A psychological and medical analysis of temperament, character and behavior in children and adolescents of school refusal.

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Abstract

Objective: To analyse the teenagers’ school refusal behavior and its relationship with their as well as their parents’ temperament and character.

Methods: The patients were matched by a ratio of 1:3 in age to gender for clinical studies. Adolescents who refused to go to school and their parents were selected from the mental outpatients of our hospital as the study group (n=55) and those who did not refuse to go to school together with their parents were the control group (n=165). Adolescents in the two groups were asked to fill out questionnaire of general information as well as Teenager Temperament Character Inventory (JTCI-S) and their parents were told to fill Chinese version of Temperament Character Inventory (TCI-R140).

Results: The teenagers in the study group had higher HA score and lower score in NS, RD, SD, CO and PS than those in the control group with statistically significant difference in between (P<0.05). Fathers in the study group had lower RD than those in the control group. The mothers’ RD and ST scores in the study group were lower than those in the control group and the difference was statistically significant (P<0.05) (SR<0).

Conclusion: There are significant differences in self and parent’s temperament and character between the adolescent of school refusal and those of school refusal in the control group. For teenagers with unusual family style, factors like high harm avoidance pose certain risks to school refusal behavior. In addition, the teenagers have the characteristics of novelty seeking, reward dependency and cooperative disposition, which provides certain protective factors for school refusal behavior.

Keywords: Teenagers’ school refusal behavior, Temperament and character, Parent’s character.

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Introduction

School Refusal Behavior (SRB) mainly means that teenagers voluntarily refuse to go to school or fail to stay in campus for a whole day [1]. These young people are completely absent from or late for school in a certain period of time, skip some classes or leave the campus in one day [2]. In the morning, when it comes down to attending school, they will act inappropriately, for example they may lose their temper by refusing to leave home, ending in truancy or resignation with extremely pain in class. Under such circumstance they will beg to be excused from school. The school refusal behavior has a detrimental effect on young people's growth. Research shows that [3,4], in China the research on school refusal behavior in teenagers is still in the initial stage and the study of family in this regard relies solely on the way of home education. In this research we mainly studied the relationship between school refusal behavior and teenagers’ temperament and character as well as their patients’ as follows.

Data and Methods

General information

School refusal behavior group (SRB group): The patients were matched by a ratio of 1:3 in age to gender for clinical studies. Adolescents who refused to go to school and their parents were selected from the mental outpatients of our hospital as the study group (n=55) and those who did not refuse to go to school together with their parents were the control group (n=165). The adolescents including 115 males and 105 females were aged 12-18 with a mean age of (13.5 ± 2.5 y). The mean age of adolescents in study group was (13.7 ± 2.1 y), and the mean age of adolescents in control group was (13.4 ± 2.3 y), no significant differences in age was found between two groups.

Methods

Adolescents in the two groups were asked to fill out questionnaire of general information as well as Teenager
Temperament Character Inventory (JTCI-S) and their parents
Chinese version of Temperament Character Inventory (TCI-R140). 1. In JTCI-S there were a total of 108 questions
required to be answered by “yes or no”, respectively scored “1 or 0” in which temperament contains four dimensions, namely
Novelty Seeking (NS), Harm Avoidance (HA) and Reward
Dependency (RD) on while character includes three, namely
Self-Direction (SD), Collaboration (CO) and Self-Transcendence (ST). 2. In Chinese version of (TCI-R140) there
were a total of 140 questions about temperament and character
in which the former included the dimensions of NS, HA, RD as
well as PS, and the latter SD, CO as well as ST. Each
dimension was divided into 5 levels as follows: level 1: complete inconformity, 2: most inconformity, 3: uncertainty, 4:
most conformity and 5: complete conformity [5].

### Statistical processing
SPSS17.0 statistical Software was used for data analysis with
t-test for check. P<0.05 suggested there was statistically
significant difference.

### Comparison of JTCI-S scores between the two groups
Compared with the control group, the RSB group had higher
score of Harm Avoidance (HA) but scores of Novelty Seeking
(NS), Reward Dependency (RD), Self-Direction (SD),
Collaboration (CO) and Persistence (PS) with statistically
significant difference in between (P<0.05), as shown in Table
1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>HA</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>RD</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>CO</th>
<th>PS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSB group</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13.02 ± 4.525</td>
<td>7.86 ± 2.56</td>
<td>4.26 ± 2.25</td>
<td>8.78 ± 3.56</td>
<td>13.02 ± 4.25</td>
<td>2.84 ± 1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>9.87 ± 4.06</td>
<td>8.56 ± 2.65</td>
<td>5.10 ± 2.01</td>
<td>10.45 ± 3.25</td>
<td>16.24 ± 2.65</td>
<td>3.25 ± 1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>7.256</td>
<td>-3.012</td>
<td>-3.051</td>
<td>-3.565</td>
<td>-5.658</td>
<td>-2.365</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Comparison of TCI-R140 scores in fathers between the two
groups (score, \( \bar{x} \pm s \)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>RD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRB group</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>66.58 ± 8.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70.56 ± 21.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>-2.549</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Comparison of TCI-R140 scores in mothers between the two
groups (score, \( \bar{x} \pm s \)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>RD</th>
<th>ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRB group</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>66.75 ± 6.05</td>
<td>43.25 ± 8.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>75.02 ± 23.54</td>
<td>48.56 ± 8.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>-5.045</td>
<td>-3.541</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comparison of temperament and character among
the parents between the two groups
The results showed that fathers in the SRB group had lower
score of RD and mothers in the SRB group had lower scores in
RD as well as ST than those in the control group with statistically significant difference in between (P<0.05) as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

### Discussion
Teenagers are going through puberty in the stage of
development and at this point they will experience large degree
of psychological growth as well as changes with relatively
short duration. They are often subjected to such relatively
complex contradictions as immature and mature as well as
dependence and independence, which makes the students in
this period more prone to psychological and behavioral biases
[6-9]. A person's personality is an integration of unique and
stable mental disposition as well as psychological
characteristics [10-12].

The study shows that the adolescents who refuse to go
to school exhibit to certain extent such manifestations as
pessimism, anxiety, depression, fear of uncertainty, fatigue,
apathy and laziness and so on. In addition, some of them show
irresponsible, undisciplined and self-centred performance [13].
All these students, compared with those who did not refuse to
go to school, have specific personal traits [14]. This study
shows that in dimensions of adolescent temperament the harm
avoidance is a risk factor for school refusal behavior. The
adolescents with anxiety tend to be too scrupulous, nervous,
sensitive and unsociable in personality traits meanwhile they
have moderately poor social adaptive ability and tense
interpersonal relationships, prone to suffer from disorders in
emotion and behavior, which will more easily lead to the
incidence of school refusal. The novelty seeking, reward
dependence and cooperation contribute to factors of school
refusal behaviour and proper novelty seeking would drive the
behaviour to develop toward inward obstacles, which is a
suppression of behavior and to some extent reduces the
occurrence of refusal to school [15]. The high score of reward
dependency helps an individual quickly respond to the request sent by others, thus generating warm attachment in one another and constructing stable and good social relationship as well as social support system [5].

In summary, because parents are main caregivers of a teenager in his or her daily life and learning process, their personality will exert certain influences on the temperament and school refusal behavior in adolescences.

References


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