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STABILITY AND CHANGE IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF EMERGING ADULTHOOD

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BACKGROUND

Emerging adulthood...

- Refers to the period between ages 18 and 29 (Arnett, 2000, 2014a).
- Is understood as a developmental period that begins and ends gradually and whose characteristics emerge and fade little by little over the course of the third decade of a person's life (Arnett, 2006a, 2011)
- Are different from those typical of either adolescence or adulthood (Arnett, 2007a, 2010).



BACKGROUND

Emerging adulthood...

is not universal. It exists only in those cultures in which a delay occurs in the assumption of the roles and responsibilities typical of adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2007a, 2014a).

living independently

entering the labor market

getting married or becoming a parent



Family relationships during emerging adulthood...

- For the majority of young people, the changes and delays in the assumption of adult roles also imply changes in their relationship with their parents and affect family dynamics (Kins, Beyers, & Soenens, 2013; León & Migliavacca, 2013).
- The family always tries to follow the same trend to maintaining balance in their relationships (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Families are forced to readjust their everyday life (Aquilino, 1997, 2006; Milevsky, Thudium & Guldin, 2014; Parra, Oliva, & Reina, 2015) in order to find a new balance in parent-child relations, which become more symmetrical than before (Arnett, 2018; Fosco, Caruthers, & Dishion, 2012; Kins, Soenens, & Beyers, 2011).



BACKGROUND

Thus, a relevant aspect in the study of emerging adulthood is knowing **how family relationships change during these years.**

However...

There is a lack of research focusing on this period in South European countries. Most studies have been carried out in the United States and Northern Europe

The research using longitudinal designs are practically non-existent in South European countries.



This study has two specific objectives:

1. To examine whether family relationships changes or remain stable over emerging adulthood.
2. To analyse whether parent-child relationship at the beginning of emerging adulthood are associated with psychological distress three years later.



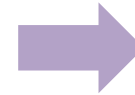
METHOD: Participants

- Participants included 400 emerging adults (n = 132 male, 268 women at Wave 1; n = 132 male, 266 women, 2 other at Wave 2).
- Aged between 18 and 29:
Wave 1 (Mean: 20.31; SD: 2.04)
Wave 2 (Mean: 23.66; SD: 2.08)

- Participants were recruited for the present two-time study from two Spanish universities



This study was approved by the Coordinating Committee for the Ethics of Biomedical Research in Andalusia



METHOD: Measures

Demographic Variables: Age and gender.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988).

Family subscale: a total of 4 items (e.g., I get the emotional help and support I need from my family).

Cronbach's alphas: W1/W2 = .90/.92

Perceptions of Parents Scales (POPS), College Student Version (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Robbins, 1994). A total of 23 items divided into three subscales: **parental involvement** (e.g., My parent finds time to talk with me), Cronbach's alphas: W1/W2 = .83/.84; **parental warmth** (e.g., My parent accepts me and likes me as I am), Cronbach's alphas: W1/W2 = .82/.85 and **parental autonomy support** (e.g., My parent helps me to choose my own direction). Cronbach's alphas: W1/W2 = .82/.84.



METHOD: Measures

Parenting Styles Scale (Oliva, Parra, Sánchez-Queija, & López, 2007). The **psychological control subscale**: a total of 8 items (e.g., My father/mother makes me feel guilty when I do not do what he/she wants). Cronbach's alphas: W1/W2 = .87/.91.

Control Subscale (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). The **behavioral control subscale**: a total of 5 items (e.g., My father/mother tries to set rules about what I do in my spare time). Cronbach's alphas: W1/W2 = .87/.91 .

Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). A total of 21 items divided into three subscales: depression (e.g., I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all); anxiety (e.g., I feel scared without any good reason), and stress (e.g., I tended to over-react to situations) which are grouped into a second order factor called general psychological distress. Global Cronbach's alphas for this scale: W1/W2 = .89/.88.



RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	Wave 1			Wave 2		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Family social support (FSS)	6.02	1.29	1-7	5.82	1.30	1-7
Parental involvement (PI)	5.48	1.18	1,33-7	5.48	1.15	1,17-7
Parental autonomy support (PAS)	5.45	1.00	1-7	5.41	1.06	1-7
Parental warmth (PW)	6	1.06	1,65-7	5.88	1.06	1-7
Psychological control (PC)	2.22	1.09	1-5,75	2.10	1.13	1-6
Behavioral control (BC)	2.23	1.08	1-6	1.78	.93	1-6

High scores in:

- Family social support
- Parental involvement
- Parental autonomy support
- Parental warmth

Low scores in:

- Psychological control
- Behavioral control



RESULTS



Family social support. Pillai multivariate analysis, $F(1,396)= 12.59, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03$

Parental warmth. Pillai multivariate analysis, $F(1,391)= 7.74, p = .006, \eta^2 = .02$

Psychological control. Pillai multivariate analysis, $F(1,386)= 5.79, p = .017, \eta^2 = .01.$

Behavioral control. Pillai multivariate analysis, $F(1,386)= 79.21, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17.$

There is absolute stability in parental involvement and parental autonomy support meanwhile family social support, parental warmth and parental control decrease over the years.



RESULTS

Tabla 2. Relative stability of variables

	FSS (W2)	PI (W2)	PW (W2)	PAS (W2)	PC (W2)	BC (W2)
FSS (W1)	.51**	.46**	.50**	.43**	-.37**	-.17*
PI (W1)	.48**	.61**	.48**	.38**	-.32**	-.15*
PW (W1)	.47**	.50**	.59**	.50**	-.43**	-.28**
PAS (W1)	.46**	.47**	.52**	.58**	-.52**	-.42**
PC (W1)	-.31**	-.30**	-.36**	-.47**	.61**	.48**
BC (W1)	-.17**	-.13*	-.24**	-.37**	.39**	.59**

*p < .05; **p < .001

A high average of continuity can be seen between most of comparisons.

So, those emerging adults who perceived highest levels of parenting behaviors at W1, comparing with their peers, were those who also perceived highest levels of parenting behaviors there years later at W2.



RESULTS

Table 3. Cross-lagged correlations between study variables

	Psychological Distress (W1)	Psychological Distress (W2)
1. Family social support (W1)	-	-.29**
2. Family social support (W2)	-.22**	-
3. Parental involvement (W1)	-	-.30**
4. Parental involvement (W2)	-.20**	-
5. Parental warmth (W1)	-	-.25**
6. Parental warmth (W2)	-.25**	-
7. Parental autonomy support (W1)	-	-.25**
8. Parental autonomy support (W2)	-.30**	-
9. Psychological control (W1)	-	.27**
10. Psychological control (W2)	.30**	-
11. Behavioral control (W1)	-	.18**
12. Behavioral control (W2)	.22**	-

Parental control and psychological distress are significantly and positively associated. By contrast, the rest of the family variables and psychological distress had a negative and significant association.

Fisher's z test indicated that there is bidirectionality in the associations between all measures.



SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

- Findings suggested continuity and change in certain parenting behaviors throughout emerging adulthood. Regarding relative stability analyses, data showed high relative stability in family relationships seen globally.
- In this regard, although this developmental stage supposes a new balance to be achieved in family relationships, it is also true that the family tends towards continuity and coherence in its ways of interacting. In this sense, our results follow the line found in other studies (e.g., Aquilino, 2006; Thornton et al., 1995) that confirm this continuity in the family relationships at latest during the early years of the stage.



SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

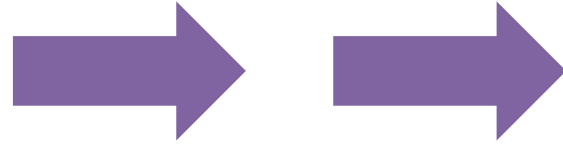
- There is also change in emerging adults' perceptions of family relationships throughout this developmental stage. Data showed that family social support, parental warmth and parental control decrease over the years.
- Regarding parental control, our data coincide with previous studies (Aquilino, 1997). These results are related to the previous argument, this period represents years in which the family has to learn to adapt and create increasingly symmetrical relationships (Manzi et al., 2012; Parra et al., 2015). As the family relationship becomes more symmetrical, parents tend to show less support and affection and to exercise less control over their older children.



SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

- According to our results, parental control and psychological distress are positively associated meanwhile the rest of the family variables and psychological distress are negatively associated.
- The associations between all measures are quite similar, so it seems that family variables and psychological distress reciprocally feed into each other.

Maybe because...



SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

- Southern European countries have a culture based on strong parent-child ties (Giuliano, 2007). More specifically, the role of the family is especially important due to the high young unemployment rates and job insecurity, insufficient social policies which obliges families to assume financial responsibility for their older children (OECD, 2013) and a strongly Catholic tradition (Gal, 2010; Moreno & Marí-Klose, 2013).
- Thus, within this context, it seems essential to have high-quality family relationships to promote positive development of young people.



CONCLUSIONS

This study...

- ❑ Extends previous and scarce longitudinal research focused on family relationships.
- ❑ Demonstrates that there is both continuity and change in family relationships at least during the early and middle years of this life stage.
- ❑ Suggest that although some parental behaviours decrease throughout emerging adulthood, family relationships still play an important role during the third-decade people's lives.



CONCLUSIONS

This study...

- ❑ Finally, our findings highlight the importance of spreading our knowledge about this stage in the European context in order to help create psychoeducational programs for families to develop appropriate educational practices and can face this new challenge during these years



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**

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