An Exploratory Study on the Implicit Parenting Styles of College Students
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This study was designed to create a methodological procedure to assess the implicit parenting styles of individuals who are not yet parents. Implicit parenting was defined as "the style of parenting that a person is currently not a parent" and was measured using a uniquely developed procedure: Participants viewed a video of a misbehaving child and rated the frequency that they would use each of 14 disciplinary techniques. A qualitative measure of implicit parenting was also assessed. Participants’ responses were examined among the variables of implicit parenting style, the parenting style of individuals experienced during childhood, and their current attachment style. Results indicated a relationship between participants’ implicit parenting style and their current attachment style. No significant correlations involving implicit parenting were found.

INTRODUCTION

Attachment Style:
- Attachment styles are systems of behaviors, feelings, and cognitions that are formed to maintain and restore one’s safety (Sroufe & Waters, 1977).
- Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) categorized adult attachment based on scores of (1) avoidance of others and (2) anxiety regarding their autonomy. The three styles (secure, preoccupied, and dismissive) are dismissive within insecure attachment and are differentiated by amount of avoidance and anxiety in relationships.

Parenting Style:
- Parenting styles vary based on how much demand parents place on their children and how much support parents provide their children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).
- Baumrind (1971) identified three distinct parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive; a fourth style, neglectful, was added later.

Definitions:
- There is correlation between the parenting style a child experiences and the attachment style that the child and subsequently the adult develops (Belsky et al., 2019; Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015; Van Ijzendoorn, 1990).
- In turn, adult attachment shapes the individual’s future relationships.
- Thus there is also a correlation between the parenting style experienced in one’s childhood and the parenting style the person uses as an adult (Belsky, Conger, & Caspi, 2009; Belsky, Slone, Weisfeld, & Silva, 2005).

Implicit Parenting Style:
- A lack of literature exists regarding the type of parenting styles used by individuals who engage in regular care of a child who are not yet parents, and have never been parents, (Bianchi and Raley, March 2019).
- The present study refers to the caring style of nonparents as implicit parenting style, which is defined as “a measure of the parenting style of an individual who is not currently a parent.”
- There are numerous caregivers, nannies, day-care providers, child life specialists, pediatrics, etc. in which daily interactions with youth occur, even though the employees are not parents.
- A measure of the implicit parenting style of individuals who pursue careers with children could be a beneficial indicator of their attitude to work in the field.

HYPOTHESES

It was expected that:
- Individuals who experienced authoritative parenting during childhood would be more likely to have a secure attachment style than individuals who experienced any other parenting style.
- Individuals who experienced authoritative parenting during childhood would be more likely to score as authoritative on the implicit measures of parenting.
- Participants who displayed any of the three insecure attachment styles would score on permissive or neglectful on the implicit parenting measures.
- Participants would be categorized with the same level of insecurity in implicit parenting style they were raised with by their own parents.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed using 2 x 2 chi square tests of independence. Results...

- Significant correlation between experienced parenting style and attachment style, X(1) = 119, p = .001.
- No significant correlation between implicit parenting style and experienced parenting style, X(1) = 100, p = .003.
- No correlation between implicit parenting style and attachment style, X(1) = 153, p = .08

Due to the small sample size, the study was completed using only the implicit parenting style of adult attachment style. Furthermore, no correlation (r = 0.06) was found between implicit parenting style and attachment style.

Qualitative data were divided into 12 categories based on the disciplinary techniques participants mentioned in their responses (see Figure 2). Participants who mentioned several disciplinary techniques in their responses were in calculations for multiple categories. See Figure 3 for an analysis of disciplinary techniques mentioned by participants.

DISCUSSION

Although the uniquely designed measures of implicit parenting did not appear to yield valid results, another method of defining implicit parenting style based on Likert-scale rating techniques was explored. Three questions were proposed for future use. Creating an accurate measure of implicit parenting style would allow researchers to understand if candidate individuals are in roles that involve caring for children. This study establishes the foundation of measures of implicit parenting style that could potentially be improved upon.

Implications:
- Participants in this study came from similar backgrounds. Correspondingly, 83% had a secure attachment style.
- Participants who received an adequate level of relaxation and privacy during the study and were given an opportunity to speak to the child.
- Participants who received an adequate implicit attachment education at the time of the study’s administration. Therefore, it is possible that a recent class in psychology, education, child development, or similar discipline could have impacted students’ responses.
- Results may have been affected by the quality of the video participants viewed. The video may not have been provided to provide a fully immersive experience.

Improvements for Replication:
- The video in the implicit parenting style measure should be filmed in one continuous take, be longer, and have basic attention-checking before and after the video’s content added to ensure participants were actively watching the video.
- Researchers should obtain more diverse samples by recruiting participants from colleges with more varied demographics.

REFERENCES


FIGURES

Figure 1. Image captured from researcher recorded video used in implicit parenting style measure.

Figure 2. Categorization of disciplinary techniques mentioned by participants.

Figure 3. Percentage of participants who mentioned each disciplinary technique in implicit parenting style measure.

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