

Role of Emotion Regulation Strategies in Attachment with Parents and Romantic Relationships among Adolescents

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Abstract

The present study is planned to determine the relationship between emotion regulation, parental attachment and romantic relationships among adolescents. The sample comprised of 120 participants from different schools of both genders with age range between 16 to 18 years. The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA-R) and Network of Relationship Questionnaire (NRI) were administered on the basis of inclusion criteria. The obtained data will be analyzed using suitable statistics like descriptive analysis (Mean, SD, Percentage etc), Pearson correlation and linear regression. The findings indicate the association between cognitive reappraisal, mother attachment and closeness in romantic relationships among participants. This study highlights the use of adaptive strategies in maintaining secure relationships in life.

Keywords: Emotion, Cognitive, Suppression, Parental, Romantic

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a dynamic period for the development of emotion regulation and the prefrontal area of the brain is responsible for hidden and overt skills to monitor emotion, and then evaluate and modify it according to the situation (John & Gross, 2004); (Braunstein et al., 2017). Inadequate development of the prefrontal cortex in adolescents makes them more vulnerable to emotionally arousing situations. During this period, Adolescents face numerous emotional challenges, such as the increasing role of peer and romantic relationships rather than parental support, academic performance, need for identity formation. (Casey et al., 2010) .

However, parents have a great impact on adolescents' emotion regulation process by guiding emotion socialization behaviour for emotional tone in the family. The emotional regulation skills of parents are also responsible for ER skills in adolescents (Eisenberg et al., 1998).

Adolescents are able to perform successfully in their social circle i.e. peers, community, schools etc. who use antecedent-focused strategies as compared to response-focused strategies. They are in better condition to understand difficult situations and manage efficiently to focus on target goals.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between emotion regulation, parental attachment and romantic relationship quality among adolescents
2. To study the independent contribution of emotion regulation strategies on parental attachment and romantic relationships among adolescents

Hypothesis

- 1(a). A positive correlation is expected between emotion regulation (cognitive reappraisal), parental attachment and romantic relationship quality (Closeness)
- (b) A negative correlation is expected between emotion regulation (expressive suppression), parental attachment and romantic relationship quality (Closeness)
2. emotion regulation strategies would be a significant predictor for parental attachment and romantic relationships among adolescents

Methodology

Design:

An exploratory Cross-sectional design was adopted for the present study.

Sample:

A total number of 120 Adolescents of both genders studying in grades 11th, and 12th with an age range between 16 to 18 years as per inclusion and exclusion criteria from different schools of the city were purposively selected.

Tools:

Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003): It is a 10-item self-report questionnaire which includes 6 items assessing cognitive reappraisal (e.g., “when I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I’m thinking about”) and

4 items about expressive suppression (e.g., “When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them”).

Inventory of parent and peer attachment-revised (IPPA-R) (Armsden& Greenberg, 1987): It is a self-report questionnaire based on 5 points likert scale, used to assess the adolescent's attachment with their parents on the three broad dimensions i.e. trust, communication and alienation. This is based on the attachment theory formulated by Bowlby. In this study, we used only the parent (father, mother) section of the revised version which consists of 25 items each for both parents’ trust, communication and alienation scores.

Network of Relationships Inventory-Relationship Qualities Version (NRI-RQV)(Furman & Buhrmester, 2010): The NRI-RQV is 30 items self-report instrument that have ten scales with 3 items per scale to assess the broad array of relationship characteristics across many different types of personal relationships (mother, father, sibling, friend, romantic partner, and teacher). It was developed by Wyndol Furman and Duane Buhrmester in order to assess five positive features including companionship, disclosure, emotional support, approval, and satisfaction, and five negative features including conflict, criticism, pressure, exclusion and dominance qualities of relationship qualities among children, adolescents, and adults.

Procedure

120 participants were recruited who fulfilled the inclusion criteria after obtaining prior permission from the authority and consent from the parents. They were asked to complete the all tests to assess their emotion regulation strategies, parental attachment, and romantic relationship qualities. Proper instructions were given according to the manuals of tests used in the study. Participants were assured that their responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Finally, they were thanked for their active participation in the study and further counselled to contact the researcher for any kind of information and psychological help related to study variables. The scoring was done according to the manual of the tests. The obtained data was analysed and interpreted by utilizing SPSS20.

Results

Table no 1 Correlation between Emotion Regulation, parental attachment and romantic relationship qualities

Variables	FA	MA	CL	DC
CR	.151	.252**	.199*	.168
ES	-.117	-.101	-.230*	.250**

*p≤ .05, **p≤ .01

Note: CR-Cognitive Reappraisal, ES-Expressive Suppression, FA-Father Attachment, MA-Mother Attachment, CL-Closeness, DC-Discord

Table no 2 Significant Predictor for Parental Attachment

Predictors	Beta/Sig	
	FA	MA
CR	.151/.099	.252/.005
ES	-.117/.202	-.101/.273

Note: CR-Cognitive Reappraisal, ES-Expressive Suppression, FA-Father Attachment, MA-Mother Attachment

Table no. 3 Significant predictor for Romantic Relationship Qualities

Predictors	Beta/Sig	Beta/Sig
	CL	DC
CR	.199/.029	.168/.067
ES	.230/.012	.250/.006

Note:CR-Cognitive Reappraisal, ES-Expressive Suppression, CL-Closeness, DC-Discord

Discussion

The present study was planned to assess the role of emotion regulation in parental attachment and romantic relationship among adolescents. The first objective of the study was to see the association between emotion regulation, parental attachment and relationships. The correlation analysis (table 1) revealed a significant positive correlation between cognitive reappraisal and mother attachment. The findings indicate that higher scores on cognitive reappraisal strategy of emotional regulation are linked to higher scores on attachment with the mother. Those who use cognitive reappraisal in handling emotions in day-to-day life are better at managing relationships with their mothers. A recent study also favoured that cognitive reappraisal was a strong predictor for secure parental attachment as compared to expressive suppression (Chen et al., 2019).

The results also indicate a significant association between cognitive reappraisal and closeness in romantic relationships among adolescents. Closeness and satisfaction in a romantic relationship are linked with a cognitive reappraisal of emotions. The study done by (Delatorre et al., 2021) also indicates the use of a flexible approach in emotional regulation impacts romantic relationship quality for better dyadic adjustment. Our findings are also in favour of previous studies that handling emotions in a better way is linked to closeness in romantic relationships among adolescents.

The findings of the present study also indicate that expressive suppression of emotion regulation strategy positively correlated with discord in romantic relationships. This indicates that adolescents who used to consciously hide and inhibit emotion-expressive behaviours, tend to score low on closeness. They are not able to handle emotions in adaptive ways which ultimately links to less intimate disclosure, satisfaction, emotional support and approval with romantic partners. Our study results were consistent with previous research which revealed anxiety in romantic relationships associated with expressive suppression which leads to dysregulation of emotions in adolescents (Marszał&Jańczak, 2018).

The second objective of the present study was to see the contribution of emotion regulation strategies in managing relationship with parents and romantic partners. It was found that use of cognitive reappraisal strategies in managing emotions in daily life is the significant predictor for secure attachment with mother. It was well documented that the usage of more adaptive emotion regulation predicts higher quality parental attachment and usage of maladaptive emotion regulation strategy predicts lower quality parental attachment (Gresham &Gullone, 2012)

The present study highlights the importance of role of emotion regulation during the adolescent period for secure interpersonal relationship with significant others. Adaptive emotion regulation strategies are also linked to future relationships in different trajectories of life. The small sample is the main limitation of the study. There is a need to do research in this field on a larger sample and to focus on emotion regulation skills training for the overall development during major transitions of life.

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