

Research Paper

Correlation between Parent-Child Attachment, Communication Patterns and Adult Relationship Satisfaction among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the impact of parent-child attachment (quality of emotional bond, separation anxiety, inhibition of individual exploration), communication patterns, and their association with adult relationship satisfaction. These early experiences, particularly the quality of emotional bond and space for individual growth, can influence young adults' ability to form and maintain satisfying relationships. A sample of 130 participants (75 females and 55 males) comprising of young adults aged between 18-25 years was used in this study. The study was assessed using three tools- Father and Mother Attachment Questionnaire Short Form (FMAQ-SF), Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument (RFCP) and Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale. Pearson correlation analysis indicated significant positive relationships between quality of emotional bond and communication patterns, and also with adult relationship satisfaction. In addition, communication patterns were found to be positively related to adult relationship satisfaction. In contrast, there was a significant negative correlation found between inhibition of individual exploration and separation anxiety with both communication patterns and adult relationship satisfaction. Regression analysis showed quality of emotional bond and communication patterns to have high predictive value in adult relationship satisfaction. These findings indicate that strengthening emotional bonds, using constructive communication skills, and encouraging individual growth within the relationship are crucial for enhancing adult relationship satisfaction. Conversely, restricting individual exploration and growth can hinder communication and ultimately lead to decreased satisfaction in adult relationships.

Keywords: *Parent-Child Attachment, Quality of Emotional Bond, Separation Anxiety, Inhibition of Individual Exploration, Family Communication Pattern, Constructive Communication, Adult Relationship Satisfaction*

Our closest relationships in adulthood are built on the foundation of our childhood experiences. The quality of attachment we form with our caregivers, particularly parents, shape ability to connect with others.

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Received: April 29, 2024 ; Revision Received: June 22, 2024; Accepted: June 26, 2024

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Attachment theory suggests early interactions with caregivers form a lasting impact for future connections. Secure attachment, characterized by trust, safety, and open communication, enables individuals with the emotional security and communication skills to build fulfilling relationships. On the other hand, insecure attachment styles, formed through inconsistent or emotionally distant parenting, can lead to difficulties with intimacy and expressing needs. According to Thornton et al. (1995), the amount of parent-child interaction remains almost stable from adolescence to adulthood despite changes in residential location for children.

Family communication patterns also significantly influence how we connect with others later in life. McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973) developed the original model of family communication patterns to describe families' tendencies to develop fairly stable and probable ways of communicating with one another. Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) proposed two fundamental family communication orientations. Conversation-oriented families encourage open and honest communication, promoting emotional well-being and self-esteem in children. On the contrary, conformity-oriented families prioritize obedience and discourage conflict, potentially hindering a child's ability to express themselves effectively in future relationships.

Adult relationship satisfaction works on the complex interplay of attachment styles and communication patterns. Individuals with secure attachment and strong communication skills are more likely to experience fulfilling adult relationships. On the other hand, insecure attachment styles and poor communication habits can hinder the ability to form and maintain healthy connections.

While research has explored the individual effects of parent-child attachment and communication on adult relationships, a gap exists in understanding their combined influence. By examining these factors together, we can gain a more detailed picture of how our childhood experiences shape our capacity of forming relationships.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emily et al. (2022) studied how use of technology, mediate by communication interdependence and family communication patterns (FCPs), resulting well-being in parent-adult child relationships. Their findings suggest that FCPs effect child's use of technology with parents, eventually impacting relationship satisfaction. Mainly, conversation orientation results in more interdependent communication style, whereas conformity orientation restricts it.

Jian & Jiao (2021) researched how family communication patterns influences parent-child attachment and adults' romantic relationship satisfaction. Their research suggested that communication patterns existing in the family plays a role in determining both parent-child attachment and adult relationship satisfaction. These dynamics can enhance individual well-being and functioning of family.

D. Whittington & Lisa A. Turner (2022) explored the relationship between family of origin communication patterns and attachment styles on adults' romantic relationship satisfaction. Their study showed that open communication within the family is positively related to romantic relationship satisfaction. This effect is mediated by attachment anxiety and avoidance. This highlights the significance of parent-child attachment in adult relationships.

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Lindsey (2020) studied parent-child relationship satisfaction based on communication orientations and behaviours. Their research included 211 young adults and found that family communication orientations and relation maintenance behaviours effect satisfaction with parent-child relationships. This study showcases the importance of communication patterns with parents in adult relationship satisfaction.

Erica & Cliff (2021) researched how family communication patterns effect the quality of parent-child relationships between young adults and their parents. Their main focus was on help-seeking and help-providing behaviours of the children. Their findings suggests that family communication patterns can influence parent-child attachment, which impacts adult relationship satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To examine the relationship between parent-child attachment, communication patterns and adult relationship satisfaction.

Variables

Independent: Parent-child attachment- Quality of Emotional Bond, Separation Anxiety, Inhibition of exploration and Individuality, Communication Patterns

Dependent: Adult Relationship Satisfaction

Objectives

1. To understand the relationship between parent-child attachment style and adult relationship satisfaction.
2. To understand how communication patterns within parent-child relationships influence adult relationships.
3. To understand the predictive relationship between parent-child attachment, communication patterns and adult relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant correlation between parent-child attachment and adult relationship satisfaction,
2. There is no significant correlation between communication patterns and adult relationship satisfaction.
3. Parent-child attachment and communication pattern have no predictive value on adult relationship satisfaction.

Sample

Simple Random Sampling method was used to collect a sample of 130 Young Adults, out of which 55 were male and 75 females.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

- **Father and Mother Attachment Questionnaire Short Form (FMAQ-SF)** (Nunes, F., Mota, C. P., Costa, M., Assunção, R. S., & Matos, P. M. 2019) is a 15-item questionnaire that measures the child's and parents' attachment on 3 domains- (quality of emotional bond, separation anxiety, inhibition of individual exploration). The statements on a 5-point Likert scale.

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- **Revised Family Communication Pattern Questionnaire (RFCP)** (Ritchie, M. A., & Fitzpatrick, M. L., 2002) It contains of 26 Likert type items measuring two major dimension- conversation orientation and conformity orientation. For this study, 15 items of conversation orientation were administered to understand the communication pattern existing withing the family.
- **Relationship Satisfaction Scale** (Burns, D. D. 1988) consists of 7 items. It is used to measure the satisfaction level of an individual in varying relationships.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, participants were provided with an instruction sheet which detailed the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, and declaration of confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they proceeded to complete the questionnaires. Participants were assured that their responses would be anonymized and only used for research purposes. Participants were instructed to respond to each item honestly and to the best of their ability. They were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires, and no time constraints were imposed. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any further consequence. The data collected was further analysed using statistical software.

RESULTS

The current study aims to study and understand the relationship between parent-child attachment, communication patterns an adult relationship satisfaction. The study includes a sample of 55 males and 75 females aged between 18 to 25 years. Statistical method of Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to study the relationship between all the variables, regression was performed to understand the predictive value of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Table No. 1 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quality of Emotional Bond	130	24.00	4.886
Separation Anxiety	130	16.85	4.836
Inhibition of Exploration and Individuality	130	14.96	5.112
Communication Pattern	130	49.82	11.478
Adult Relationship Satisfaction	130	30.05	9.778
Valid N	130		

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for parent-child attachment, communication patterns, and adult relationship satisfaction in a sample of 135 participants. While the average scores suggest a tendency towards moderate levels on all dimensions, a notable range in scores highlights significant individual variability. This indicates that parent-child attachment styles, communication patterns, and adult relationship satisfaction varied considerably among the participants.

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Table No. 2 Correlation table

Variable		Adult Relationship Satisfaction
Quality of Emotional Bond	Pearson Correlation	.592**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	130
Separation Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.258**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	130
Inhibition of Exploration and Individuality	Pearson Correlation	-.416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	130
Communication Pattern	Pearson Correlation	.569**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	130

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

Table 2 shows the correlation between the three dimensions of parent-child attachment—Quality of Emotional Bond, Separation Anxiety and Inhibition of Exploration and Individuality, Communication Patterns and Adult Relationship Satisfaction. The results show that Quality of Emotional Bond has the strongest positive correlation ($r = .592, p < .001$) with Adult Relationship Satisfaction, followed by Communication Patterns ($r = .569, p < .001$). In contrast, Separation Anxiety ($r = .258, p = .003$) is weakly correlated with Adult Relationship Satisfaction, whereas Inhibition of Exploration and Individuality ($r = -.416, p < .001$) is negatively correlated with Adult Relationship Satisfaction.

Table 3: Regression Table Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.638 ^a	.407	.388	7.650

A. Predictors: (Constant), Communication Pattern, Separation Anxiety, Inhibition of Exploration and Individuality, Quality of Emotional Bond

Table 4: Coefficients^a of Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2.296	6.635		-.346	.730
	Quality of Emotional Bond	.835	.214	.417	3.907	.000
	Separation Anxiety	-.136	.166	-.067	-.819	.414
	Inhibition of Exploration and Individuality	.044	.182	.023	.242	.809
2.	Communication Pattern	.280	.086	.328	3.237	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Adult Relationship Satisfaction

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Table 3 and 4 show the regression analysis to how parent-child attachment styles and communication patterns predict adult relationship satisfaction. The results suggest that quality of emotional bond as the strongest positive predictor, with a one standard deviation increase associated with a 41.7% increase in adult relationship satisfaction. Communication patterns also show a significant positive association, with a one standard deviation increase associated to a 32.8% increase in adult relationship satisfaction. The other two dimensions of separation anxiety and inhibition of exploration and individuality do not have statistical significance with adult relationship satisfaction.

In this study, one of the hypotheses proposed no significant correlation between parent-child attachment styles and adult relationship satisfaction. However, the findings revealed a positive correlation, suggesting that secure and loving childhood experiences contribute to greater satisfaction in adult relationships. This rejects the null hypothesis and emphasises the impact of early bonds on adult relationship.

Another hypothesis posited no significant correlation between communication patterns and adult relationship satisfaction. However, the research findings revealed a positive correlation. Open and supportive communication within families was related with satisfaction in adult relationships. This rejects the null hypothesis and highlights the importance of constructive communication in parent-child interactions for better adult relationships.

Finally, the study hypothesized that parent-child attachment and communication patterns would not have a predictive value on adult relationship satisfaction. However, the analysis demonstrated that both the quality of the emotional bond and communication patterns emerged as significant predictors of adult relationship satisfaction. This finding rejects the null hypothesis and underscores the pivotal role of these early experiences in shaping the foundation for adult relationships.

DISCUSSION

This study explored how parent-child attachment and communication patterns impacts adult relationship satisfaction in young adults. The findings suggest significant correlations between these factors, pointing the lasting impact of childhood experiences on our capacity for love.

Parent-Child Attachment and Adult Relationship Satisfaction

A secure emotional bond with parents plays a critical role in adult relationship satisfaction. Young adults who grew up feeling loved and secure tend to have higher satisfaction in their adult relationships. This aligns with attachment theory, which emphasizes the importance of secure attachments for healthy emotional development (Bowlby, 1969).

Quality of Emotional Bond: A strong positive correlation was found between a positive emotional bond with parents and adult relationship satisfaction. This suggests that secure attachments, where emotional needs are met and communication is open, equip young adults with the skills to build fulfilling relationships. Regression analysis confirmed this as the strongest predictor, with a 41.7% increase in adult relationship satisfaction for every standard deviation increase in emotional bond quality.

Separation Anxiety: The domain of separation anxiety showed a weak negative correlation with adult relationship satisfaction. While high levels of separation anxiety might suggest difficulty with independence, the regression analysis did not find a statistically significant

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relationship with adult relationships. This implies that other factors, like communication skills, might moderate the impact of separation anxiety (Feeney & Noller, 1990).

Inhibition of Exploration and Individuality: The study found the strongest negative correlation between limitations on exploration and individuality during childhood and adult relationship satisfaction. This suggests that parents who restrict their children's exploration hinder their emotional growth and ability to navigate the complexities of adult relationships, where independence and self-expression are crucial. Similar to separation anxiety, regression analysis did not find a statistically significant effect on adult relationships, suggesting the quality of emotional bond and communication patterns might have a stronger influence.

Communication Patterns and Adult Relationship Satisfaction

Open and positive communication within families plays a significant role in fostering adult relationship satisfaction. Parents who actively listen, validate feelings, and encourage open communication equip young adults with the skills to express themselves effectively, listen to partners, and navigate conflict constructively. The study revealed a significant positive correlation between communication patterns and adult relationship satisfaction. Regression analysis showed a substantial 32.8% increase in adult relationship satisfaction for every standard deviation increase in positive communication patterns within the family.

Implications

1. Secure emotional bonds in childhood lead to greater satisfaction in adult relationships.
2. Positive communication between parent and child enables young adults with valuable communication skills for adult relationships.
3. Encouraging exploration and individuality in children promote independence, important for building healthy adult relationships.
4. Early intervention programs addressing attachment and communication can enable young adults for successful adult relationships.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Early experiences significantly impact adult relationships. Secure parent-child bonds fostered emotional security in young adults, leading to greater ease with intimacy and navigating adult relationships. Interestingly, anxious attachment had a weaker negative influence, suggesting communication skills might mitigate its impact. Furthermore, parental restriction of exploration hindered young adults' ability to form healthy connections. In conclusion, fostering secure attachments, open communication, and independence in childhood equips young adults for successful adult relationships.

Limitations

1. The study might be limited by a potentially small sample size. This might fail to generalise to larger population.
2. The study only limits to a group of young adults. A more varied population can be addressed to broader age groups.
3. Participants can be taken from diverse cultural backgrounds to conduct a comparative study and understand how culture effects the relationship between the variables.
4. The study administered self-report inventories. The data might be influenced by memory or social desirability.
5. Other factors, keeping aside parent-child attachment and communication patterns may have an influence on the levels of adult relationship satisfaction.

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Acknowledgment

The success of this study required a lot of guidance from many people and I am extremely fortunate to have got this all along the completion of this study. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made it possible. Firstly, I thank the HOI, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied sciences, Amity University, Noida for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this curriculum and providing me with the support to conduct my study. I would also like to thank all my professors who taught me in these two years and who inspired me to take up this topic of interest. Further, my gratitude goes to my guide for her invaluable advice, support, and patience during the period of my study. I cannot forget to thank all the participants for willingly agreeing to be a part of this study without whom I would not be able to gather enough data to complete this research. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my friends and family. Without their tremendous support, understanding and encouragement, it would be impossible for me to meet the requirements.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Gupta, T. & Tripathi, K.M. (2024). Correlation between Parent-Child Attachment, Communication Patterns and Adult Relationship Satisfaction among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 3846-3853. DIP:18.01.342.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.342