



Parental knowledge trajectory and its relationships with parental warmth and adolescent disclosure for Korean adolescents



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to expand the knowledge base on parental knowledge by assessing a developmental trajectory and factors that might predict parental knowledge among Korean adolescents. To address this purpose, the current study assessed changes in parental knowledge during the transition to adolescence using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). In addition, parental warmth and adolescent disclosure were considered as time-variant predictors of knowledge. The data from Korea Youth Panel Survey (KYPS) of Grade 4 students who were followed for five years was analyzed. The results indicated that there was a significant average increase followed by a slight decrease in parental knowledge over time; that is, the data followed a quadratic trend. Controlling for gender and family structure, the study found that parental warmth and adolescent disclosure had significant effects on parental knowledge over time. The study's results suggest that parental warmth and adolescent disclosure are important elements to be emphasized in prevention and intervention programs that promote parental knowledge.

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1. Introduction

During the transition to adolescence, children experience significant changes in their parent–child relationships, as well as in physical, psychological, and social aspects. These changes include children's increasing demand for independence and autonomy (Kwon & Kim, 2005). However, parenting still exerts important influences on adolescent adjustments (Jang, 2000; Steinberg, 2001). Specifically, parental knowledge about children's whereabouts, companions, and activities is known to be critical because it is consistently found to be protective for adolescent outcomes such as substance use (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004), delinquency (Fletcher et al., 2004; Laird, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2003; Stattin & Kerr, 2000), and depression (Hamza & Willoughby, 2011). The importance of parental knowledge increases during late childhood and adolescence (Grundy, Gondoli, & Salafia, 2010; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001). The reason for this increase in importance is likely due to children's vulnerability in this transitional period to various behavioral and psychological problems (Farrington, 2004; Trad, 1995). Therefore, maintaining high parental knowledge is of great consequences for the healthy adjustments of adolescents in transition.

Whereas consistent and robust links between parental knowledge and problem behavior have been reported, little is known about the developmental changes in parental knowledge over time (Moilanen, Shaw, Criss, & Dishion, 2009). Considering changes in parent–child

relationships from childhood to adolescence, parental knowledge is expected to change as children grow up. To promote parental knowledge, the examinations of 1) how parental knowledge changes over time and 2) the factors that influence parental knowledge during the transitional period, are required. Information about developmental changes and predictors of parental knowledge can be advantageous for not only theoretical development but also effective prevention and intervention.

Substantial recent studies have been implemented to identify predictors of parental knowledge (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009; Fletcher et al., 2004; Grundy et al., 2010; Hamza, 2010), since Stattin and Kerr (2000) argued that parental monitoring needs to be re-conceptualized as parental knowledge because most studies have operationalized monitoring with measures of parental knowledge, and children as well as parents are a source of parental knowledge. According to these studies, both parental and adolescent factors were found to affect parental knowledge, with parental warmth and adolescent disclosure being the strongest predictors of this knowledge (Grundy et al., 2010; Hamza, 2010; Hamza & Willoughby, 2011; Salafia, Gondoli, & Grundy, 2009; Willoughby & Hamza, 2011). The relationships between parental knowledge, parental warmth, and adolescent disclosure have been examined across developmental periods and reported among myriad samples of early and late adolescents in both cross-sectional and longitudinal research. However, most studies were conducted of adolescents in Western cultures. Parent–child relationships in Asian cultures, including Korea, where family is considered to be central and has a priority over individuals (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000), can be different. Nonetheless, relatively fewer studies have examined how parental

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knowledge changes over time and what can promote parental knowledge among Korean adolescents. Most Korean researchers have focused on the positive role of parental monitoring efforts using a measure of parental knowledge; for example, protection against adolescent drinking (Cho & Yoon, 2010), school maladjustment (Kim & Chung, 2010), and problem behavior (Ahn & Lee, 2009). The Korean literature on how parents obtain information about their children is much sparser. Only recently have a handful of Korean researchers identified the effects of adolescent gender, mother's employment (Ko, 2005), and poverty (Kim & Chung, 2010) on parental monitoring measured by the degree to which parents are knowledgeable about their children's daily activities. We found only one study that examined the effects of adolescent disclosure on parental knowledge (Choi, 2011).

The scarcity of knowledge on the changes over time and potential predictors of parental knowledge among Korean adolescents was the driving factor for this study. The purpose of this study was to expand research on parental knowledge—which has been restricted to adolescents in Western cultures—into Korean adolescents. Specifically, taking the previous studies' results into account, this study assessed a developmental trajectory of parental knowledge, and the effects of parental warmth and adolescent disclosure on the trajectory, during the adolescent transition of Korean adolescents. The findings of this study are worthwhile because the recent research of Western adolescents in this area has revealed the positive effects of parental warmth and adolescent disclosure on parental knowledge, while these effects have not been examined among Korean adolescents.

2. Literature review

2.1. Changes in parental knowledge over time

Parental knowledge of children's whereabouts, companions, and activities has been known to prevent various problem behaviors (Crouter, Bumpus, Davis, & McHale, 2005). Specifically, parental knowledge was related to adolescents' norm breaking (Stattin & Kerr, 2000), substance use (Fletcher et al., 2004; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyckx, & Goossens, 2006), and delinquency (Fletcher et al., 2004; Laird, Pettit, Bates et al., 2003; Soenens et al., 2006). Considering these relationships between parental knowledge and adolescent maladjustments, maintaining high parental knowledge over the transition to adolescence is of great significance.

How parents become knowledgeable—and how much knowledge they have—about their children's daily activities may change from childhood to adolescence. Adolescents want to be independent of their parents and be free from parental control. In addition, adolescents tend to criticize or rebel against their parents' attempts to guide them (Kwon & Kim, 2005; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2001). Parental direct supervision and control become ineffective due to physical and cognitive developments in adolescence. Being in a formal operational period, adolescents begin to find contradictions in their parents' rules and values, and ask their parents to explain any parenting inconsistencies (Jang, 2000). Given the transitional changes, parents may become less knowledgeable about their offspring's day-to-day activities, and direct ways of knowing about their children's experiences may become less accessible (Kerr, Stattin, & Burk, 2010).

In this context, parental knowledge is expected to decrease as a child moves to adolescence and becomes more independent. Parent-child relationship changes during the transition to adolescence were reported in Korean qualitative studies. According to these studies, parents of middle school students reported that their children were not inclined to share their personal information with them, while parents of elementary school students perceived that their children were willing to openly share their experiences with them (National Youth Policy Institute [NYPI], 2007; Sohn, 2009). However, empirical studies examining changes in parental knowledge suggest inconsistent results. According to Laird and his colleagues, parental knowledge of boys decreased, while parental

knowledge of girls showed no changes from Grade 9 to Grade 12 (Laird, Pettit, Bates et al., 2003). Another study, which examined a trajectory of parental knowledge using hierarchical linear modeling, yielded a non-significant linear slope coefficient for the entire sample, indicating no increase or decrease in parental knowledge from Grade 9 to Grade 12 (Laird, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003). Pettit, Keiley, Laird, Bates, and Dodge (2007) documented that mother-reported monitoring, as measured by maternal knowledge, significantly decreased from Grade 5 to Grade 11. A quadratic change pattern of parental knowledge was also reported. Moilanen et al. (2009) examined the developmental changes in parental knowledge of boys. Their results showed positive linear slope and negative quadratic slope coefficients—all statistically significant—indicating that parental knowledge increased from ages 10 to 12 and decreased from ages 12 to 15 (Moilanen et al., 2009). Grundy et al. (2010) also examined the maternal knowledge trajectory using hierarchical linear modeling. Their results indicated that maternal knowledge changed in a quadratic and decreasing pattern from Grade 4 to Grade 8 for both mother and adolescent reports. As mentioned earlier, consistent change patterns have not been reported across studies. The differences in findings may be due to sample characteristics, study timing, measurement strategy (e.g., measuring parental knowledge or maternal knowledge), or the use of different informants (e.g., parental respondents or adolescent respondents). The current study focused on the adolescent transitional period and examined the trajectory among Korean adolescents specifically.

2.2. Predictors of parental knowledge

This study also considered the predictors of changes in parental knowledge over time. Parental knowledge is understood to be a product of both parent-child relationships and children's spontaneous sharing of information and experiences (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009; Crouter, MacDermid, McHale, & Perry-Jenkins, 1990; Fletcher et al., 2004; Grundy et al., 2010; Hamza & Willoughby, 2011; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). The study focused on parental warmth and adolescent disclosure, and investigated the relationships between these predictors and changes in parental knowledge on the basis of extant research.

2.2.1. Parental warmth

Parental warmth reflects parental responsiveness and affection (Shaffer, 1996), and has been identified as an important correlate of parental knowledge (Crouter & Head, 2002; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). As for parental predictors, much research indicates that adolescents in a warm parent-child relationship perceive their parents to know more about their lives (Fletcher et al., 2004; Grundy et al., 2010; Salafia et al., 2009; Soenens et al., 2006). Fletcher et al. (2004) examined the associations between parenting dimensions and behavioral problems of high school students. The authors reported that parental knowledge was higher when the students perceived their parents to be warmer. Another research study of high school students reported that parental responsiveness had positive influences on parental knowledge (Soenens et al., 2006). This positive association between parental knowledge and parental warmth was also supported in longitudinal studies. Salafia et al. (2009) reported that maternal warmth in Grade 6 had indirect effects on maternal knowledge in Grade 8, as evidenced by adolescent disclosure in Grade 7. Another longitudinal study also revealed that maternal warmth in Grade 4, as a time-invariant variable, predicted maternal knowledge in that grade, and maternal warmth, as a time-variant predictor, also had positive effects on maternal knowledge (Grundy et al., 2010). According to these studies, higher parental warmth resulted in more parental knowledge, and this association has been reported among early and late adolescents in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (Fletcher et al., 2004; Grundy et al., 2010; Salafia et al., 2009; Soenens et al., 2006). Based on the prior research, we can expect that parents who are perceived to be warm by their

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