



FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS PATTERNS IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD

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Over the past few decades, a reconceptualization of the transition from adolescence to adulthood gave rise to a new life stage (between 18 and 25 years of age) which is referred to as emerging adulthood. In this sense, for a large number of young people, changes in the transition to adulthood also include changes in their relationships with their parents during this period. The transition to adulthood in Spain and others Mediterranean countries would be defined as the "Mediterranean model". It is a model characterized by a prolonged stay in the family home, giving great relevance to family and delaying their entry into parenthood. Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies on family functioning during emerging adulthood, and about how family relationships play a role in emerging adults' well-being in Spain.

This paper has two aims:

→ To identify and describe family relationships patterns during emerging adulthood.

→ To analyze the link between the quality of family relationships, psychological well-being and psychological distress of emerging adults.

Participants

The present study involves 1502 university students (903 women and 599 men) aged between 18 and 29 (*Mean*: 20.32; *SD*: 2.13) participating in the Transition to Adulthood in Spain (TAE) research project (EDU 2013-45687-R).

Instruments

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

- The Perception of Parents Scale (POPS) (Compilation from Grolnick et al., 1997; Grolnick et al., 1991; Robbinson, 1994).
- Psychological control subscale of Parental Styles Scale (Oliva et al., 2007).
- Kerr & Stattin's Control Subscale (Kerr & Stattin, 2000).
- Spanish adaptation of the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) (Diaz et al., 2006).
- Spanish adaptation of the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) (Bados, Solanas & Andres, 2005).

Plan of Analysis

The first step in the analyses comprises a cluster analysis in order to categorize different groups of emerging adults as a function of their own perceptions about the quality of relationships with their parents.

The second step examines whether there were differences between the three clusters previously categorized and, emerging adults' psychological well-being and psychological distress. We performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Figure 1. Family relationships cluster: Means of standardized punctuation of parent involvement, parent autonomy support, parent warmth, psychological control and behavioral control

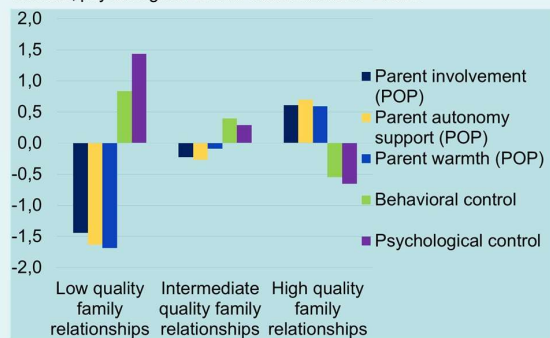
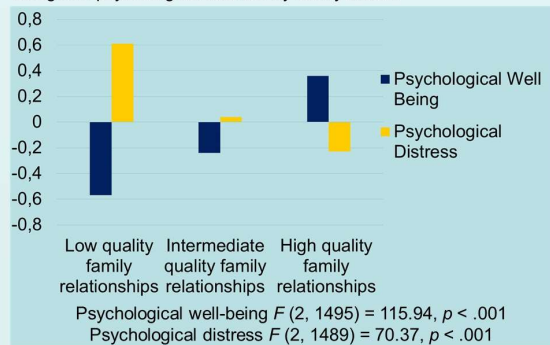


Figure 2. Means of standardized punctuation of psychological well-being and psychological distress by family cluster



DISCUSSION

- ❖ The cluster analytic procedure identified three clusters based on the centrality of five family variables within the family system. The high quality family relationships is the largest group in the study, as almost half of the participants fell into this cluster. Emerging adults of this group perceived high levels of parent involvement, parent autonomy support, and parent warmth. At the same time, they perceived low levels of behavioural control and psychological control exercise by their parents. Besides, in the three clusters, behavioural and psychological control are negatively related to parental closeness. Moreover, emerging adults who felt more controlled by their parents, both respecting to psychological and behavioural control, were who reported more psychological distress and less psychological well-being.
- ❖ These results highlight how relevant and beneficial it is for parents to promote autonomy, emotional closeness and close parent-child relationship to their older children, particularly in the Mediterranean context where the majority of emerging adults still live in the family home. Moreover, it is relevant to continue developing these findings in order to find what the best way is -in terms of family functioning- to guide the behaviour of daughters and sons in this period.

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