

The Effects of Interparental Conflict and Attachment Style on Authenticity in Romantic Relationships

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Background

Childhood experiences of interparental conflict can affect the development of attachment styles, which can later affect adult romantic relationships (Fraley & Heffernan, 2013). The current study examines the relationship between perceived interparental conflict and adult attachment styles, as well as interparental conflict, attachment styles, and authenticity in romantic relationships. Two variables were used to measure authenticity, intimate risk-taking, and unacceptability of deception.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of interparental conflict, attachment avoidance, and attachment anxiety will predict lower levels of risk-taking in romantic relationships.

Hypothesis 2: Higher levels of interparental conflict, attachment avoidance, and attachment anxiety will predict lower levels of authenticity in romantic relationships.

Method

Participants comprised of 101(53 men, 46 women, one gender fluid, and one preferred not to say) U.S.-based emerging adults between 18-30 ($M = 24.44$). Participants self-reported three measures to determine levels of perceived interparental conflict, attachment style, and levels of authenticity. Participants also reported their own and their parents' relationship status in the demographics.

Results

Hypothesis 1 was supported. The overall model predicting risk-taking was significant, $F(5, 95) = 24.19, p < .001$, explaining 56.0% of the variance in IRT (see Table 1). Hypothesis 2 was also supported. The overall model predicting authenticity was significant, $F(5, 95) = 7.93, p < .001$, and accounted for 29.4% of the variance in UOD (see Table 2).

Table 1

Linear Regression Model with Predictors of Authenticity

Predictors	R^2	b	Standard Error	B	p
Model	.29***				
Frequency		-.07	.07	-.15	.290
Intensity		.04	.06	.09	.527
Stability		.09	.09	.13	.321
Anxiety		-.08	.02	-.33	<.001
Avoidance		-.07	.02	-.30	<.002

** $p < .001$

Table 2

Linear Regression Model with Predictors of Risk Taking

Predictors	R^2	b	Standard Error	B	p
Model	.56***				
Frequency		.06	.05	.13	.215
Intensity		-.06	.04	-.18	.117
Stability		.08	.06	.13	.195
Anxiety		.01	.02	.04	.600
Avoidance		-.15	.02	-.71	<.001

** $p < .001$

Discussion

The results of the current study align with previous research in the field. Both hypotheses were supported by the findings, highlighting the effect of perceived interparental conflict and attachment style, on authenticity in romantic relationships.

- Attachment avoidance predicts risk-taking within relationships
- Attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety predict lower levels of authenticity within romantic relationships

These findings show that those with high levels of attachment anxiety struggle with maintaining authenticity within their romantic relationships due to fear of rejection and an increased need for reassurance.



By identifying the role of interparental conflict in shaping attachment styles and authenticity in romantic relationships, we can better help individuals in the future develop healthier, secure relationships by reducing the long-term effects of childhood conflict.