

The influence of teenagers' sense of awe on their awareness of rules

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ABSTRACT

To explore the impact of awe on rule awareness, the study surveyed 906 middle school students in eastern Guangdong using questionnaires on awe and rule awareness. The results showed that the level of awe and rule awareness among adolescents was above average; there is a significant correlation between awe and rule awareness; awe has a positive predictive effect on rule awareness. Therefore, the study recommends enhancing adolescents' rule awareness by fostering their awe towards rules.

KEYWORDS

teenagers; awe sense; rule consciousness

1 Introduction

The UNESCO website indicates that one-third of adolescents worldwide suffer from bullying (Zhang Jing, 2018). In the wake of information overload and the wave of diverse values, incidents such as juvenile delinquency, school bullying, and cyberbullying have become increasingly common. This highlights that some young people lack a sense of reverence for life and rules, leading them to disregard regulations and trample on others' lives. Not only does this affect their personal healthy development, but it also poses a potential threat to social order and stability. Therefore, discussing the importance of rule awareness is crucial.

Rules refer to various systems, regulations, and codes of conduct that constrain people's behavior in daily life, study, and work. Rule awareness refers to the cognition, recognition, respect, and belief in rules by individuals in society, as well as their desire and habit to voluntarily abide by these rules. Domestic research focuses on exploring the factors influencing rule awareness. Lai Qingwen (2013) argues that rule awareness is influenced by social, family, educational environments, and temperament characteristics (Lai Qingwen). In similar studies, parenting styles, parent-child communication, temperament, and emotions have been found to influence problematic behaviors in adolescents (including disciplinary violations) (Zhang Shanming, 2008). Pandina et al. (1993) discovered that adolescents with high levels of negative emotions are particularly prone to engage in problem behaviors (Pandina, 1993). Emotions affect rule awareness; negative emotions are positively correlated with problem behaviors, which essentially stem from a disregard for and transgression of rules. Therefore, enhancing adolescents' rule awareness has become increasingly important.

Reverence may promote rule awareness. Keltner and Haidt (2003) pointed out that reverence has two core characteristics: the perception of grandeur and the need for conformity. Reverence is more likely to prompt individuals to engage in prosocial behaviors (Dong Rui et al., 2013), including increased moral decision-making (Piff et al., 2015), helping behavior (Wang Guofang et al., 2024), interpersonal forgiveness, and generosity (EftychiaStamkou, 2023). Additionally, studies have shown that reverence is significantly negatively correlated with suicidal ideation (Zhang Chao et al., 2024) and aggressive behavior (Liu Min et al., 2021).

Reverence encourages individuals to act more prosocially and is negatively correlated with negative behaviors such as aggression. Social norms are a crucial part of rules, and recognizing and identifying with these norms contributes to social harmony and stability, which is one manifestation of prosocial behavior. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that reverence can positively predict adolescents' rule awareness.

2 Research methods

2.1 Research Objectives

This study recruited 906 middle school students from a region in Guangdong (representing junior high school students with eighth-grade students and senior high school students with second-year students) to complete the questionnaire on awe and rule awareness. A total of 906 questionnaires were collected, but invalid responses such as "mostly unanswered" and "regularly answered" were excluded, leaving 793 valid questionnaires, with an effective response rate of 87.5%. The demographic distribution of the valid participants is shown in Table 1.

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Table 1 Descriptive statistics of population variables

	sex		grade			region		
	number of people	percentage (%)	number of people	percentage (%)		number of people	percentage (%)	
man student	350	44.1	junior two	414	54.2	city	570	77.8
woman student	387	48.8	Senior Two	350	45.8	town	163	22.2
						amo		
amount to	743	93.7	amount to	764	100	unt	733	100
						to		

2.2 Research tools

2.2.1 Fear questionnaire

The Intimacy Questionnaire was compiled by Lin Rongmao et al. (2020), consisting of 25 items across 5 dimensions: natural reverence, life reverence, moral reverence, relational reverence, and spiritual reverence. The Intimacy Questionnaire (Lin Rongmao et al., 2021) has shown good reliability among adolescents. In this survey, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the Intimacy Questionnaire is 0.899.

2.2.2 Rule awareness questionnaire

The questionnaire of rule consciousness was compiled by Wang Na, Fu Ruijuan and others, consisting of 17 questions and 5 dimensions, namely rule recognition, rule sensitivity, rule persistence, rule flexibility and externality of rules. In this survey, the Cronbach's α coefficient of the questionnaire of rule consciousness was 0.856.

3 Data analysis

3.1 Descriptive statistics of teenagers' sense of awe and awareness of rules

The sample size of awe in adolescents was 793. There were significant differences in the scores of each dimension of awe in adolescents, with natural awe ($M=5.71$, $SD=1.72$) > moral awe ($M=5.63$, $SD=1.44$) > life awe ($M=5.51$, $SD=1.93$) > relationship awe ($M=4.65$, $SD=1.45$) > spiritual awe ($M=4.52$, $SD=2.22$). The sample size of the questionnaire on adolescents' awareness of rules was 329. There were significant differences in the scores of each dimension of adolescents' awareness of rules, with rule recognition ($M=5.45$, $SD=1.63$), rule flexibility ($M=5.33$, $SD=1.73$) > rule sensitivity ($M=5.11$, $SD=2.09$) > rule externality ($M=4.40$, $SD=2.33$) > rule persistence ($M=3.40$, $SD=3.78$). See Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of adolescents' awe and rule awareness scores

Awe (n = 793)	M	SD	Rule awareness (n = 329)	M	SD
Nature 敬畏.	5.71	1.72	Rule recognition	5.45	1.63
Life is awe-inspiring	5.51	1.93	Rule sensitivity	5.11	2.09
A sense of awe	5.63	1.44	Rule persistence	3.40	3.78
Respect for the relationship	4.65	1.45	Rule flexibility	5.33	1.73
Spiritual awe	4.52	2.22	Rule externalities	4.40	2.33
Revere the aggregate	26.02	24.15	Rule awareness total score	23.61	26.78

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, and so on

3.2 Sense of awe is related to sense of rules

There was no significant correlation between awe and external rules ($n=329$, $r=0.083$, $p=0.138$), external rules ($n=329$, $r=0.076$, $p=0.177$), and awe and external rules ($n=329$, $r=0.062$, $p=0.271$). Other dimensions of awe were significantly correlated with all dimensions of rule awareness ($n=329$, $r=0.597$, $p<0.001$), as shown in Table 3.

表3 敬畏感与规则意识相关矩阵

	自然敬畏	生命敬畏	道德敬畏	关系敬畏	灵性敬畏	规则认同	规则敏感性	规则坚持性	规则灵活性	规则外在性	敬畏感总分
自然敬畏	0.707**										
道德敬畏	0.687**	0.672**									
关系敬畏	0.229**	0.236**	0.354**								
灵性敬畏	0.421**	0.428**	0.412**	0.334**							
规则认同	0.481**	0.512**	0.569**	0.254**	0.334**						
规则敏感性	0.452**	0.525**	0.517**	0.247**	0.352**	0.713**					
规则坚持性	0.083	0.131*	0.200**	0.356**	0.325**	0.332**	0.417**				
规则灵活性	0.427**	0.465**	0.454**	0.264**	0.261**	0.450**	0.432**	0.166**			
规则外在性	0.076	0.062	0.118*	0.288**	0.277**	0.045	0.041	0.359**	0.268**		
敬畏感总分	0.795**	0.800**	0.813**	0.572**	0.709**	0.548**	0.549**	0.297**	0.475**	0.226**	
规则总分	0.403**	0.452**	0.508**	0.406**	0.455**	0.693**	0.749**	0.733**	0.637**	0.531**	0.583**

3.3 Sense of awe predicts positive rules awareness

Using rule awareness as the dependent variable and awe as the independent variable for multiple regression analysis: Model 1: gender, age, region (demographic variables); Model 2: total awe score; Model 3: natural awe, life awe, moral awe, relational awe, and spiritual awe (each dimension of awe). The results show that after controlling for demographic variables, Model 2 significantly improves the explanatory power of the total awe score ($\Delta R^2=0.354$, $F=46.629$, $p<0.001$); Model 3 further explains an additional 2% of the variance in each dimension of awe ($\Delta R^2=0.020$, $F=25.052$, $p<0.001$).

Table 4 Hierarchical regression analysis of awe and rule consciousness

model	df	R ²	Adjust R ²	F	P	SEE
1	3	0.015	0.005	1.584	0.193	5.161
2	4	0.369	0.361	46.629	<0.001	4.137
3	8	0.389	0.373	25.052	<0.001	4.097

4 Discussion and recommendations

This study explored the relationship between adolescents' sense of awe and rule awareness through a questionnaire. The statistical analysis results show that there is a significant positive correlation between awe and rule awareness. Adolescents with a high sense of awe can predict their rule awareness well, meaning that adolescents with a higher sense of awe also have a higher level of rule awareness. The results support the hypothesis of this study: awe can positively predict rule awareness. Zhang Chao et al. (2024) found that trait awe and state awe positively influence participants' safety awareness and operational norms. Awe not only enhances individuals' prosocial behaviors but also reduces their aggressive behaviors (Yang, Yang, Baoetal., 2016). The findings of this study are consistent with previous research.

Awe may promote compliance with social norms and rules by reducing egocentrism and enhancing an individual's sense of social identity. Piff et al. (2015) found that awe, as a form of collective emotion, leads to a decrease in self-awareness and self-focus, and an increase in prosocial behavior. Experiencing awe makes individuals more concerned with collective interests, thereby enhancing their adherence to rules. However, there is no significant correlation between natural awe and rule persistence or externality, nor between life awe and externality. This difference may stem from fundamental distinctions in the dimensions of focus: natural awe primarily concerns the grandeur and mystery of nature, life awe arises from deep cognitive and emotional experiences of value and dignity within oneself, while rule persistence emphasizes adherence to rules in difficult situations, and externality emphasizes the external manifestation of rule awareness.

The overall sense of awe (Zhang Youmiao, 2024) and the awareness of rules (Liu Dianchen, 2021) of teenagers are higher than the average value of the sample group in previous studies, which may be due to the strong collectivism atmosphere in eastern Guangdong; and this study is different from the dimension of awareness of rules studied by Liu Dianchen, so there are differences in results.

The conclusions of this survey are largely consistent with previous studies that have found that awe promotes prosocial behavior and enhances awareness of rules. However, there are differences in sample selection and methodology between this study and previous ones: most previous studies focused on college students, whereas this study targeted eighth-grade and second-year high school students in eastern Guangdong. This difference in sample may lead to distinct characteristics in age and regional features of the research results.

5 Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is: contemporary adolescents have a moderate to high level of awe and rule awareness; there is a significant correlation between awe and rule awareness; and through regression analysis, it was demonstrated that awe has a positive predictive effect on rule awareness, thus verifying the hypothesis of this study. This finding deepens research in the related fields of awe and rule awareness, providing theoretical basis and empirical support for enhancing middle school students' awe emotions to promote their rule awareness.

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