

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIFE VALUES IN RUSSIA AND THEIR ATTACHMENT STYLES TO PARENTS AND ROMANTIC PARTNERS

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Abstract

The contemporary world, characterized by dramatic events, exacerbates the problem of life values, particularly among the younger generation. Values instilled during early childhood determine an individual's attitude toward the world, others, and oneself; subsequent life circumstances facilitate a reevaluation of these values. Depending on their perception of the importance and achievability of various values, individuals develop their interactions with others. The concept of attachment also reflects perceptions of the significance and approachability of fundamental human needs – security and affiliation. We believe that examining the young people's values in relation to their attachment styles will help clarify the mechanisms underlying the development of their value systems and the strategies used to achieve them. The study involved 124 people aged 18 to 35 years, all of whom had been in romantic relationships lasting more than one year at the time of the study. The main research methods: «The Values Importance – Approachability Ratio...» by E. Fantalova, ECR by K. Brennan et al., MIMARA by K. Brennan & F. Shaver, and the Attachment to Parents Scale of IPPA by G. Armsden & M. Greenberg. Findings revealed that the majority of young people in contemporary Russia lack harmony in their value sphere, 70% demonstrated a high or moderate discrepancy between their evaluations of the importance and achievability of different life values. The most highly prioritized values among young people are love, a happy family life, and health. However, value conflicts are observed in the domains of family and health: while individuals aspire to build happy family relationships and maintain psychological and physical health, they currently consider these goals difficult to achieve. Values are more closely associated with adult attachment styles than with parental attachment. Secure attachment correlates with the realization of core values such as cognition, family and love. For individuals with anxious attachment, material values tend to be more important, whereas those with avoidant attachment, prioritize self-confidence and assign less significance to love. Disintegration within the value sphere is strongly associated with attachment. Regression analysis indicate that while values are reliable predictors, they are not the primary determinants of overall adult attachment style. Anxious attachment is largely determined by relationships with parents, particularly the mother, whereas avoidant attachment is shaped by romantic relationships and values, as well as — to a lesser extent — relationships with the father. These findings provide insights that can refine approaches to psychotherapeutic work with different attachment disorders in couples.

Keywords: *Life values, value conflict, attachment style, parental attachment, romantic attachment.*

1. Introduction

The contemporary world, characterized by constant and often dramatic events, exacerbates issues related to fundamental life values and meanings, particularly for the younger generation. The values instilled during early childhood under parental influence largely determine an individual's attitude towards the world, others, and themselves. Rapidly changing socio-economic conditions lead to a reevaluation of personal life values (Davletshina, 2024). In recent years, against the backdrop of increasing global social instability, there has been a sharp confrontation between different worldview systems; the struggle over values has acquired a particularly dramatic character and has become a matter of identity survival. There is a noted deterioration in the social well-being of youth, associated with negative socio-economic and sociocultural trends, which intensifies the potential for value conflicts (Reutov et al., 2023).

In early age, the perceived attainability of significant values becomes increasingly important for an individual. What a person considers more accessible, based on past experiences, tends to become more prioritized, while inaccessible values often lead to the development of protective strategies that hinder interpersonal interactions. A substantial disparity between the importance and accessibility of values can result in internal conflicts (Fantalova, 2012).

The concept of attachment also reflects perceptions of the significance and accessibility of the most essential needs and life values — safety and belonging. These perceptions exist as an internal working model — a system of relations to oneself and others, which influences trust towards the world, leaves a profound impact on personality development, and shapes the person's strategies for interaction with the world (Bowlby, 1999).

K. Horney emphasized that a lack of security in interpersonal relationships, especially with parents, leads to basic anxiety, which manifest in various coping strategies and modes of dealing with the world: moving towards people, away from people, or against people (Horney, 2013).

We hypothesize that studying the value orientations of young people in relation to their attachment styles will elucidate the mechanisms underlying the formation of their value systems and their strategies for achieving personal goals.

2. Design

The study involved 124 participants (41 men and 87 women) aged 18 to 35 years ($M = 21.3$). All participants had been in romantic relationships lasting more than one year ($M = 3$ years) at the time of the study. The respondents did not live with their partners and did not have children. All participants were university students. 45% of the respondents lived with their parents and received partial support from them; the remaining participants lived separately and were financially independent, often combining university studies with work (46%).

More than half of the respondents (61%) had previous experience of stable romantic relationships, which were rated as positive by 37% and negative by 59% participants. Among the respondents, 56% reported that their parents were married, while the others experienced parental divorce. Within the latter group, 38% experienced the divorce before they turned 7 years old, and all of them continued to live with their mothers. Among the respondents with divorced parents, 41% described their relationship with their father as formal and distant, while only 29% characterized it as close and trusting.

Main research methods: "The Values Importance – Approachability Ratio in Various Spheres of Life" by E. Fantalova; "Experiences in Close Relationships" (ECR) by K. Brennan et al., adapted by N. Sabelnikova & D. Kashirsky; "Multi-Item Measure of Adult Romantic Attachment" (MIMARA) by K. Brennan & F. Shaver, adapted by T. Kryukova & O. Ekimchik; "The Attachment to Parents Scale" (IPPA) by G. Armsden & M. Greenberg, adapted by N. Sabelnikova et al.. For statistical analysis, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, the Mann–Whitney U test, and linear regression analysis were employed.

3. Results

3.1. General characteristics of young people's values and their attachments

Findings revealed that the majority of young people in contemporary Russia lack harmony in their value system: 70% demonstrated a high or moderate discrepancy between their evaluations of the importance and achievability of various life values. The most highly prioritized values among young people are love, a happy family life, and health. However, conflicts of values are observed in the domains of family and health: while individuals aspire to build happy family relationships and maintain psychological and physical health, they currently consider these goals difficult to achieve.

The attachment styles of young Russians are, on average, quite secure, both with their parents and partners. Relationships with parents are generally open and trusting, although attachment to mothers tends to be stronger than attachment to fathers. Relationships with fathers are more likely to be estranged. In romantic relationships, young people highly value their connections and trust their partners, seeking emotional intimacy while also prioritizing their autonomy within the relationship.

3.2. The relationship between the values of young people and their attachment styles

Young person's values are more closely associated with their adult attachment styles than with their parental attachment. The secure adult attachment characteristics are positively associated with such values as the beauty of nature and art, cognition, love, a happy family life, and self-confidence, while the insecure attachment variables are negatively associated with most of these values and are positively associated with a feeling of inaccessibility of important life values and with internal value conflicts.

Interestingly, that insecure adult attachment styles are differently related to specific values. For individuals with anxious attachment, material values tend to be more important, whereas those with avoidant attachment, prioritize self-confidence and assign less significance to love.

Among the indicators of parental attachment, only attachment to the father shows an inverse relationship with the importance of material well-being. Overall, relationships with parents are linked to internal value conflicts and vacuums experienced by young people. Paternal figures tend to play positive roles in assessing practical aspects of life, such as intellectual and physical development and social activity. Meanwhile, maternal figures play ambivalent roles in young people's emotional well-being and self-expression. Specifically, good communication with the mother is positively associated with the fulfillment of values related to self-confidence and creativity, whereas trust in the mother is inversely associated with frustrations related to self-confidence.

For further analysis, we identified within the sample two groups exhibiting more pronounced levels of secure (n=55) and insecure (n=45) romantic attachment. A comparative analysis of value orientations was conducted between these two groups. Regarding the importance attributed to values, a single significant difference was observed: young individuals with secure attachment rated the value of cognition as significantly more important ($p=0,009$) than those with insecure attachment. More differences were found in perceptions of the accessibility of values. Specifically, individuals with secure attachment more frequently perceive values of love ($p=0,009$) and family life ($p=0,001$) as accessible, whereas those with insecure attachment more often rate values of beauty ($p=0,01$) and creativity ($p=0,006$) as more accessible. In terms of internal conflict manifestations across most values, higher levels were characteristic of the insecure attachment group compared to the secure group (the difference in overall value conflict level: $p=0,04$).

Thus, we confirmed that attachment partially compensates for unmet values. Insecure adult attachment is generally associated with a shift of focus towards values related to beauty and creativity, which may serve as a compensatory mechanism for underlying value disintegration. However, this does not eliminate the profound frustration arising from unmet needs for intimacy. Disintegration within the value sphere is strongly associated with general and romantic insecure attachment.

A comparative analysis of parental attachment patterns revealed no significant differences concerning paternal attachment but indicated that individuals with secure attachment showed significantly higher overall attachment to the mother ($p=0,004$), greater trust in her ($p=0,001$) and lower levels of alienation from her ($p=0,005$). So, the data suggest that secure attachment to the mother potentially plays a more crucial role in romantic attachment styles than attachment to the father.

3.3. Life values and attachment to parents as predictors of adult attachment in young people

We constructed regression models for general adult attachment and romantic attachment. Since the methods used do not allow for the derivation of a general indicator of attachment security, models were constructed for different manifestations of attachment insecurity. The resulting coefficients of determination are as follows: for the avoidance of intimacy model, $R^2 = 0,811$; for the anxiety about relationships model, $R^2 = 0,822$; and for the model of insecure romantic attachment, $R^2 = 0,820$.

Based on these findings, we conclude that value orientations can be considered sufficiently reliable predictors of overall adult attachment style. Specifically, the significance of values related to love and cognition serves as a predictor of high levels of anxiety about relationships and low levels of avoidance of intimacy. The importance attributed to work and friendship also predicts low anxiety levels. Perceived frustration of values associated with active life correlates with higher levels of avoidance, whereas frustration of the value of happy family life correlates with lower levels. Perceptions of accessibility regarding material well-being, self-confidence, professional achievement, and cognition, among others, predict lower levels of anxiety, as does the overall level of value disintegration.

Furthermore, synthesizing the data on the contribution of parental and romantic attachment variables to the variability in avoidance and anxiety indicators reveals that anxious attachment is more strongly determined by relational experiences with parents, whereas avoidant attachment is more strongly influenced by experiences in romantic relationships. Specifically, insecure relationships with the father more significantly predict avoidance of intimacy, while relationships with the mother are more associated with anxiety about relationships.

4. Discussion

First, it should be noted that this study reflects the situation of relatively well-adjusted young people residing in contemporary Russia. It is important to remember that both life values and attachment styles are not static and not absolutely culturally universal. Life values dynamically reflect the cultural and historical context of personality development. Nations differ significantly in the priorities they assign to

universal basic values. Culture shapes the environment that makes certain personal values more accessible or socially acceptable, while an individual's personal values can substantially diverge from the dominant values of their culture, thereby creating additional tension within the motivational and value sphere of the individual (Schwartz, 2004, 2008). Cultural norms also influence emotional expression, levels of intimacy and care between individuals, and thus shape different attachment patterns. Individual romantic attachment profiles in different nations correlate with sociocultural indicators in ways that are more adaptive in certain social situations (Schmitt et al., 2004). Along with some universal models of parental behavior, certain cultural-specific patterns, providing children with a sense of secure attachment exist in any culture (Chebotareva, 2019). Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results of this study to other cultures.

It is necessary to compare the results obtained in this study with the data from studies on other cultures. For example, our data are consistent with research by Australian authors indicating a relationship between anxious attachment and materialism (Norris et al., 2012), which demonstrates that individuals with an anxious attachment pattern tend to exhibit increased materialism and hoarding behaviors as an attempt to compensate for a lack of emotional closeness. Furthermore, financial concerns in such individuals often exacerbate anxiety and worry within their relationships. Additionally, a European study by Weidmann et al. (2024) notes that individuals with anxious attachment patterns are more sensitive to their health and tend to experience difficulties in creative activities. But still, would be appropriate to conduct cross-cultural researches examining the relationships between individuals' attachment styles and their value orientations.

Secondly, the respondents in our sample were generally engaged in relatively stable and healthy relationships. Consequently, further research is necessary to examine the association between life values and attachment styles among individuals involved in destructive romantic relationships, whether as perpetrators or victims of psychological abuse within the relationship.

Thirdly, additional studies are required to explore differences in the functions of attachment to the father and the mother. Although our research did not identify significant correlations between attachment variables and parental married status or divorce circumstances, this issue warrants more in-depth investigation. It is possible that the observed differences in correlations between attachment to the father and mother with life values and adult attachment strategies are partially explained by the fact that a considerable proportion of the respondents' fathers were either absent from or minimally involved in the respondents' lives. Another limitation of our study is the gender asymmetry of the sample, which could have impacted the data on the role of attachment to the father and mother. It is important to further explore the role of parental attachment taking into account the gender ratio of the child and parent.

5. Conclusions

Life values of young people are associated with their parental and adult attachment. In general, secure attachment is associated with a harmonious value structure, where significant values are aligned with the opportunities for their realization. Insecure attachment is associated with value imbalances.

Secure attachment correlates with the realization of core values such as cognition, family and love. Insecure attachment characteristics are associated with internal value conflicts and with a shift of focus towards values related to beauty and creativity, which may serve as a compensatory mechanism for underlying value disintegration.

Life values are more closely associated with adult attachment styles than with parental attachment. The attachment to the mother potentially plays a more crucial role in romantic attachment styles than attachment to the father.

Life values are reliable predictors of adult attachment style, but they are not the primary determinants of it. Anxious attachment is largely determined by relationships with parents, particularly the mother, whereas avoidant attachment is shaped by romantic relationships, as well as— to a lesser extent— by relationships with the father.

These findings provide insights that can refine approaches to psychotherapeutic work with different attachment disorders in couples. The study data can be applied in individual and couples' psychotherapy. Specifically, when working with individuals experiencing value conflicts, it is advisable to consider their relational experiences with parents and other close figures. It is recommended that couples therapists assess not only attachment styles but also young adults' value orientations and the degree of congruence of values within the pair. Strategies for correcting maladaptive patterns of behavior in romantic relationships may be tailored according to attachment style. For example, anxious patterns can be addressed through processing childhood and parent-related experiences, whereas avoidant patterns may be targeted through work on current and past romantic relationships. Additionally, it is important to recognize that strategies for building romantic relationships may serve as attempts to compensate for frustrated life values and underlying value conflicts.

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