

# AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PARENTAL AVAILABILITY AMONG EMERGING ADULT UNDERGRADUATES IN SPAIN

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## INTRODUCTION

Family is an essential source of support, care and security for emerging adults. Nevertheless, since emerging adulthood is a relatively recent life stage, it is necessary to determine which specific dimensions of family context are important. Although recent studies have confirmed the positive role played by parental warmth and the negative effects of control, due to their developmental stage, we hypothesized that perceived parental availability would be particularly important for emerging adults' well-being. The three-item Parental Availability Scale (PAS) was designed to evaluate this variable. The main purpose of the present study was to conduct an exploratory analysis of the PAS. The study had two specific aims: first, to determine the internal consistency and dimensional structure of the PAS; and second, to assess its criterion validity, exploring the extent to which the measure is associated with emerging adults' psychological well-being and distress.

## METHOD

Participants were 1711 Spanish emerging adults (1109 women, 594 men and 11 who identified as "other") aged between 18 and 29 years (Mean: 20.61; SD: 2.49). All were participants in the Transition to Adulthood in Spain (TAE II) research project. Participants completed a questionnaire including sociodemographic variables, the Spanish version (De la Fuente, Parra & Sánchez-Queija 2017) of the Flourishing Scale (Diener et al. 2010), the Spanish adaptation (Bados, Solanas, & Andrés, 2005) of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21), reduced version (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), and the Parental Availability Scale (PAS). The PAS is an ad hoc scale measuring the degree to which emerging adults perceive that their family is available when they need help or advice. It comprises 3 items (If I ever needed to, I could count on my parents; My parent often seems too busy to attend to me; My parents are there when I need them) rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (completely false) to 7 (completely true).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .60 and the Bartlett test of sphericity 1125.17 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the data was possible. According to the EFA, 63.17% of the variability was explained. The reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of .68.

Descriptive statistics for the PAS total score, psychological well-being and distress are shown in Table 1. The mean score for perceived parental availability was 5.99, within a range of 1-7. Finally, the correlation analysis indicated that availability was positively associated with flourishing and negatively associated with psychological distress (Table 2).

Our data confirm that the PAS is an effective measure of parental availability; that emerging adults generally perceive their parents as available; and that high scores in this variable are associated with good adjustment. These results are particularly relevant in a country such as Spain, in which emerging adults spend these years in a family culture of dependence. They also highlight the importance of parental availability.

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics of study variables**

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Range</i>
Parental availability	5.99 (1.10)	1-7
Flourishing	45.33 (6,4)	8-56
Psychological distress	41.12 (27,37)	0-124

**Table 2. Intercorrelations between study variables**

	1	2	3
1. Parental availability	-		
2. Flourishing	.32**	-	
3. Psychological distress	-.32**	-.48**	-

\*\* $p < .01$

## IMPLICATIONS

The results highlight how beneficial it is for the well-being of emerging adults that their parents are available when they need help or advice; they also confirm that the PAS is an effective measure of parental availability. It is important to continue exploring parental availability in order to determine the best way to guide young adults' behavior during this period and to foster positive parenting.

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