

Behavioral health in child and youth: the importance of parental influence

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Editorial

Parenting is, currently, one of the most addressed processes from research in developmental sciences, often even as a predictor of children's and youth's welfare along the entire lifecycle [1]. In fact, parent practices have been highlighted as a major public health issue related to the community health [2]. In the empirical field, nowadays there is significant accumulated evidence about the influence of parental resources and behaviors on children's later outcomes [3]. In short, different studies have demonstrated the undisputable role of what children and youth observe and learn from parents on their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in many spheres of life [4]. For instance, different processes such as educational success, crime, (un)employability, physical and mental health, have been considered as significantly-predicted outcomes from parenting performance and parenting styles [1,2,5].

Nevertheless, and keeping in mind the large number of factors on which parenting practices exert a certain influence, it should be highlighted the fact that, in general, in most of the countries parents do not have a greater training or specific formation for improving potential behavioral and health-related outcomes of their children, beyond what, in most cases, parenting is empirically learned and strengthened through significant experiences present in their micro-social environment. In brief, the typical core assumption on child disruptive behaviors use to be that different misbehaviors should be conceived as a direct result of wrong parenting practices [6]. Behavioral health disparities among children and youth have shown to become (in a significant amount) from the inadequate preparation of parents regarding health attitudes, habits and specific behaviors that, at the same time -and summed to parenting styles-, are systematically observed and progressively acquired by them.

In this respect, some relevant studies have highlighted the importance of considering parenting practices when examining variations in (e.g.) childhood health and health care, attributing a major focus on parental behavior in the field of intervention [7]. For instance, recent experiences analyzed the effectiveness of intervening on parents over the ulterior health and safety of children and youth, showing prospectively positive results in different fields such as preventive sexual behaviors [8], road safety [9,10], and the prevention of addictions [11]. Further, it is already known the positive influence of effective parenting practices on reducing diverse negative childhood outcomes [12].

For these reasons, and based on the evidence, critical factors for children's and youth's development such as parent practices, behaviors and influences on their future behavior and welfare have been acquiring a growing importance and, from the scientific scope, constituting a rising research problem, not

only aiming to describe in which degree what parents do could explain what future adults will show in the behavioral field, but seeking to contributing to the improvement of parental resources for guaranteeing adequate tools and knowledge among parents, essentially to develop healthy beliefs, habits, behaviors and (of course) positive outcomes along their adulthood. How much will scientific advances of developmental sciences explain, intervene and contribute for strengthen a better development among their children? It could be a reasonable question when prospectively look future variations, needs and challenges in this regard.

That is, in other words, the need of developing new, more and even better strategies looking to promoting parenting skills education for strengthen health-related outcomes in all segments of children and youth stages. In this sense, professional institutions and public authorities should progressively encourage parents, both to take party in these experiences, as to apply more positive parenting strategies and influences on the learning of health behaviors of their children [5]. Finally, it must be considered the crucial role of continued education programs for parents and program effects on parenting, which could lead to promote positive changes regarding children's involvement in risky contexts, and on the avoidance of risk factors typically related to the lack of preparation of the parents to strengthen the development of their children under adequate standards of parenting [13] and, of course, the importance of its simultaneous or articulation [14] with the intervention and assessment of children's health-related attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that, despite being merely influenced by their parents, could substantially improve its ulterior life quality and welfare as health behaviors.

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