The Relationship Between Parental Personality, Attachment Style, and Subjective Well-Being

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Introduction

Numerous factors can influence a person's subjective well-being but attachment style and parental personality are some factors that can impact life satisfaction into adulthood.

- Subjective well-being [people's assessment of their own livelihood and quality of life (Yang et al., 2008)], has been linked to secure attachment.
- Children's attachment style can be influenced by parental rearing (Roelofs et al., 2006).
- Parental rearing behaviors can be affected by parents' personality- (Metsäpelto & Pulkkinen, 2003).
- Research on parental personality traits and parenting behaviors shows that nurturing parents who are authoritative and emotionally involved are more likely to score higher in extraversion and openness to experience (Metsäpelto & Pulkkinen, 2003).

Hypotheses

Adult children who perceive their parents as...

1. **high in extraversion** are more likely to be securely attached and score higher in subjective well-being
2. **high in openness** are more likely to be securely attached and score higher in subjective well-being
3. **low in neuroticism** are more likely to be securely attached and score higher in subjective well-being

Method

115 Participants ages 18-65 were recruited through various social media outlets to complete a survey composed of the following three scales:

- Big Five Inventory: a 46 item inventory that measures the personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (John et al., 1991)
- Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: a compact 8-item inventory designed to measure general personal happiness and psychological well-being (Hills & Argyle, 2002)
- Adult Scale of Parental Attachment: a 20-item inventory designed to measure adult children's relationship with their parents (Snow et al., 2005)

Participants included:

- 80% females, 17.4% males, 2 non-binary individuals, and one transgender man
- 20.9% of participants identified as Hispanic, Latino, or from a Spanish Origin

Results

Those who perceived their parents as:

- more extraverted ($r(113) = .286, p = .002$)
- more open ($r(113) = .391, p = .000$)
- and less neurotic ($r(113) = -.265, p = .004$)

had a "safer" attachment ($r(113) = .333, p = .000$) and scored higher on happiness and were more likely to be happier.

Figure 1: Positive correlation between those who perceived their parents as extraverts and "safe" attachment

Figure 2: Positive correlation between those who perceived their parents as open and "safe" attachment

Figure 3: Negative correlation between those who perceived their parents as neurotic and "safe" attachment

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how the perceptions of parental personality influence parent-child relationships and ultimately well-being into adulthood. Results demonstrated that there is a relationship between perceived parental extraversion, openness, and neuroticism, "safe" attachment, and subjective well-being. Those who perceived their parents as extraverted, open and less neurotic were more likely to have a "safer" attachment and score higher on the happiness scale.

Limitations:

- there was not much variability in the sample as the majority of participants were white females
- the attachment scale used did not clearly separate participants into securely attached and insecurely attached but rather into various subgroups

Implications:

- this study could encourage parents to form more secure attachments with their children in an effort to raise happier children into adulthood

Future Directions: Future studies could...

- examine the relationship between the other personality traits not tested in this study, attachment, and well-being
- examine how the other subscales in the Adult Scale of Parental Attachment interacts with parental personality