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Parenting perfectionism and the parenting role

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Abstract

The purpose of the present research was to provide evidence for the validity of the Multidimensional Parenting Perfectionism Questionnaire (MPPQ), an objective self-report instrument designed to measure multiple aspects of parenting perfectionism. Data from two separate samples provided evidence that the MPPQ parenting perfectionism tendencies were systematically related to parenting styles, parenting satisfaction, parental bonding, and attachment tendencies. The discussion focuses on the implications of these research findings and future directions for research with the Multidimensional Parenting Perfectionism Questionnaire.

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1. Introduction

Research studies have consistently produced evidence of a multidimensional structure underlying perfectionistic tendencies (cf. Frost, Heimber, Holt, Mattia, & Neubaur, 1993; Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1989). Hewitt and Flett (1989), for example, reported

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evidence that perfectionism consists of at least three components involving excessively high self-imposed standards, demands from important others (especially important parental figures), and expectations for perfectionistic behavior in others. Frost et al. (1990) also took a multidimensional approach to perfectionism and identified perfectionistic dimensions focusing on high self-standards, preferences for order and organization, concerns about parenting mistakes, doubts about one's performance, and both high expectations and excessive criticism from one's parents.

As Flett, Hewitt, and Singer (1995) and Frost, Lahart, and Rosenblate (1991) have noted, perfectionism has been largely ignored in the parenting literature, even though some aspects of parental authority described by Baumrind (1971, 1977) have perfectionistic overtones. In light of this consideration, Snell, Overbey, and Brewer (submitted) have recently applied a multidimensional perfectionism approach to the concept of parenting by constructing the Multidimensional Parenting Perfectionism Questionnaire (MPPQ). The goal of the present study was to examine the validity of the MPPQ with regard to the parenting role. There is ample evidence indicating that the parental role is influential in the social, personal, and individual development of people's children (Collins & Kuczaj, 1991). This literature suggests that at least three parenting concepts may be theoretically linked to parenting perfectionism—parenting styles, parenting satisfaction, and parental bonding/attachment.

1.1. Parenting styles

Baumrind (1971, 1977) defined three styles of parenting behavior that primary caregivers use to interact with their children. The authoritarian parenting style is characterized by harshness and expectations for strict obedience to parental rules (Clarke-Stewart & Apfel, 1979; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Permissive parents are warm and responsive, yet rarely make or enforce rules to guide the behavior of children (Baumrind, 1971). By contrast, the authoritative parenting style incorporates greater warmth and responsiveness to children as well as higher goal setting and expectations (Baumrind, 1971). An important research issue for the parenting literature is whether perfectionistic parenting tendencies are related to one's own parenting style and/or the parenting styles experienced in one's family of origin.

1.2. Parenting satisfaction

Parenting perfectionism may also influence people's current level of satisfaction with their parenting behavior. Parenting satisfaction itself involves an overall global assessment of the qualitative features of one's parenting behaviors. By examining the relationship between parenting perfectionism and parent satisfaction, the present research provided the opportunity to determine whether particular parenting perfectionism tendencies might be associated with parent satisfaction.

1.3. Parental bonding/attachment

Parents and their infants develop strong emotional bonds which foster the development of healthy social and emotional relationships and adaptive cognitive abilities (Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, 1978). Two major aspects of parental rearing behavior have been identified in the parent-child literature: (1) care, which may promote bonding, and (2) (over)-protection, which can

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