

Differences in Parental Acceptance, Rejection, and Attachment and Associations with Adolescent Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction

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Abstract : Research and theory suggest that parenting and parent-child attachment influence emotional development and well-being. Studies indicate that adolescents often describe differences in relationships with each parent and may form different types of attachment to mothers and fathers. During adolescence and young adulthood, romantic partners may also become attachment figures, influencing well being, and providing a relational context for emotion skill development. Mothers, however, tend to be remain the primary attachment figure; fathers and romantic partners are more likely to be secondary attachment figures. The following hypotheses were tested: 1) participants would rate mothers as more accepting and less rejecting than fathers, 2) participants would rate secure attachment to mothers higher and insecure attachment lower compared to father and romantic partner, 3) parental rejection and insecure attachment would be negatively related to life satisfaction and emotional intelligence, and 4) secure attachment and parental acceptance would be positively related life satisfaction and emotional intelligence. After IRB and informed consent, one hundred fifty adolescents and young adults (ages 11-28, $M = 19.64$; 71% female) completed an online survey. Measures included parental acceptance, rejection, attachment (i.e., secure, dismissing, and preoccupied), emotional intelligence (i.e., seeking and providing comfort, use, and understanding of self emotions, expressing warmth, understanding and responding to others' emotional needs), and well-being (i.e., self-confidence and life satisfaction). As hypothesized, compared to fathers', mothers' acceptance was significantly higher $t(190) = 3.98, p = .000$ and rejection significantly lower $t(190) = -4.40, p = .000$. Group differences in secure attachment were significant, $f(2, 389) = 40.24, p = .000$; post-hoc analyses revealed significant differences between mothers and fathers and between mothers and romantic partners; mothers had the highest mean score. Group differences in preoccupied attachment were significant, $f(2, 388) = 13.37, p = .000$; post-hoc analyses revealed significant differences between mothers and romantic partners, and between fathers and romantic partners; mothers have the lowest mean score. However, group differences in dismissing attachment were not significant, $f(2, 389) = 1.21, p = .30$; scores for mothers and romantic partners were similar; father means score was highest. For hypotheses 3 and 4 significant negative correlations were found between life satisfaction and dismissing parent, and romantic attachment, preoccupied father and romantic attachment, and mother and father rejection variables; secure attachment variables and parental acceptance were positively correlated with life satisfaction. Self-confidence was correlated only with mother acceptance. For emotional intelligence, seeking and providing comfort were negatively correlated with parent dismissing and mother rejection; secure mother and romantic attachment and mother acceptance were positively correlated with these variables. Use and understanding of self-emotions were negatively correlated with parent and partner dismissing attachment, and parent rejection; romantic secure attachment and parent acceptance were positively correlated. Expressing warmth was negatively correlated with dismissing attachment variables, romantic preoccupied attachment, and parent rejection; whereas attachment secure variables were positively associated. Understanding and responding to others' emotional needs were correlated with parent dismissing and preoccupied attachment variables and mother rejection; only secure father attachment was positively correlated.

Keywords : adolescent emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, parent and romantic attachment, parental rejection and acceptance

Conference Title : ICABL 2018 : International Conference on Attachment, Behaviour and Learning

Conference Location : San Francisco, United States

Conference Dates : June 06-07, 2018