA consenting to participate in this longitudinal study. Through the assistance of ten schools, 62 families with children receiving full Textbook Allowance were recruited to participate in this longitudinal study.

During the visits to the families, the parents were invited to respond to a Parent Questionnaire that included measures of their psychosocial adjustment. For the adolescents, they responded to an Adolescent Questionnaire that included measures of family functioning, parent-child relational qualities (parenting, parental support, parental conflict and parent-child relationship), psychological well-being (including existential well-being, life satisfaction, mastery, self-esteem and psychological morbidity) and problem behaviour (delinquency and substance abuse). The details of the methodology of the study can be seen in the related papers of the project.^{25,28-37}

Dataset E

This dataset was based on the responses of 1,193 Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 students aged between 11 to

19 years (598 males and 581 females). Among the participants, there were 153 respondents whose families were receiving CSSA and 1,013 respondents whose families were not receiving CSSA. There were no differences between the two groups in terms of mean age, gender ratio, and mean number of persons in the family. The details of this study were reported in the literature.¹

Conclusions Drawn from the Findings Derived from the Datasets

Conclusion 1: Positive parenting characteristics were associated with positive adolescent developmental outcomes.

This conclusion can be drawn from the findings of several datasets. Based on Dataset A, the cross-sectional data showed that positive parenting characteristics were generally related to better adolescent psychological well-being.^{4,5} In the same dataset, the longitudinal findings showed that positive parenting characteristics indexed by global parenting and specific parenting characteristics were predictive of positive changes in adolescent psychological well-being over time.¹⁴ Based on Dataset C, the cross-sectional findings showed that positive parenting characteristics were related to better adolescent psychological well-being and lower levels of adolescent problem behaviour.²⁷ Based on Dataset D, both cross-sectional and longitudinal findings showed that positive parenting characteristics were related to better adolescent psychological well-being and less problem behaviour.^{29,30}

Conclusion 2: Higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict were associated with worse adolescent developmental outcomes.

This conclusion can be drawn from the findings of several datasets. Based on Dataset A, cross-sectional data revealed that higher levels of parent-adolescent conflicts indexed by multiple perspectives (children and parents' perspectives) were generally related to poorer adolescent psychological well-being.^{7,18} In the same dataset, the longitudinal findings showed that higher parent-adolescent conflicts were predictive of deterioration of adolescent psychological well-being over time.¹¹ Based on Dataset C, the cross-sectional findings showed that higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict were related to poorer adolescent psychological well-being and more adolescent problem

behaviour.²⁷ Based on Dataset D, both cross-sectional and longitudinal findings showed that higher levels of parent-adolescent conflicts were related to poorer adolescent psychological well-being and more problem behaviour.^{25, 29} In fact, research findings generally showed that while parent-adolescent conflict was negatively related to adolescent mental health, parental support was positively related to adolescent mental health.²⁵

Conclusion 3: More positive parent-adolescent communication was associated with better adolescent developmental outcomes.

Based on Dataset A, findings showed that there were cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships between parent-adolescent communication and adolescent adjustment.^{2, 4, 5} With reference to Dataset E, findings showed that positive mother-adolescent communication quality was associated with better adolescent psychological well-being and lower levels of problem behaviour and more positive father-adolescent communication quality was associated with better adolescent psychological well-being and lower levels of problem behaviour. In addition, it was found that the linkages between these two domains could be found in adolescents with and without economic disadvantage.¹

Conclusion 4: More positive parent-child relational qualities were associated with better adolescent developmental outcomes.

There are two general observations that can be highlighted in connection with this conclusion. First, when different measures of parent-child relational qualities were analysed by factor analyses, two distinct factors emerged, with one factor related to the parenthood qualities of the fathers and another one related to the parenthood qualities of the mothers. In the case of Dataset A, factor analyses based on the questionnaire-based measures (measures of global parenting styles, specific parenting behaviour, and parent-adolescent conflict) and interview-based measures (indices of degree of liking for parenting characteristics, frequency of parent-adolescent conflict, frequency of and feelings related to parent-adolescent communication, and parent-adolescent relationship) related to fathers and mothers showed that two stable factors could be extracted from the Time 1 and Time 2 data and high coefficients of congruence were associated with the factor structures derived from different samples. In the case of Dataset C, factor analyses of the parent-child relational variables

(including parenting, parental support, parental assistance, parent-adolescent conflict and parent-adolescent relationship) revealed that father-child relational qualities and mother-adolescent relational qualities formed two distinct factors and these factors were found to be stable across different sub-samples. Finally, in the case of Dataset D, factor analyses of the parenting, parental support, parental assistance, parent-adolescent conflict and parent-adolescent relationship measures related to fathers and mothers again showed that two stable factors could be extracted from the Time 1 and Time 2 data and high coefficients of congruence were derived from different samples. These observations were generally consistent with the findings that Chinese fathers and Chinese mothers were different in their parenting characteristics and Chinese adolescents perceived their fathers and mothers in a distinct manner.^{12, 15, 38}

The second phenomenon that can be highlighted from the literature is that parent-child relational qualities were related to adolescent adjustment and problem behaviour. With reference to Dataset A, findings showed that more positive perceptions of parent-child relational qualities at Time 1 were related to more positive changes in adolescent psychological well-being as well as reduction in adolescent problem behaviour at Time 2.² Based on Dataset C, findings showed that father-child relational qualities and mother-child relational qualities were related to adolescent adjustment in adolescents with or without economic disadvantage.²⁷ Similarly, findings in Dataset D showed that paternal parenthood qualities and maternal parenthood qualities were concurrently and longitudinally predicted adolescent psychological well-being and its change over time.³⁹

Conclusion 5: More positive family functioning was associated with better adolescent developmental outcomes.

This conclusion is drawn from the different datasets presented in this paper. Based on Dataset A, cross-sectional findings⁸ showed that family functioning based on ratings obtained from different sources were significantly related to measures of adolescent psychological well-being (general psychiatric morbidity, life satisfaction, purpose in life, hopelessness, and self-esteem), school adjustment (perceived academic performance and school conduct) and problem behaviour (smoking and psychotropic drug abuse). In the same dataset, longitudinal findings also revealed that family functioning obtained from different sources was longitudinally related to changes in adolescent

psychological well-being over time.¹⁰

With reference to Dataset B, there were findings showing that higher levels of perceived family functioning were significantly related to better adolescent psychological well-being (including psychological symptoms and positive mental health), better school adjustment (perceived academic performance and school conduct) and lower levels of substance abuse.¹⁹ Besides the community sample included in this database, findings based on two other validation studies are also presented in Shek.¹⁹ One salient observation across these studies is that the relationship between perceived family functioning and adolescent adjustment could be replicated in different adolescent samples using both translated and indigenous measures of family functioning.

With respect to Dataset C, findings showed that family functioning was significantly related to different measures of adolescent psychological well-being (existential well-being, life satisfaction, self-esteem, sense of mastery, general psychiatric morbidity), school adjustment (perceived academic performance and school conduct) and problem behaviour (delinquent and substance abuse behaviour). Family functioning was generally more strongly related to measures of adolescent adjustment in adolescents with economic disadvantage than in adolescents without economic disadvantage.²⁴

Finally, cross-sectional findings based on Dataset D showed that perceived family functioning was related to adolescent psychological well-being and problem behaviour in poor adolescent boys and girls.^{28,33} In addition, the related longitudinal findings based on this dataset showed that perceived family functioning was concurrently related to measures of adolescent psychological well-being (existential well-being, mastery, life satisfaction, self-esteem and general psychiatric morbidity) and problem behaviour (substance abuse and delinquency) at Time 1 and Time 2. Longitudinal and prospective analyses (Time 1 predictors predicting Time 2 criterion variables) showed that perceived family functioning at Time 1 predicted changes in adolescent psychological well-being and problem behaviour at Time 2.³¹

Conclusion 6: Relative to mothers, fathers exerted a stronger influence on adolescent developmental outcomes.

This conclusion is drawn from several datasets reviewed in this paper. Based on Dataset A, longitudinal findings showed that relative to mothers, fathers appeared to exert stronger influence on the adjustment of adolescents. Results

showed that the influence of father-adolescent conflict at Time 1 on adolescent psychological well-being at Time 2 was stronger than the influence of mother-adolescent conflict at Time 1 on adolescent psychological well-being at Time 2.¹¹ Similarly, relative to maternal parenting characteristics, paternal parenting characteristics exerted a stronger influence on adolescent adjustment over time.¹⁴ Finally, the influence of paternal parenthood qualities on adolescent adjustment over time was stronger than that based on maternal parenthood qualities.²

With reference to Dataset C, while the strengths of association between paternal parenthood qualities and adolescent adjustment outcomes were generally similar to those based on the maternal parenthood qualities in the total sample and the Non-Poor Group, some parental differences were found in the Poor Group. With specific reference to the composite adolescent developmental variables, father-adolescent relational qualities were found to have a significant relationship with adolescent mental health, whereas mother-adolescent relational qualities did not.²⁷

With reference to Dataset D, the cross-sectional findings showed that the relationship between father-adolescent relational qualities and adolescent adjustment was stronger than that between mother-adolescent relational qualities and adolescent adjustment. Among the 24 significant Bonferroni corrected correlations based on the discrete parental qualities and adolescent adjustment variables, 16 of them were related to the fathers. From the analyses based on the composite scores, similar results were observed – while paternal parenthood qualities was related to adolescent psychological well-being and problem behaviour, maternal parenthood qualities was not. Furthermore, the longitudinal findings from this database showed that paternal parenthood qualities appeared to be more important than maternal parenthood qualities in influencing adolescent adjustment. The findings based on the partial correlation and multiple regression analyses revealed the relatively stronger impact of paternal parenthood qualities.³⁹

Conclusion 7: The influences of family processes on adolescent developmental outcomes were generally stronger in adolescent girls than in adolescent boys.

With reference to the impact of parenting on adolescent adjustment in Dataset A, results showed that parenting characteristics at Time 1 predicted changes in: (a) hopelessness, life satisfaction, and purpose in life in adolescent girls only; and (b) self-esteem and general psychological health in both adolescent boys and girls at

Time 2. The findings also showed that out of the 16 significant correlations, 12 correlations were in the female sample and 4 were in the male sample, and 11 correlations were related to paternal parenting whereas 5 correlations were related to maternal parenting.¹⁴ Regarding the impact of parental parenthood qualities on changes in adolescent adjustment over time, multiple regression analyses showed that paternal parenthood qualities significantly predicted changes in life satisfaction, hopelessness, and general psychological health in adolescent girls, but only changes in self-esteem in adolescent boys.² Finally, the data in Dataset A also showed that there were gender differences in the linkage between family functioning and adolescent adjustment over time. While discrepancies in family functioning between parents and adolescents predicted changes in psychological morbidity in adolescent boys over time, it predicted changes in hopelessness and life satisfaction in adolescent girls at Time 2.⁸

The findings based on Dataset D also showed that a lower level of perceived family functioning at Time 1 predicted deterioration in the adjustment of poor female adolescents in the domains of existential well-being, mastery, general psychological distress, delinquency and overall mental health. In contrast, perceived family functioning at Time 1 was unrelated to changes in the adjustment in poor adolescent boys over time.³¹

Conclusion 8: Family influences on adolescent developmental outcomes were observed in adolescents with and without economic disadvantage.

Generally speaking, the studies under review showed that dyadic and systemic family processes were concurrently and longitudinally related to adolescent psychological well-being and problem behaviour in the general adolescent population (Datasets A, B, C, D and E). In addition, the findings in these datasets also revealed that dyadic and systemic family processes were important protective factors for adolescents experiencing economic disadvantage (Datasets C, D and E). With reference to the remark that there were few studies examining the family antecedents of adolescent mental health in the general adolescent population,³ the databases under review and the related conclusions can be regarded as pioneering attempts in the Chinese literature. With reference to the remark that studies in poverty "has not been accorded the level of research attention as families in middle class"⁴⁰ and the comment that "there is a need for greater attention to theoretical conceptualizations regarding 'normative

development' in the context of poverty",⁴¹ the findings based on the datasets reviewed in this paper can also be regarded as constructive responses.

In short, the conclusions that can be drawn from the different datasets reviewed in this paper are summarised as follows: 1) more positive parenting styles were related to better adolescent developmental outcomes; 2) higher parent-adolescent conflict was related to poorer adolescent adjustment; 3) more positive parent-adolescent communication was related to better adolescent adjustment and less problem behaviour; 4) more positive dyadic relational qualities (such as parent-adolescent relationship) were associated with better adolescent developmental outcomes; 5) better perceived family functioning predicted positive adolescent development; 6) relative to mothers, fathers exerted a stronger impact on the development of Chinese adolescents; 7) dyadic and systemic family processes exerted a stronger impact on adolescent girls than on adolescent boys; 8) family influences on adolescent developmental outcomes were found in adolescents with and without economic disadvantage.

Theoretical Implications of the Findings Derived From the Datasets Under Review

First, the findings arising from the findings based on the datasets under review provide support for the existing theoretical models on family influences on adolescent development: the findings on the linkage between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent adjustment are consistent with the formulation advanced by Foster and Robin;⁴² the conclusion that positive parenting characteristics predicted positive changes in adolescent adjustment across time is consistent with the framework proposed by Maccoby and Martin⁴³ that different parenting characteristics foster different adolescent behaviour; the linkage between family functioning and adolescent behaviour as revealed in the findings in the datasets is also consistent with the theoretical formulations included in Jacob;⁴⁴ the finding that family processes exerted a stronger influence on adolescent girls than did adolescent boys is consistent with the Western findings in the literature. The support provided by these studies for Western theoretical models is important because Chinese people constitutes roughly one-fifth of the world's population, which means that the generalisability of Western theoretical formulations must be examined with respect to Chinese adolescents.

Another theoretical implication is that several novel

findings are revealed by the present review. First, because there are few longitudinal studies on the linkage between family functioning and adolescent adjustment, the studies in the present review reinforce the assertion that family functioning influences adolescent adjustment over time. Second, because there are few studies examining the relationships between parent-adolescent communication and adolescent adjustment, the findings in the datasets represent interesting additions to the literature.

Third, with reference to the existing literature on family processes and adolescent development, researchers have commonly defined psychological well-being in terms of psychiatric morbidity and distress where indicators such as depression and psychiatric symptoms have been employed. In contrast, there are few studies examining the link between different family processes and adolescent positive mental health, such as life satisfaction, meaning in life, hope, or mastery. Therefore, the observation in the reviewed studies that there are linkages between different family processes and adolescent developmental outcomes can be regarded as novel findings that demand construction and re-construction of theoretical models on the linkage between family processes and adolescent developmental outcomes.

Finally, the repeated observation that the influence of fathers on adolescent development is relatively stronger than that based on the mothers is quite novel, although there are also some isolated Western findings showing similar patterns. Shek² showed that empirical research findings on paternal vs. maternal influences on adolescent development were quite mixed. Based on a comprehensive review of the related studies in the Western literature, Phares and Compas⁴⁵ commented the available literature is "quite mixed, and no simple conclusions can be drawn from these comparisons at present except to say that in general, little evidence could be found distinguishing the contributions of fathers and mothers" (p.405). Obviously, the studies in the datasets under review provide additional research findings from the Chinese culture.

More importantly, the present review suggests that there is a need to re-consider the popular beliefs in the clinical literature regarding the role of mothers in shaping mental health problems in children. In a review of the articles in several clinical journals, Caplan and Hall-McCorquodale⁴⁶ reported that while a wide range of childhood psychological problems had been seen as the outcome of maternal influence, no specific childhood disorder was conceived to be the result of paternal influences. They also noticed that while mothers were seldom described in positive terms,

fathers were often seen as having positive influence on their children. As Caplan⁴⁷ pointed out, "blaming mothers for their children's psychological problems has a long and, unfortunately, respected history, particularly among mental health professionals" (p.70). In contrast to the picture described in the Western literature, the findings based on the different datasets under review clearly showed that although paternal and maternal parental qualities predicted adolescent psychological well-being over time, only paternal characteristics were found to have statistically significant effects on the changes in adolescent mental health. The present findings obviously challenge the common belief that adolescent emotional problems are due to maternal influences alone.⁴⁶

Practical Implications of the Findings

The findings underscore the importance of family antecedents of adolescent development. The findings from different studies suggest that changing dyadic and systemic family processes is an important intervention point for Chinese families. This implication suggests that there is a need to reflect on the possible factors that contribute to adolescent adjustment. In contrast to individualistic explanations (such as genetic and psychological explanations), ecological models suggest that there is a need to look at how different contexts (e.g. the family) might influence adolescent development.⁴⁸ A review of the literature shows that there is an increasing appeal to understand adolescent behaviour in terms of an ecological perspective.⁴⁹

Based on the findings that family processes are important antecedents of adjustment in adolescents, programs that are aimed at enhancing the dyadic and systemic family processes of adolescents' families should be designed. One successful example is the Family and Schools Together (FAST) program that has been implemented in poor families to enhance the functioning of poor adolescents.⁵⁰ A number of protective factors, including mother-child bond, parent to parent bond, parent self-help support group and parent-school affiliation, were intrinsic to the program. In particular, McDonald and Sayger⁵⁰ stressed that "family cohesion is considered the *central protective factor* in the FAST framework and is achieved by strengthening family communication and their ability to resolve conflict" (p.64).

Finally, in view of the finding that fathers are more important than mothers in influencing changes in adolescent psychological well-being and that the degree of involvement

of fathers in the socialisation of adolescents is lower than mothers,³⁸ it is practically important to consider how fathers can be more positively involved in the parenting process. This is especially relevant when one realises that the parenting behaviour of the fathers were generally seen as relatively less positive as compared to those of the mothers.¹⁵

Future Research Direction

First, because the studies under review were conducted in Hong Kong, there is a need to further replicate the findings in other Chinese communities. This direction is important because Hong Kong is quite an urbanised and Westernised society. Second, because self-report questionnaire measures were used in the studies under review, the significant correlations observed between family processes and adolescent adjustment may be due to common method variance. It would be desirable if other methods of data collection, such as the qualitative data collected in Dataset A, can be included. Third, because different members of the family would have different perceptions of different family processes, it would be desirable to include multiple perspectives in the future studies. Although some effort has been made in Dataset A and Dataset D to include both parents and adolescents in the assessment of family processes, these steps are just beginning steps only. Finally, because there are only two time periods in the related longitudinal study, the data cannot give any clue to the relationships between family processes and adolescent psychological well-being in the long run. It would certainly be exciting if more time points over a longer period of time can be included in the future research studies.

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