

Title:

How is parenting and adolescents' attachment related in diverse cultures?

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Abstract:

Although parenting warmth is conceived as pan-cultural predictor of child attachment, some studies indicate that the extent of its effect differs across cultures and that in certain contexts attachment may be explained better by rejection than acceptance.

Referring to an ecological framework, we asked to what extent culture moderates the relation between parenting (acceptance-rejection) and adolescents' attachment. Our sample consisted of 4246 mothers and their adolescent children interviewed in 14 countries. Generic attachment was indicated by anxiety and avoidance.

Results revealed that maternal parenting explained child attachment in general. However, effects on anxiety were moderated by culture. More precisely, in countries where effects of rejection were stronger, effects of acceptance were weaker. Results indicate that in some countries maternal rejection (compared to acceptance) is a stronger (or the only) predictor of adolescents' anxiety. Results will be discussed in the framework of attachment and culture-informed model of intergenerational relations.

Keywords:

Adolescence; ecological framework; rejection

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Caregiver's sensitivity underlying individual differences in child attachment seems to be well represented beyond infancy by parenting warmth, indicated by acceptance and rejection. Although both dimensions seem to be pan-culturally related with child adjustment (Rohner, 2014), the extent to which they predict attachment differs across cultures (Dwairy, 2010). Moreover, some studies indicate that in certain contexts attachment may be explained better by negative (e.g., rejection) than by positive aspects of parenting (e.g., acceptance) (Berlin et al., 2008).

Referring to the ecological model of intergenerational transmission of attachment (van IJzendoorn, 1995), assuming that effects of parenting on child attachment are context-dependent, we set out to answer two questions: 1) To what extent does culture moderate the relation between parenting acceptance and adolescents' attachment? 2) To what extent does culture moderate the relation between parenting rejection and adolescents' attachment?

The sample of 4246 mothers and their adolescent children (between 14 and 17 years old; 56% females) was interviewed in 14 countries (from 4 continents) as part of the Value-of-Children-Study (Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005). Generic attachment indicated by anxiety and avoidance was measured by the Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990). The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (e.g., Rohner, Rohner, & Roll, 1980) was used to assess parenting acceptance and rejection. Measurement equivalence of instruments was established before the analyses. Economic status, education of mothers, and adolescent gender were controlled for.

Results revealed that maternal acceptance and rejection explained child attachment in general. The effects on anxiety were moderated by culture. Specifically, in countries where effects of rejection were stronger, effects of acceptance were weaker. Results indicate that in some countries maternal rejection (compared to acceptance) is a stronger (or the only) predictor of adolescents' anxiety. Results will be discussed in the framework of attachment and culture-informed model of intergenerational relations (e.g., Trommsdorff, 2006).

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