Associations Between Parental Attachment, Peer Attachment, and Moral Disengagement

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Associations Between Parental Attachment, Peer Attachment, and Moral Disengagement

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Results & Conclusions

Using multiple regression, we tested associations between parent attachment, peer attachment, and moral disengagement while controlling for gender.

Initial model

In our initial model, after controlling for gender, parent attachment was not a significant predictor of moral disengagement ($B = .03$, $ns$. Peer attachment was a significant negative predictor of moral disengagement ($B = -.06$, $p < .05$).

Exploratory interaction model (see Table 2 and Figure 1)

At the lowest levels of parent attachment, greater peer attachment was not significantly related to moral disengagement (simple slope $= .08$, $ns$). At the highest level of parent attachment, greater peer attachment was associated with less moral disengagement (simple slope $= -.14$, $p < .01$).

Additionally, men reported more moral disengagement than women.

Limitations

• Lack of age, race/ethnicity, and gender diversity within the sample limit generalizability (Nielsen et al., 2017). Additionally, student samples impact generalizability (Galland Wintre et al., 2001).

Conclusion:

This study provided an uninvestigated perspective on how secure attachment relationships with parents and peers might influence moral disengagement.

Background

• Attachment is the emotional bonding that happens between an infant and a caregiver, predicting relational functioning later in life (Bowlby, 1973; Simpson & Rholes, 2017).

• Early attachment styles generalize to peer relationships in childhood and adolescence (Dykas et al., 2008).

• Moral disengagement, or the justification of actions contrary to the ethics of the perpetrator, is a form of anxious and dysfunctional behavior (Bandura, 2016). It is used to preserve self-concept while violating core values.

• There is evidence that moral disengagement is related to attachment style, suggesting moral disengagement could be impacted by relational influences (Chugh et al., 2013).

Hypothesis:

We predicted that secure parent and peer attachment would be associated with less moral disengagement.

Methods

Participants

• 403 college students

• 72% women, 28% men

• 90% White non-Hispanic/Latinx, 4% Hispanic/Latinx, 3% Asian

Measures

• Parent Attachment (12 items): 1 = never true, 5 = Always True, $\alpha = .92$ “My parents accept me as I am.” (Raja et al., 1992)

• Peer Attachment (12 items): 1 = never true, 5 = Always True, $\alpha = .89$ “My friends encourage me to talk about my difficulties.” (Raja et al., 1992)

• Moral Disengagement (31 items): 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. $\alpha = .92$ “It is alright to lie to keep your friends out of trouble.” Log transformation applied due to skewness. (Bandura et al., 1996)

Results

Table 1. Correlations between study variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parent Attachment (PA)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Peer Attachment (PE)</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moral Disengagement</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2. Final model of predictors of moral disengagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Type III $p$ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (M=1)</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA x PE</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Interaction terms are centered. $F(4,398) = 13.57, p < .001$. Multiple $R^2 = .12$, Adj. $R^2 = .11$

Parent and Peer Attachment Predicting Moral Disengagement

Figure 1. Interaction between peer attachment and parent attachment predicting moral disengagement

Figure 1. Interaction between peer attachment and parent attachment predicting moral disengagement

References


