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Just Sleep it Off: Does Sleep Moderate the Impact of Insecure Attachment Styles on Cortisol Levels?

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Current literature suggests an association between attachment styles and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis regulation. In particular, insecure attachment (high anxiety and/or high avoidance) has been associated with higher cortisol release at both baseline and post-stressor measurements. Sleep has been shown to serve a protective and regulatory role in HPA axis functioning. It is proposed that proper sleep hygiene may beneficially moderate the impact of insecure attachment styles on cortisol release; therefore, potentially decreasing disease and increasing overall health.

Objectives & Purpose of Proposed Research

- To examine the protective role that proper sleep hygiene may play to blunt the negative impact of insecure attachment on cortisol levels, for both baseline and post-stressor measurements.
- To reaffirm the connection between attachment styles and cortisol levels, particularly the link between insecure attachment and higher cortisol levels.
- To further explore the associations between attachment styles, cortisol levels, behavior dysregulation, and gender.

Method

Participants: n = 180 undergraduate students from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) recruited using SONA participant systems (Credit given for participation).

Procedure:

Participants complete several measures (e.g., on attachment style, sleep quality and quantity, behavioral dysregulation, and background demographics)

- Baseline blood pressure & heart rate measured
- Saliva collection using assay kits (to assess baseline cortisol)
- Trier Social Stress Test (TSST) - (the stressor)
- Blood pressure & heart rate measured (manipulation check)

References


