The Influence of Interactional Patterns within Family of Origin Upon Satisfaction in Emerging Adults’ Romantic Relationships

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Introduction

- Family of origin experiences shape current relational processes of emerging adults.
- The role of adult attachment has not been tested in the association between family of origin and current romantic relationship satisfaction.
- Previous studies used Bartholomew’s Relationship Questionnaire to clarify adult attachment categories but did not apply it dimensionally.

Method

- 355 participants in the U.S. and 150 from China, between the ages of 18 and 29 years who have had at least one romantic relationship.
- Data collected online through Qualtrics.
- Mediation analysis is conducted through ordinary least squares regression, using Hayes’ PROCESS.
- Adult attachment - Bartholomew’s RQ
- Romantic relationship satisfaction - Satisfaction subscale of Investment Model Scale
- Parent-child relationship satisfaction - Adapted IMS Satisfaction subscale items
- Parental support - Six items from Parental Attachment Questionnaire and four newly created

Results

- Romantic relationship satisfaction was significantly related to parental support from mother for both U.S. and Chinese samples.
- Mediating effects were found in all secure and fearful attachment paths for the U.S. sample whereas no effect was found in Chinese sample.
- For the Chinese sample, only one path showed a mediating effect - the dismissing attachment path between parental support from father and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

- For American, higher parent-child satisfaction and parental support indicate higher youth romantic relationship satisfaction and that the association is mediated through adult attachment.
- Secure and fearful attachment have different roles compared to preoccupied or dismissing attachment in the process of how family of origin experiences influence romantic relationship satisfaction.
- The results of cross-cultural comparisons might imply that Chinese parents have fewer influences on offspring romantic relationships, Chinese fathers play different roles from American fathers, and influencing mechanisms are different between these two groups.

New way to use Bartholomew’s Relationship Questionnaire

Cross cultural comparison between Chinese and U.S. Samples

Note: The number on the left of “/” is the coefficient between related two variables for American sample and the number on the right of “/” is for Chinese sample.
Significance: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.01, * < 0.05.