

EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY, PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND FLOURISHING DURING EMERGING ADULTHOOD IN SPAIN

Parra, A., García. M. C., Sánchez-Queija, I. & Díez, M.

Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology. University of Seville, Spain

In recent years, emotional autonomy from parents has been largely studied, with inconclusive results, to determine whether it is truly part of a developmental stage during adolescence and emerging adulthood, or if it is an indicator of difficult family relationships. There are also non-conclusive results regarding the relationship between emotional autonomy from parents and personal well-being.

The situation in Spain about young people would be represented by the *Mediterranean model*. Spanish young people remain in the parental home for extended periods and tend to make direct transitions from living at home to marriage and parenthood. So we consider especially interesting studying emotional autonomy from parents in a Mediterranean country such as Spain.

AIMS

1st To know if emotional autonomy from parents is related to positive family relationships during emerging adulthood or it is an indicator of negative family relationships.

2nd To know if emotional autonomy from parents is related to emerging adults wellbeing.

We believe relevant to divide the sample into two groups.

- Emerging adults between 18 and 22 years old. In Spain most young people at that ages continue with their education.

- Emerging adults between 23 and 29 years old. Young people of that age are usually closer to the work setting.

METHOD

Participants

The current study involved 278 emerging adults (197 women and 81 men) aged between 18 and 29 years (*Mean* 22.03; *SD*: 2.65) participating in the Transition to Adulthood in Spain (TAE) project.

Instruments

Participants fulfilled a questionnaire that included socio-demographic variables (sex and age). Furthermore:

- Three subscales of the Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS, Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), parental idealization, non-dependency from parents and individualization.
 $\alpha = .70$

- Perception of Parent Scale: College student version. POPS (Compilation from Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997; Grolnick, Ryan & Deci, 1991; Robbinson, 1994).
 $\alpha = .88$

- Flourishing Scale (Diener, et al. 2010).
 $\alpha = .79$

- Tobacco & hashish / marijuana consumption. Ad hoc items:
 1. *In the past 30 days, How often have you smoked cigarettes?*
 1. Never
 2. Less than one day a week
 3. One day a week
 4. Everyday
 2. *In the past 30 days, How many days have you taken hashish or marijuana?*
 1. None
 2. Weekends
 3. Weekends and one day a week
 4. Everyday or almost everyday

RESULTS

Figure 1. Emotional Autonomy by sex

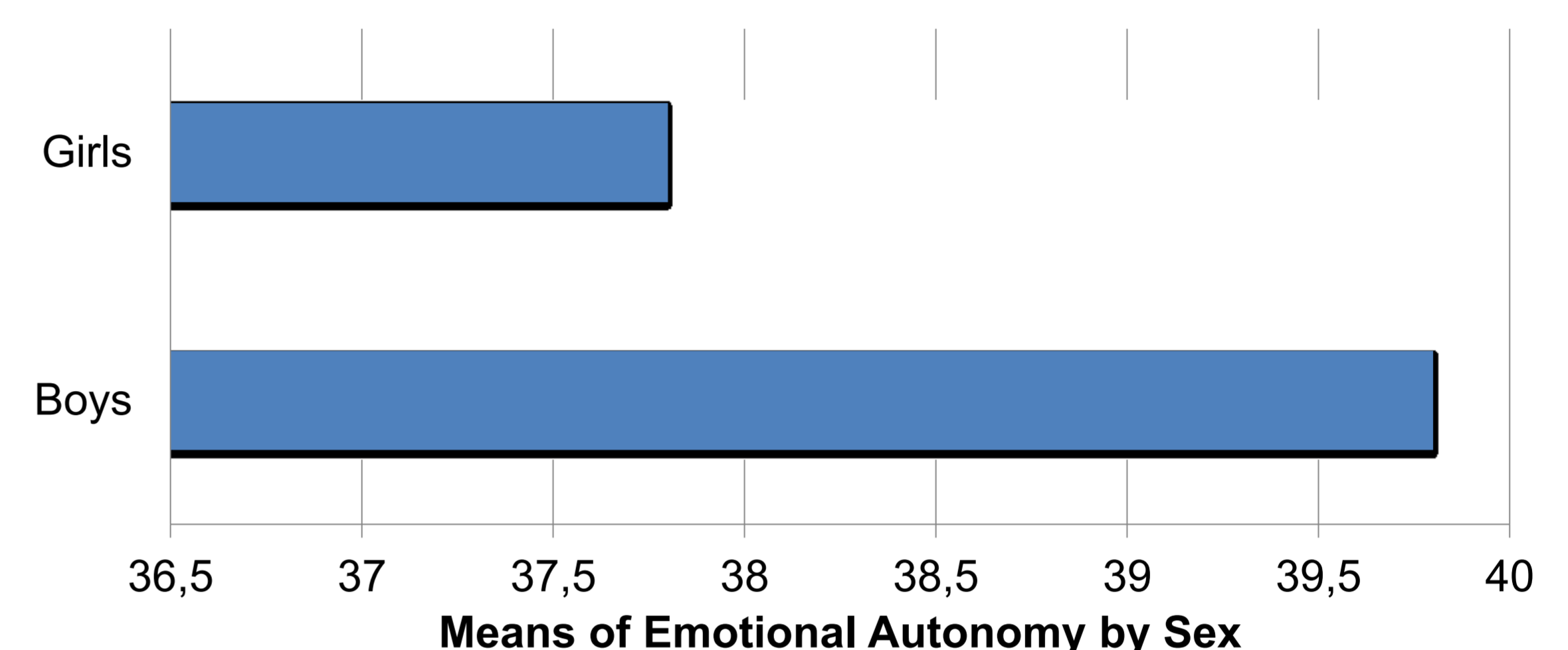


Table 1. Correlations among Emotional Autonomy and, Parent Involvement and Flourishing by age

	Parent Involvement (18-22)	Parent Involvement (23-29)	Flourishing (18-22)	Flourishing (23-29)
Emotional Autonomy	-.60***	-.55***	-.23**	-.15

p<=.01; *p<.001

Table 2. Correlations among Emotional Autonomy and, Tobacco and Hashish / Marijuana consumption by age

	Tobacco Consumption (18-22)	Tobacco Consumption (23-29)	Hashish or Marijuana Consumption (18-22)	Hashish or Marijuana Consumption (23-29)
Emotional Autonomy	.21*	.11	-.26**	.19*

**p<=.01; *p<.05

DISCUSSION

- Boys showed higher levels of Emotional Autonomy than girls. Probably, girls feel more pressure from the family than boys in Spain.

- A higher level of Emotional Autonomy seems to be the result of difficult family relationships. In fact, the most autonomous emerging adults were those that presented lower levels of parental involvement throughout emerging adulthood.

- Emotional Autonomy is negatively correlated with flourishing and positively correlated with tobacco and hashish/marijuana consumption specially at the beginning of emerging adulthood. Emotional Autonomy from parents could be a risk factor for emerging adults' well-being specially at the beginning of the stage. The negative influence of this emotional distance seems to decline with age.

Correspondence to: mcgarcia188@gmail.com

María del Carmen García

Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology.
Camilo José Cela s/n, 41005, Seville, Spain



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