



The relationship between perceived parenting style and attachment styles, depending on the family structure

Adina-Gabriela Tomșa

University of Bucharest

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Corresponding author at: University of Bucharest, Department of Psychology, 90 Panduri Av, Bucharest, RO.

E-mail address: tomsa.adina@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper objective is to investigate the elements from childhood that can be associated with some type of attachment in adult relationships. Participants were 207 young people aged between 20 and 30 ($M = 23,22$), from Romania, who have been in a relationship during the last year. The used instruments were: Parental Authority Questionnaire and Experiences of Close Relationships Inventory. The results supported that a permissive parental style is associated with a low level of anxiety ($r = .17$) as a dimension of attachment in adult relationships; while authoritarian parental style coincides with avoidance tendencies ($r = .17$) and an increased anxiety ($r = .35$) in adult relationships and last but not least, authoritative parental style is associated with low levels of anxiety ($r = .19$) or avoidance ($r = .29$) in relation to others. Furthermore, the work revealed differences between participants from single-parent families (following the death of their mother or father) and participants who were raised in two parent families, the latter having a lower level of avoidance, being able to express themselves more easily in relationships and show their affection. The parental structure was not supported as a significant moderator of the relationship between perceived parenting style and attachment.

Keywords: *perceived parenting style, attachment, divorce, death, anxiety, avoidance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles, attachment and family structure are constructs of interest for both research and psychological practice. Early parent-child relationships are considered to be able to guide the child's feelings, thoughts and

expectations in future relationships, so perceived parenting style becomes an extremely important factor in shaping the type of attachment of the young people.

Throughout the civilized world, in the early 1960s, the phenomenon of child growth, with all its needs that were known to develop optimally, caught the attention of researchers for a long time, followed by a series of reforms and moments of awareness between the population of parents, borrowed from clinical research. The child's need of growing up in a secure family environment with an available, capable, warm, emotionally approachable adult was supported by numerous authors such as Anna Freud, John Bowlby, H.M. Skeels, Françoise Dolto and many others (Bretherton, 1992). This fundamental idea was going against the medical perspective on child development, which was the basis for institutions of child support, such as orphanages. Based on the experience gained in a center for delinquent children and referring to other research papers on the child's needs of healthy development, John Bowlby (1988) built the attachment theory. This theory is the basic tool of understanding the role of parents / adults, the impact of separation in relationships and the effect of parent- child interaction on their development.

Although it has become increasingly obvious that the parent-child relationship can have significant and substantial continuity over time (Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000), empirical evidence suggests that change is not only possible, but also associated with variations in the presence and duration of positive or negative events in life (Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000). In this context, it becomes imperative to analyze the long-term effect of negative events such as parental divorce or the death of one parent during childhood. Beginning with Freud, many theorists have suggested that someone's early loss may predispose the individual to depression during maturity (Bowlby, 1982). This research aims to highlight the specific factors from childhood that are associated with a certain style of attachment in romantic relationships at adult ages. Thus, it explores the association between perceived parenting style and adult attachment, expressed through the level of anxiety and avoidance, while testing the moderating role of the family structure on this relationship.

Attachment and parenting style. Interaction.

The way parents interact with their own children can influence many areas of development when they reach adulthood. In this direction, the perceived parenting style can be associated with the type of attachment in adult relationships, the patterns experienced in childhood, reaching even to modulate the way individuals relate to their loved ones. Here, one can observe the most commonly used classification of the two concepts analyzed: parenting style and attachment style.

Research in the field shows that some parents are better at adapting to the personal style of the child, than others. These specificities are reflected by the individual

temperament of children that affects how they interact with parents. The attachment, therefore, occurs at the intersection of the child's temperamental predispositions and the parents' offer. From this perspective, Thomas and Chess (1981) highlight the relationship between parenting style and the child's temperament in establishing parent-child attachment.

As mentioned before, the attachment is based on the construct of an internal working model, based on two ideas: (a) whether the attachment figure is considered or not a person who generally fulfills the support and protection needs, and (b) if the child considers himself a person to whom anyone, especially the attachment figure, would provide support. From the perspective of parenting styles, a number of researchers have demonstrated that a secure adult attachment is a predictor of parental qualities, such as closeness, control, and support for the child. A combination of these behaviors, characterized by Baumrind (1991) as authoritative or flexible parenting, has been proven to be the predictor of some characteristics of the child from pre-school to teenage years, such as self-confidence and reduced aggression. Certain parenting styles have been associated with adult secure attachment: warmth or acceptance and responsiveness, involvement and support (Crowell et al., 1991) et al., 1991), structure (Cohn et al., 1992) and organization (Crowell et al., 1991).

A quantitative research on adult attachment in non-clinical populations suggests that 40% of adults have an insecure attachment style (Ravitz et al., 2010). Associations between parenting style perception and adult attachment pattern have been demonstrated for young people. For example, young adults who have been characterized as secured when talking about attachment, have described their mothers with a high degree of affection and fathers with a low rate of setting punishments, despite those with insecure attachment style (Sroufe et al., 1999). In a group of Swedish high-school students, the secure attachment was positively correlated with emotional warmth of the parents, while insecure attachment was positively correlated with the remembrance of parental rejection and over-protection (Perris & Andersson, 2000). Also, secure attachment is associated with the perception of proper care and correlates negatively with exaggerated parental control of young adults in Japan (Liu, Shono & Kitamura, 2008). On the other hand, the psychopathology research being in continuous development explores the role of attachment and parenting style in the manifestation of pathology in clinical populations. (Wilmhurst, 2015).

The results of the other research (Ionescu, 2013) reveal a strong and significant correlation between parental over-protection and an anxious adult attachment style. Specifically, the higher the parental control, the stronger the anxiety, while the avoidance is reduced, similar to the

dependent attachment style (Feeney, 2008). Over-protection refers to child-raising behaviors whereby parents constantly show their fears about possible dangers or do not trust the child's ability to cope alone by taking the opportunity to take responsibility. An idea constantly circulated in the literature is that parents who protect their children from demanding experiences, limit their control over stressful situations, and send them the message that the world is a dangerous place that they cannot control, so they need someone's protection (Van Zalk & Kerr, 2011). Therefore, it becomes easy to explain the correlation between a parental model perceived as over-protective and the manifestation of dependent behavior towards a partner, which is representative to anxiety, as a dimension of attachment. The correlations between anxious attachment and over-protective parenting were confirmed in different age groups, clinical and non-clinical groups, in various research (Greco & Morris, 2002; Spokas & Heimberg, 2009). A low avoidance is understandable, because the distance to the partner is perceived as dangerous by these adults. The linearity and quality of the early experiences that individuals can remember, exert their influence on the attachment style. Individuals with a high consistency of memories and a secure attachment describe their family relationships with constructs such as: warmth, love and a low level of rejection. Moreover, even in the context of negative childhood events, they can look at things from a new perspective, even having feelings of forgiveness for their parents who were cold, not being able to express their love and rather reluctant. Specifically, individuals with a secure internal working model have developed this pattern through natural or acquired autonomy (Main & Solomon, 1990).

The subject's perception of the quality of relationships with both parents during childhood was associated with their type of attachment in adult relationships (Gleeson & Fitzgerald, 2014). According to research by Brenann and Shaver (1995), securing people recalled more relationships defined by acceptance with mothers and fathers, unlike those in the group with an insecure attachment. The latter had the tendency to perceive their fathers in a negative way, and in the case of mothers, fearful individuals described their mothers as persons who rejected them more often than those who were avoiding or dependent. Both individuals in the secure and avoidant groups felt that their parents cultivated their independence and talked about idealized relationships with their fathers, unlike those in the other groups. These findings replicate the results of Carnelley et al. (1994), adding information about people with a predominantly avoidant attachment style.

The multi-generational perspective puts the dynamics of the nuclear family as the main element influencing the individual and family development (Skowron, Holmes & Sabatelli, 2003). Furthermore, there may be differences that may arise

regarding memories about the two parents. Practically, in the case of men, those with a secure attachment pattern remembered a higher level of care from fathers, contrary to those who had an anxious pattern. Both men with a secure attachment style and those with an avoidant style have indicated a lower level of maternal control compared to those categorized as anxious or dependent. A strong correlation between insecure attachment styles and the overprotective experience for men was proved, while in the case of women the correlation was stronger with parental rejection (Perris & Andersson, 2000). According to the study conducted by Wilhelm, Gillis and Parker (2016), the relationship between perceived parenting style and adult attachment outlines two dimensions of parenting type and a four-category model. The dimension of parental warmth has the affection, emotional warmth, empathy, focusing on the child, closeness and attention to the child's needs, and on the opposite side, there is neglect, indifference, emotional distance. In support of this idea, the presence of the mother becomes a necessity felt by the child, but it is not enough to shape a healthy personality because love is what the child needs. The control dimension has at one end of the axis, excessive protection, intrusion and prevention of independent behavior, and on the other side the acceptance of independence and autonomy. From the combination of these two dimensions, we obtain four categories: authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting (parental style found to be the most pathogenic), permissive parenting and uninvolved parenting (Harwood et al., 2010).

According to Zayas et al. (2011), early nurturing experiences have an influence on adult attachment dynamics with both romantic partner and friends, conceptualized as an avoidant attachment (the difficulty of depending on attachment figures) and anxious attachment (the fundamental concerns being rejection and abandonment). More specifically, a maternal care that showed warmth and an absence of control at the age of 18 months, predicted a low avoidance of friends and partner, and a low level of anxiety at the age of 22. These results highlight the fact that maternal care in the early years is not only related to the first attachment relationship but, also, reflects relationships in the general sense with both friends and romantic partners. This pattern is consistent with previous research (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994), which argued that romantic relationships are more likely to turn into a fully developed attachment bond in which anxiety separation occurs, unlike in relationships with friends. Scientific research has also focused on uninvolved parenting, which has indirect effects on sexual or non-sexual abuse and attachment type, increasing the incidence of abuse and making a significant contribution to the attachment insecurity. For that matter, the use of therapeutic interventions centered on attachment is recommended in the treatment of adults abused during childhood (Briere,

Runtz, Eadie, Bigras & Godbout, 2017) is suggested. Another study, conducted by Bryant et al. (2017) highlights the effects of early childhood separation during childhood trauma (in this case a devastating fire that occurred in Australia in 1983) on adult attachment and post-traumatic stress. Separation from parents has been linked to an avoidant attachment, with re-experiencing memories, numbness, while anxious attachment implies stimulation. In general, short parental separation during a trauma may have long-term effects on adult attachment and may be associated with post-traumatic psychopathology.

Prunas, Pierro, Huemer & Tagini (2017) mark the correlation between immature defense mechanisms and insecure adult attachment, because these mechanisms are following a pattern, possibly formed on the structural childhood's interactions. Dissociation and suppression are coping mechanisms that characterize the avoidant attachment, while projection and fantasizing become important elements of anxious attachment. A context in which these defense mechanisms could intervene, as mentioned above, would be in the case of experiencing a trauma, such as finding out about the existence of a disease. For children suffering from cancer, concern and anxiety-induced illness can turn into over-protection or low emotional responsiveness from parents. These reactions to the negative event can cause the surviving child to have more insecure relationships with different friends, partners and colleagues. Childhood cancer has been associated with a high level of emotional warmth from parents, reduced avoidance and a high probability of being in a relationship (Lehmann et al., 2017). Last but not least, the research conducted by Eldad and Benatov (2018) highlights a link between parenting style, attachment type and leadership. More specifically, giving parental independence has been associated with reduced degrees of avoidance and anxiety within the attachment. Both the transactional and the transformational leadership styles have been positively associated with parental autonomy, and only the transformational one correlated with parental involvement.

Family structure and its role

In the present paper we will refer only to the nuclear family (family of origin), consisting in children and parents living together. By family structure one can understand the type of family: family with both parents or single-parent family, in the latter case assuming the occurrence of disruptive events in the family structure, such as the divorce or death of one of the parents. When the term "single parent family" is taken into account, we are talking about a disorganization due to the loss of family integrity following separation of parents as a consequence of one of the following reasons: marriage dissolution, divorce, the death of one of the parents, etc. (Mitrofan, 1991). On the other hand, from the point of view of sociology, the single parent family can be seen as a social

group formed on the kinship between one parent (the single parent) and his child/ children, a group defined by common elements such as: emotions, values and aspirations (Stefan, 2001).

In the society that we live in, always-changing society, the number of single-parent families has reached 626,149 according to the INSEE census realized in 2011, of which 502,004 families continue to live with their mother and 124,145 with their father. From these families, 831,165 children grew up in single-parent families, and this is an alarmingly high number, focusing our attention on studying different types of family structures, from the perspective of the perceived parenting type and the style of attachment. A great volume of studies investigated the negative correlation between the instability of the family structure and the well-being of the child (Waldfogel, Craigie & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). However, the family's effects are not limited to this, the researchers have identified associations between changing the family structure and obstacles to cognitive development (Magnuson & Berger 2009), an emphasis on behavioral problems (Osborne & McLanahan, 2007), as well as degradation of physical health (Bzostek & Beck, 2011). Also, an important argument that sustains the necessity of analyzing the influence of the family structure is that there is evidence that children who have undergone family change fall behind in terms of results in different areas compared to those who have grown up in a stable family (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007).

The instability hypothesis is structured on the model of family stress and highlights that differences in children's results arise as a consequence of the stress caused by separation and eventually reconstruction of the family. So, these changes are often associated with changes in roles and routines specific to both parents and children, aspects associated with parental resource fluctuations, change of parenting quality and emotional insecurity, which can later influence adult attachment (Coleman, Ganong & Fine, 2000). One aspect worth considering is whether any change in structure is equally important, or certain types of events have a greater effect. Recent studies emphasize the fact that the effects are different: the loss of a parental from the family image reflects in the behavior of the child, whereas the entry of a new parent in the family (remarriage) is more important for the child's academic results (Mitchell et al., 2015). The diathesis-stress model from the perspective of attachment, as illustrated in the following figure, exemplifies that attachment insecurity can generate non-daptive responses to various threatening events, depending on the type of attachment of the person.

Once it is understood how these changes can affect the child's further development, strategies can be developed to improve his / her well-being; emotional and psychological protection measures could be developed specifically for these disruptive situations.

In order to achieve the established objectives, this paper is looking to investigate the following assumptions:

I1: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant association between perceived parenting style and attachment.

I1.1: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant and negative association between permissive parenting and anxiety as the attachment dimension;

I1.2: It is assumed that there is a positive and statistically significant association between permissive parenting and avoidance;

I1.3: It is assumed that there is a positive and statistically significant association between authoritarian parenting and avoidance;

I1.4: It is assumed that there is a positive and statistically significant association between authoritarian parenting and anxiety;

I1.5: It is assumed that there is a negative and statistically significant association between authoritarian parenting and avoidance;

I1.6: It is assumed that there is a negative and statistically significant association between authoritative parenting and anxiety;

I2: It is assumed that the family structure significantly modifies the relationship between perceived parenting style and attachment;

I3: It is presumed that there are statistically significant differences according to the family structure in terms of type of adult attachment.

I3.1: It is assumed that the level of anxiety differs statistically significantly depending on the family structure;

I3.2: It is assumed that the level of avoidance differs statistically significantly according to the family structure.

2. METHODOLOGY

Participants and procedure

The design of the paper is quantitative and correlational, also following a moderating scheme, the family structure being explored as the moderator of the relationship between perceived parenting style and adult attachment style. The questionnaire was created in google forms and promoted through social media, being structured in four sections: informed consent, demographic questions, PAQ and ECR. In this study, all the participants answered the survey questions voluntarily. Participants were young people with ages from 20 to 30 years old, who were involved in a romantic relationship during the last year. The questionnaire was submitted by 220 people, but 13 persons were deleted because they didn't meet the age criteria, remaining 207 respondents with the mean age of 23, 22 (SD= 3, 45). Geographic questions regarding age, gender, family structure were gathered.

Participants were distributed in 3 categories, depending on the family structure, having the following groups: family with both parents (N= 115), single parent family due to divorce (N= 51), single parent family after the death of a parent (N=41).

Instruments

Perceived Parenting Style

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991), published for the first time in the Journal of Personality and Social Assessment, measures the parenting styles described by Baumrind (1991): authoritative, authoritarian,

permissive. PAQ was built to measure parental authority and discipline perceived by the children. The questionnaire had 30 items with a Likert scale in 5 points. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients were .78 on the permissive subscale, .91 on the authoritarian subscale, .90 on the authoritative subscale and .75 on the global scale.

Romantic adult attachment

Experiences of Close Relationships Inventory – ECR , originally created by Brennan et al. (1998) and revised by Fraley, Waller & Brennan (2000). For this study, it was used the adapted version by Sava & Negrei (2006). This inventory has two scales: anxiety and avoidance, based on those, being able to describe four attachment styles: secure, dismissing, fearful, preoccupied. The persons questioned were asked to think about the romantic relationships, from the past or present and evaluate the extent to which every item describes their emotional experience on a 7 point Likert scale. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were .80 for anxiety, .93 on avoidance and .89 on the global scale.

Data analysis

The software SPSS 22 was used for the data analysis. First, the overall data was performed in a correlation analysis. Second, a hierarchical regression analysis (using PROCESS module) was used to explore the moderating role of family structure in the relationship between the perceived parenting styles and the attachment styles. Finally, ANOVA was conducted to further analyze the difference between the three groups regarding the adult attachment style.

3. RESULTS

Initially, a normality test was carried out using the Kolmogorov- Smirnov, checking the distribution on each

scale (Sig > .05). Also, in Table 1 are presented the descriptive statistics of this data, such as the means, the standard deviations and the skewness and kurtosis distributions.

Table 1 – Descriptive indicators of the scales PAQ & ECR

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Skewness	Kurtosis	M	SD
	Statistic	df	Sig.				
Parenting Style (Permissive)	.05	207	.20	.019	-.502	27.18	7.149
Parenting Style (Authoritarian)	.09	207	.12	.443	-.643	25.88	9.569
Parenting Style (Authoritative)	.08	207	.10	-.589	-.155	33.98	9.285
Attachment Styles (Avoidance)	.09	207	.15	.633	-.061	38,07	11,576
Attachment Styles (Anxiety)	.07	207	.17	.232	-.864	60,87	23,723

Also, in the general sample, the variable of “family structure” splits participants in the following categories: family with both parents (N= 115), single parent family following divorce (N= 51) and single parent family following the death of a parent (N= 41). For the last two groups (single parent families) other aspects were also analyzed such as: with witch parent did the child continue to live with after the disruptive event and at what age did this event occur. If we look at the percentages, we can observe that children went through the divorce of the parents or loss of a parent at the following age range: 0-3 years (27%), 3- 6 years (15%), 6- 11 years (25%), 11- 17 years (33%).

On the other side, in both cases, the percentages of children who continued to live with their mother is substantially

bigger than those who remained with their dads, but especially when divorce took place, because there we have to take in consideration the child’s choice or a court order.

In order to test the hypothesis, the statistical procedures which have been carried out will be described below.

The first assumption (I1) was “It is presumed that there is an association between perceived parental style and attachment”.

Regarding this matter, the Pearson Linear Correlation Coefficient was analyzed, the results being centralized in Table 2.

Table 2 – Descriptive indicators of the scales PAQ & ECR

Subscales of Parenting Styles		Avoidance	Anxiety
Parenting Style (Permissive)	Pearson Correlation	-.09	-.17*
Parenting Style (Authoritarian)	Pearson Correlation	.17*	.35**
Parenting Style (Authoritative)	Pearson Correlation	-.19**	-.29**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Research data regarding the perceived permissive parenting style, on a sample of 207 participants, showed a negative low correlation but statistically significant with the level of anxiety (r= .17; p < .05), supporting the secondary hypothesis I1.1. On the other hand, authoritarian parenting style is positively associated with the level of avoidance (r= .17, p < .05), but also with the anxiety level (r = .35; p < .01), in this way supporting the hypothesis I1.3 and I1.4 . Last, but not least, the analyzed data highlights negative correlations with small to medium coefficients between authoritarian

parenting style and avoidance (r = .19 , p < .01), respectively, anxiety (r= .29, p < .01), which supports the secondary hypothesis I1.5 & I1.6. Based on the results described previously, it can be concluded that the first principal assumption (I1) is supported.

The second assumption (I2) was “It is presumed that family structure moderates the relationship between perceived parental style and attachment.” In order to investigate this aspect, we will follow the statistical model in the following figure.

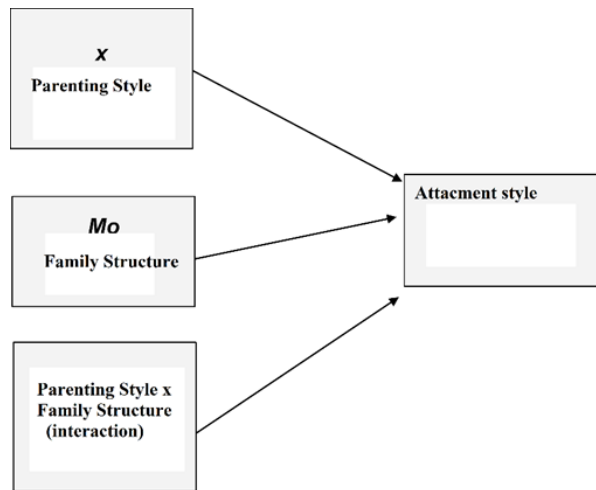


Figure 1 – Statistical model of moderation

To test this assumption, the Process extension was used, analyzing the moderator role of the family structure (with the three categories: family with both parents, single parent family with divorce, single parent family with death of a

parent). Consequently, the Hypothesis II.2 is not supported by the research data, so we can not conclude, at this moment, that the family structure would moderate the relationship between parenting style and attachment.

Table 3 - The moderator role of family structure

Moderating relationship	Interaction	R2-chng	F	β (coef)	p
Authoritarian & Avoidance	Authoritarian x Fam. Structure	.002	.58	.07	.44
Authoritarian & Anxiety	Authoritarian x Fam. Structure	.004	1.02	.20	.31
Permissive & Avoidance	Permissive x Fam. Structure	.004	.90	-.13	.34
Permissive & Anxiety	Permissive x Fam. Structure	.000	.16	-.12	.68
Authoritative & Avoidance	Authoritative x Fam. Structure	.004	.92	-.09	.33
Authoritative & Anxiety	Authoritative x Fam. Structure	.002	.44	-.14	.50

The third assumption (I3) was "It is presumed that there are differences depending on the family structure regarding the adult attachment style. With this purpose in mind, the single-factor analysis of variance was runned, the differences being tested on equivalent groups after randomly selecting cases (Family with both parents- N=51; Single-Parent Divorce- N=51; Single-Parent Death- N=41). In the initial faze the homogeneity was tested with the Levene procedure on the avoidance and anxiety dimension, inside the 3 groups, the homogeneity being confirmed. The Bonfferoni option

reflects differences on the avoidance scale depending on the family structure. The persons who grew up in a single-parent family due to the death of a parent tend to have a higher level of avoidance than those who grew in a family with both of their parents ($F = 5.072$; $p = .007$), the difference between the means is 7.796 with a signification of $p < .05$. On the other hand, there are no significant differences in the anxiety level between.

Thereby, the results as they will be presented in the next table partially support the secondary assumption I3.2

(people who've gone through the death of a parent have a higher level of avoidance, compared to those with both parents), but invalidates, at the moment, the assumption I3.1

(there is no difference in the level of anxiety, between the three groups).

Table 4. *Analyze of variance on the attachment dimensions depending on the family structure*

		Mean Square	F	Sig.
Avoidance	Inter-groups	713.97	5.072	.007
	Intra-groups	140.75		
Anxiety	Inter-groups	739.28	1.297	.276
	Intra-groups	569.80		

Table 5. *Differences on the attachment style depending on the family structure*

Dependent Variable	(I) Fam. Structure	(J) Fam. Structure	Mean Difference (I-J)		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
				SD		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Avoidance	F. both parents	Death	-7.796	2.49	.006	-13.83	-1.77

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study are consistent and better outline the possible factors present in childhood that are associated with adult attachment. The objectives initially set were achieved by testing the research hypotheses, and based on these we can draw more conclusions. Objective 1 was to explore the relationship between perceived parenting style and adult attachment. In this direction, five out of six hypotheses have been confirmed, highlighting a series of associations between variables. Growing in a family where a permissive style is predominant can be associated with low anxiety, freedom, and the absence of expectations and rules that could put pressure on the child, thus limiting stress as a generating factor of anxiety (I1.1). The profile of a child who was allowed to do anything and had no limitations, is now the one of an adult who still thinks that every single person's reality relates to his own, and doesn't experience the fear of abandonment or the worries that others could criticize them.

On the other hand, in the case of children living in families with authoritarian parents, where the parental figure is seen from the perspective of a "leader" rather than a support point, we often encounter a high level of avoidance and anxiety in attachment relationships in adulthood. Continuous parental direction, lack of autonomy and independence, inhibition of feelings, whether positive or negative, can be associated with relational difficulties in the couple, avoiding closeness and disclosure to the partner, fear of abandonment (I1.3, I1.4). The image of a child who heard from young ages "You are not doing anything right!" instead of "I love you!", is now the one of an adult who is deeply afraid of intimate relationships, is willing to let himself be controlled by others, but has a desperate need to know in

every second that the partners still loves them. He seeks for affection, but doesn't have the skills to ask for it or accept it.

The third situation, according to the typology of parental styles, where there are authoritative or flexible parents, highlights on the one hand the existence of clear rules and limits and, on the other hand, the display of support, empathy and trust in relation to their own child. In this case, the more parents have a closer version of this style, the more children (who now became adults) will have a lower level of anxiety and avoidance, reflecting a secure attachment, and engaging in honest and open relationships, while preserving their autonomy (I1.5, I1.6). It is also important to remember that one of the variables is the perceived parenting style, so it refers to the way the participant perceives at the moment, how the parents behaved in childhood. For people with a safe attachment, there is a tendency to remember more optimistic life events, with a significantly lower number of punishments and traumatic situations.

All these conclusions are supported by the literature, and there are a number of authors who have previously pointed out the existence of a relationship between perceived parenting style and attachment (Van Zalk & Kerr, 2011; Ionescu, 2013; Gleeson & Fitzerlad, 2014). Certainly, other dimensions present in childhood could be analyzed, such as perceived social support, which explains a part of the exploratory capacity of the individual, allowing him or her to open-up in front of the partner, to become closer with him or not (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

The second objective is to highlight the role of family structure in childhood, the relationship between perceived parenting style and attachment to young people. According

to the testing of the general hypothesis (I2), it is noted that the family structure does not play a moderating role in this relationship. Thus, research data eliminates the moderating role of the family structure, which may highlight the fact that the origin of a particular family (both parents, single-parent following the death of a parent or single-parent by the death of a parent) can not be linked to an insecure attachment, unlike parenting practices that play an important role in this association, regardless of the context in which the individual has grown up. In this direction, the parent-child relationship becomes more and more important, whether we are talking about an intact family with both parents or a family in which a disruptive event occurred, which, in the absence of suitable parental attitudes, could favor the occurrence of harmful effects in the child's future relationships.

The third objective is to analyze the differences in young people on the attachment style in adult relationships, depending on the family structure in which they grew in. The statistic results reveal that young people in single or two-parent families do not differ in anxiety, but differences are seen when considering the level of avoidance (I3.1, I3.2). People who lost one of their parents in their childhood tend to have a higher level of avoidance than those in families with both parents. This might be explained if we look at the image of a child who experienced the death of a parent, and might have gone through a period of secrets, in which he didn't understand anything of what was going on, or whether what he feels is right, acceptable or not. That child, is now an adult who is afraid to let others get close to him, had difficulties in expressing his feelings, and is avoidant in relationships. As other authors have previously said, in the context of losing a loved one, some effects might appear, such as: a lack of social support, the difficulty of people around the children to provide the necessary information to explain the truth, which could distort (in adulthood) the confidence in those around, the ability to form relationships, and expressing feelings, self-esteem; elements that can be translated by avoidance (Wolchik et al., 2006). This conclusion has many implications in the field of psychotherapy and parenting; it comes to destroy the

"taboo", banned or secret labels on the concept of death, and emphasizes the importance of a healthy surviving parent-child relationship and open communication. Regarding young people whose parents divorced until the age of 18, there are no differences in attachment dimensions, but as is also suggested in the literature, differences in attitude towards marriage could be identified, to live as concubines or to have marriages of shorter duration (Valle & Tillman, 2014).

Some limitations of the study were that the parenting styles was measured retrospectively which could imply some errors, like omissions or exaggerations. However, in this research, by using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), which focuses on specific behaviors and attitudes rather than on general impressions, a part of the error was minimized. An aspect that may reduce the accuracy of the results may be that this questionnaire provides results based on a typology (permissive, authoritarian, authoritative style) that, although they are continuous variables, could better identify certain aspects if a questionnaire was used which measures the dimensions of parental style, such as authority versus freedom; affection versus hostility (Coman, 2009).

As future directions, the present study could be used for other theoretical researches or practical applications. More specifically, other variables could be tested as moderators, such as: previous experiences of loss, coping mechanisms, cultural factors, openness of the surviving parents to approach the loss and the details of the partner's death. The last, but maybe most important future direction, would be developing an experimental study and a practical method, to support the child, through the remaining parent, after a death or divorce, and facilitating an open and honest communication, an authentic relationship. On that matter, a board game could be produced which would help both the child and the parent to form a secure attachment style and ask all the questions that they have, by doing this in a playful way with no pressure. In order to test the utility of such an application, the level of anxiety, life satisfaction and children's concept of death could be explored before and after using the game for a period of time.

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