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Personality and Jealousy as Attachment Trauma

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Material and Methods: Quantitative (questionnaires, inventories and scales) and experimental data have been used to measure and test the study's hypothesis. A sample of 180 participants has been measured on personality traits, dysfunctional attitudes, and level of resilience in front of family stressful events.

Results: The findings show that jealousy, as a feature of attachment trauma, significantly correlates *(p<0.001)* with several personality factors, such as neuroticism *(r=0.57),* dependency *(r=0.49),* psychoticism *(r=0.45),* culpability *(r=0.57)* and ergic tension *(r=0.60)*. Contrary to previous research, the results indicate no significant effect *(F=1.69, p=0.172)* of life events and stressful family life on the experience of jealousy in the later years.

Keywords: *personality, jealousy, attachment, relationship, trauma.*

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Conclusions: Personality traits start developing within early childhood, influenced mainly by the family environment a child is brought in. But as time goes by, individuals can become more attached to the new relationships they get involved in, displaying attitudes and behaviors guided mainly by their innermost fears and insecurities reflected in jealous behavior. Romanian individuals appear to discount the family background and hardships they come from, manifesting more loyalty to their family of origin, as seen in the findings of the quantitative data.

Keywords: personality, jealousy, attachment, relationship, trauma.

I. Introduction

Personality is undoubtedly a part of human nature and is the one designing our future. It shapes our life experiences and becomes the blueprint of our will, our karma, and our fate. Numerous researchers have studied some of its determining aspects, such as traits and dimensions.

Personality stands for the motivation and the argument through which we, humans, become different from each other, creating our bio-psycho-social uniqueness. Similar to a work of art, the dimensional parts of personality become a cast on our life screen, starting from a draft that turns into a piece of work in its entirety. No matter how stable it can be, personality gathers all sorts of nuances in its development.

My personal opinion is that personality development makes its contribution not only in defining an emotionally stable society that can adjust to universal needs but also in helping to discover other unknown universal facets.

It would be interesting to study the influence that the brain has on personality development, for example, which half of the brain, be it right or left, has the most profound impact in determining the direction of an individual's choice for life path. Another topic worth investigating: is to what extent the behavioral tendencies engendered by *the shadow* can impact personality development.

One should keep in mind that spirituality and intercultural differences are aspects that we imitate throughout the process of shaping our personalities. It is later on, as we take in new values and focus on inexhaustible resources, that character starts developing in attunement with ourselves, with our uniqueness that is confined to our environment.

The imprint left by parents' personalities on their children's personality is reflected by parenting style, secure attachment type, healthy relationships, assertive communication with peers, and orienting one's life itinerary towards the climax of one's self.

Throughout their life, children, the future adults, develop a prominent personality sustained not only by the attachment style they adhere to and the parenting type present in their family but also by the development of a child's emotional intelligence.

It's only natural to wish to become a parent, and to share our love as a couple with these wonderful souls. There is no one to teach us how to be parents; we merely take in roles that are shaped by the beliefs that travel with us as we grow old and sometimes we end up passing them on trans-generationally in a skewed way, or better said, adapted to the new lifestyle existing within the context of the society.

If, in the beginning, the love we have for our life partner reaches maximum intensity based on pleasure, with time, once the kids are around, this sheer pleasure turns into mutual needs and interests destined to serve the well-being of our family. Even with the love that partners nurture for each other and the life principles they hold, they will display the love for their kids in a different way creating rules for mutual living, rules that become beliefs that will eventually lead to divergent opinions in child rearing; as such, conflicts may appear inside the couple's dynamic followed by feeble signs of trauma. All of these will be perceived through the child's filter, often seeing herself as a guilty party while innocently witnessing her parents', grandparents', or

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tutors' disputes. The child starts creating her values and making use of her resources will be at war with the parental system. When the child won't be able to become fully aware of these resources, she won't trust her forces, thus giving in to those beliefs molded by her life experiences.

The child senses the intensity of parental love and is ready to judge those moments with the same passion when this love is not received. If she happens to be caught in between abuses, she will develop psychological and emotional traumas along with insecure attachment and altered personality development.

Several factors that exist in a child's personality development would be found in their adult life. Culture and religion will play their role through the beliefs passed on to the children. Once inside a group, children will take in the cultural and religious customs they find appealing since they haven't been found within their family experiences. This is why determination in child rearing becomes essential for the parents, as well as for the teachers in the education system.

Nowadays, we do not find the same emphasis on intercultural differences since there are families with partners who share different religions; as such, children grow within the ambiance of mixed concepts, gathering from there whatever is suitable to develop, to increase their resources and consolidate their values.

More often than not, spirituality becomes a close friend to those who went through traumatic experiences. They find a way to fend off the hostile environment, creating a supporting belief to guide them through life. Religious individuals will bring in their thoughts that will become part of their life as a couple or family. It is up to the child's personality whether or not she will adhere to these beliefs or practice them according to the traditions displayed within the family.

When it comes to psychotherapy, this intervention boils down to being there for the client and providing a trustful and supportive stance. The principles of psychotherapy are rooted in a co-created therapeutic relationship, wherein trust becomes transparent, and the path to self-knowledge and experientially integrating one's own needs becomes absolutely necessary.

To ensure a child's happiness, parents, as a couple, need to supply this happiness through stability, safety, care, and meeting one's needs. As long as there is marital satisfaction with affective expression reflected the couple's relationship, it is then worth studying to what extent spirituality, through religious coping, may play a role in delivering certain beliefs to the couple, thoughts that are then passed over to the children and which of these beliefs play a role in personality development.

Childhood traumas are defined by those intensely negative events lived or witnessed by a child, usually from 0 to 6 years of age. There are several events of this sort, called interpersonal traumas, that can overwhelm a child, such as abuse, neglect, and violence. But there are also traumatic events such as accidents, natural disasters, war, medical procedures, very severe diseases, or the loss of a parent or a person who had an affectionate and safe bond with the child.

It has been proven that early traumas can have a devastating effect on mental health in the adult years (Wolff & Shi 2012). Exposure to early trauma has been strongly correlated to children and adult psychopathology, including ADHD, depression, anxiety, and personality disorders (Cummings, Berkowitz, & Scribano, 2012).

Previous studies found that childhood traumas can lead to harmful consequences within one's social and psychological features, becoming the bridges between childhood traumas and future psychopathology. Nevertheless, the majority of these studies have been done with psychiatric patients raising some questions regarding the selection bias and the probe potential. Additionally, these studies have been conducted primarily on Western countries and less in Eastern countries (Li & al 2014), focusing mainly on limited aspects of psychopathology, such as depressive symptoms or personality deficits. It is interesting to note, though, that previous studies have set the foundation for intercultural variations of psychosocial development (Zhao & Zhang, 2018). Given these premises, it raises the necessity of conducting studies of the population at large to investigate the impact of childhood traumas on different psychosocial characteristics.

A study from 2018 investigated the prevalence of early traumas and their impact on psychosocial features in a large sample of university students. The findings indicated a high presence of childhood traumas with a negative effect on social and psychological development. These findings may be significant in understanding the social and psychological mechanisms of early life stress (Wang et al, 2018).

With the early disorganized attachment style, children develop a relationship pattern that revolves around strong feelings of anxiety and fear, leading to volatile behavior. Generally, when children become frightened or anxious, they will instantly look for the proximity of their mother's comfort and safety, still the disorganized style, this exact attachment figure becomes the source of anxiety. Once they try to get closer, the anxiety level can increase, leading to more pressure, and as a result, the child will be torn between the need to get comforted and the need to avoid the attachment figure. These children will become very nervous and emotionally triggered around their caregivers, not knowing how to react around them. It is interesting to note the similarity of features and reactions present in those children with disorganized attachment styles and those who went through traumatic events.

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"For a child going through her early and later childhood, attachment relationships represent the major environmental factors that influence and determine brain development as the child grows older. Attachment is the link to the interpersonal relationship which enables the immature brain to use the mature mechanisms of parent's brain to organize its mechanisms and processes." (Dr. Siegel, 1999, p. 67 and 85).

The present study has focused mainly on the experience of jealousy as a feature influenced by the traumatic events that marked the development of an individual's attachment style. I was primarily interested in investigating whether family relationships and life events marred by trauma and stress have a significant impact on the dimension of jealousy present in individuals. Another main point of investigation revolves around a potential link between jealousy as an attachment trauma and personality factors.

The research has included a sample of 180 individuals within the age range of 18 to 35. They have been presented with questionnaires to measure several dimensions of personality traits as well as dysfunctional attitudes and level of resiliency within family events contexts. Afterward, a sample of 24 participants was selected by using the criteria of similarity in results for the dimensions of interest. This sample got divided into two groups of 12, one group representing the intervention group while the other was used as a control group for comparison after the implementation of the rehabilitation program.

II. Material and Methods

To a sample consisting of 180 participants between the ages of 18 and 35, males and females (50% females), living in rural and urban areas (80.56% urban), high school graduates (48.9%), undergraduate (36.7%) and MS (14.4%) were administered the following instruments:

- The *Big Five Personality Test* with scales measuring: *Neuroticism*, *Agreeability* and *Openness* with internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) ranging from *.79* to *.85*
- *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire – R* with scales measuring *Psychoticism* and *Lie* with Cronbach's Alpha of *.78* for Lie and *.70* for Psychoticism
- *16 Personality Factor Questionnaire* (Cattell, 1950) using the scales to measure factors such as: *E – Conformity vs. Dominance, L – Alexia vs. Protense, O – Trust vs. Culpability, Q2 – Group dependency vs. Self-sufficient, Q3 – Weak self vs. Strong self, Q4 – Low ego tension vs. High ego tension.* Cronbach's Alpha ranges from *.50* to *.88*
- *Dysfunctional Attitude Scale* (Weissman, 1978) to measure the proneness for depression
- *Risk and Resiliency Inventory* (King, 2006) measuring the level of resiliency and risk when confronted with life adversities, stressful family events, and relationships with the family of origin.

Hypothesis

1. It is presumed that individuals with less stressful family events will manifest a lower level of jealousy as compared to those who passed through traumatizing life experiences and lived in families with stressful events.
2. It is presumed that there is a significant relationship between jealousy as an attachment trauma and personality factors.

Analyses

Analyses were conducted using R Programming for Data Science, version 4.2.3, and the descriptive analysis of amplitude indicates that variables such as *Openness, Agreeability*, *Neuroticism, Psychoticism, Lie, Dominance, Jealousy, Dependency, Life events,* and *Childhood* have a low amplitude to be treated as continuous variables. Therefore, they will be analyzed as non-parametric data. The rest of the variables, *Family Events (Skewness=-0.93, SE=0.18),* display a negative asymmetric distribution, *Culpability (Kurtosis=-1.15, SE=0.36)*, *Trust (Kurtosis=-1.18, SE=0.36)*, *Ergic tension (Kurtosis=-1.13, SE=0.36)* and *Dysfunctional attitudes (Kurtosis=-1.38, SE=0.36)* display platykurtic distribution, whereas *Family events (Kurtosis=4.03, SE=0.36)* presents a leptokurtic distribution of data.

III. Results

Analyzing the first hypothesis through linear regression on jealousy as a criterion variable, we cannot reject the null hypothesis ($F(3, 142)=1.69$, $p = 0.172$), meaning that there is no significant effect of life events, childhood, and family events on the feeling of jealousy.

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Table 1: Coefficients of variables

	B	Beta	SE	t	p
(Intercept)	11.24		2.95	3.81	< 0.001
Life events	0.1	0.06	0.14	0.72	= 0.471
Childhood	0.18	0.16	0.09	1.99	= 0.049
Family events	0.09	0.06	0.12	0.72	= 0.473

Table 2: Characteristics of variables

Variables	N	Min	Max	Median	Average	Std. deviation
Jealousy	180.00	12.00	20.00	17.00	16.43	2.31
Life events	180.00	14.00	18.00	15.00	15.63	1.40
Childhood	180.00	12.00	18.00	14.00	14.26	2.07
Family events	180.00	3.00	14.00	12.00	11.97	1.57

The second hypothesis, through Spearman correlation, is confirmed, meaning that jealousy positively correlates with several personality factors, such as: *Neuroticism* (*=0.25, p < 0.001*), *Psychoticism* (*=0.45, p < 0.001*), *Culpability* (*=0.57, p < 0.001*), *Dependency* (*=0.49, p< 0.001*), and *Ergic tension* (*=0.60, p < 0.001*).

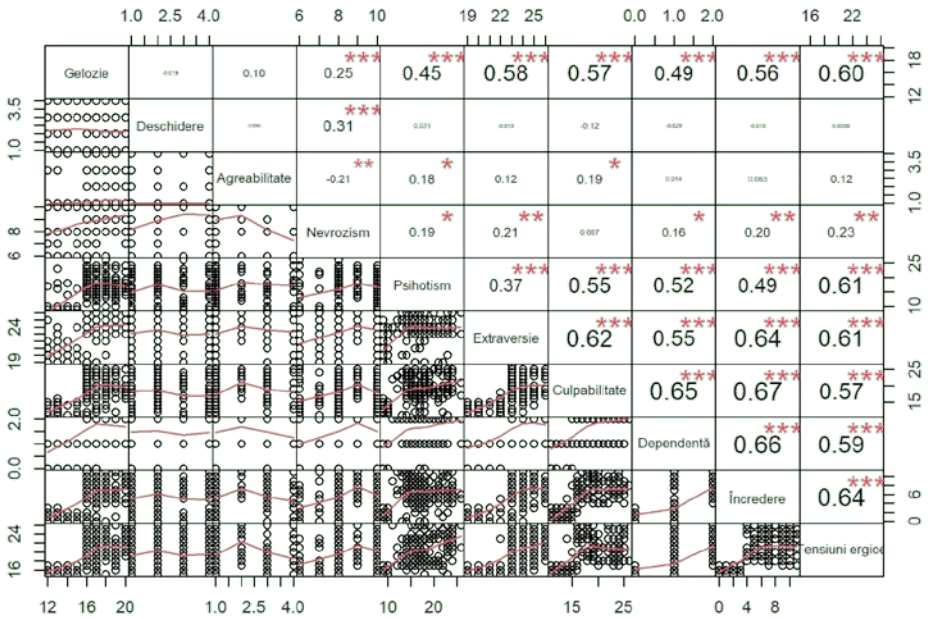

Figure 1: Spearman correlation matrix

IV. Conclusions

Findings indicate that stressful life events during childhood within the family of origin are less likely to influence the dimension of jealousy in individuals, which can be explained by the fact that individuals today do not find their past life experiences as harmful as one would think. In Romanian culture, we are educated to see families as a supportive environment regardless of the emotional turmoil that might come across it.

Other findings indicate a strong correlation between jealousy and personality factors, such as neuroticism, psychoticism, guilt, dependency, trust, and ergic tensions. More than that, with aging and going through stressful life events, dysfunctional attitudes can increase, which is explained by the social-economic downfalls individuals confront nowadays. The good news is that resorting to a rehabilitation program at any time in life can become a first step into bettering one's attitudes in existing relationships, such as the findings indicate after an intervention for the dimension of jealousy seen here as an attachment trauma feature.

With the rehabilitation program provided for the experimental group, the attachment issues are brought out in the open, ensuring, a better understanding of the importance this aspect has in the life of individuals and their emotional relationships.

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