

A Wechat-based intervention program for improving emotion socialization practices in parents of early adolescents

1. Introduction for parental emotion socialization

The parental role is highlighted among a variety of potential social environmental contributors to children's emotional development (e.g., teachers, peers, siblings) as emotional interactions between parents and their offsprings have a dominant status regardless of the quantity or quality. As commonly defined in developmental psychology, parental emotion socialization refers to diverse influences that parents have on children's experience, expression, understanding, and regulation of emotions (Eisenberg, Cumberland, A., & Spinrad, 1998). Parental emotion socialization practices are predicted by multiple factors like parent characteristics, cultural factors, and child characteristics. Also, parental emotion socialization practices are directly related to children's emotion functions and are predictive to a plethora of domains concerning children's development, including but not limited to parents-children relationship quality, social competency and externalizing problems. In specific, parental emotion socialization including expressing more positive (vs. negative) emotions, showing more supportive response (vs. unsupportive) response to adolescents' emotions, giving more explanation for emotions and their causes (vs. stress the standards related with emotions) are proved to be more beneficial to children and adolescents' development (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Morris et al, 2007).

2. The Design of the Program

The ample theoretical foundation regarding this topic provides a possibility to develop effective intervention programs of optimizing parents' emotion socialization practices and then benefit children's development. Thus, I propose a Wechat-based intervention program to optimize emotion socialization practices in Chinese parents of early adolescents. On the one hand, the program focuses on adolescents because adolescence is a period of heightened "storm and stress" with intense and frequent negative affect. On the other hand, Wechat is widely used by Chinese nowadays. According to the official report, about nine hundred million users spend time on Wechat every day in 2017. To develop a program based on Wechat will be convenient to recruit Chinese parents to participate all over the world and generalize to a huge number of parents if the intervention is effective. Early adolescence is targeted because individuals are most malleable in response to environmental influences during that time (Chaplin, Cole, & Zahn-Waxler, 2005; Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007).

The intervention program will focus on encouraging beneficial emotion socialization practices by *identifying* and *providing feedback to* parents' daily emotion socialization practices.

2.1 Identification of parental emotion socialization practices by using a daily checklist

Parents of early adolescents will be invited to participate the intervention program by giving daily reports which last 15mins every day and span two weeks on parents' emotion socialization practices. Parents' emotion socialization practices including parental emotion expression, responses to children's negative/positive emotions and discussion about emotions with their children will be assessed with a daily checklist developed based on an on-going research of our lab which is leaded by Prof. Wang Qian. Details of the checklist are listed below:

First, for parental emotion expression, the frequencies of positive emotions (e.g., happiness, pride, gratitude) and negative emotions (e.g., sadness, anger, guilt, shame) expressed by parents in the family in front of children will be recorded.

Second, the checklist measuring parental response to children's negative emotions will first ask a parent to indicate whether or not the participating adolescent shows a negative (e.g., sadness, fear, anger) over a specific event on the day (if the parent reports multiple incidents of the kind on the day, s/he will be asked to choose and focus on one incident that s/he considers the most salient on the day); then the parent will be asked to indicate whether or not s/he reacts to the participating adolescent's negative emotion in any of the listed supportive ways (i.e., expressive encouragement such as "telling her/him it's OK to cry when one feels unhappy,") or nonsupportive ways (i.e., distress such as "feeling upset and uncomfortable because of her/his emotion," Fabes et al., 2002). Parental response to children's positive emotions (Yap et al., 2008) will also be checked but the details are not stated here as words limit.

Third, parents will be asked to choice the frequencies that they discuss emotions with children during the day (i.e., range from 0, 1, 2, 3 and over 3) and if they indicate at least one, then parents will be asked to choose and focus on one discussion and indicate whether they discuss emotions with adolescents in any of the listed ways(i.e., explaining the causes of emotions, helping children to figure out their feelings, stressing the standards of emotion/emotional display).

2.2 Feedback for parental emotion socialization practices

The main goal of the feedback is to reinforce parents' level of expressing more positive (vs. negative) emotions, showing more supportive response (vs. unsupportive) response to adolescents' emotions, giving more explanation for emotions and their causes (vs. stress the standards related with emotions).

First, a scoring system will be developed by giving positive scores (vs. negative scores) for expressing more positive (vs. negative) emotions, showing more supportive response (vs. unsupportive) response to adolescents' emotions, giving more explanation for emotions and their causes (vs. stress the standards related with emotions). Electric gifts like flowers and medals will be rewarded to parents with good performance. Reminders (i.e., You are encouraged to express more positive emotion in front of your children) will be presented for parents' non-adaptive socialization practices.

Immediate feedback on daily checklist will be given to parents every day and another feedback at the end of the two-week panel based on parents' average performance will also be presented.

Second, parents will be provided with information on parental emotion socialization by sending them a series of popular science articles written by myself. Those information aims to promote parents' awareness of parental emotion socialization practices.

The articles will include the following information:

I	What do we need to learn about emotion function;
	Emotions and their roles in daily life
	Display rules of emotions in Chinese cultures (compared with Western cultures)
	Intrapersonal Emotion regulation and interpersonal emotion regulation
	(Note: Developmental patterns and Gender differences will be discussed across sub-chapters)
II.	Parental emotion socialization
	How children and adolescents' emotion function is socialized by parents in Chinese cultures (compared with Western cultures)
	The antecedents of parental emotion socialization practices in Chinese cultures

	(compared with Western cultures)
	The consequences of parental emotion socialization practices in Chinese cultures (compared with Western cultures)
	To measure your parental emotion socialization styles
III	What parents should do in those situations;
	Examples in daily lives on regarding children's emotions and how should parents response to children's emotions

3. The Timeline

Number	Task	Time
1	To design and develop the Wechat-based program	May, 2018 to July, 2018
2.	To do a pilot project with about 10 parents	Aug, 2018
3	To recruit 200 parents motivated to optimize parental emotion socialization practices	Sep, 2018
4	To introduce the program and the required tasks for parents during the program	Oct, 2018
5	To conduct the intervention and give feedback	Oct, 2018
6	To collect feedback for the intervention project from participated parents and then optimize the project	Nov, 2018 to Mar, 2019

4. Budget

Number	Task	Details	Budget
1	Programmer	To develop a Wechat-based program	HKD 3500
2	Editor	To edit the lectures/articles/practices	HKD 500
3	Helper	To provide help during intervention project (i.e., providing feedback for parents, collecting feedback from parents)	HKD 1000

5. The background information of myself

I am motivated to do this project because I am conducting my thesis in this topic which helps me to master a variety of knowledge on this topic. I have started to conduct different forms of practical work for parental emotion socialization using Wechat since last year. For example, I wrote 4 popular scientific articles regarding how parents should react to children's emotions online which were read about 7000 times last year. I also gave nonprofit online lectures for about 500 hundred individuals to introduce parental emotion socialization. The positive feedback received based on those experience inspire me to contribute more to family education. The proposed intervention program is a new try to promote parental emotion socialization practices with the help of technology which will benefit a great number of parents and children.