The Mediating Role of Sleep in the Associations of Adult Attachment and Self Disclosure in Romantic Relationships

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Research has shown that adult attachment style predicts self disclosure in relationships (Chen, Hi, & Chen, 2019 as cited in Collins and Allard, 2007). Previous research has also pointed to a positive relationship between healthy attachment and well-being, as well as sleep quality (Escolas, Hildebrandt, Maiers, Baker, & Mason, 2013 via Verdecia, Jean-Louis, Zizi, Casimir, & Browne, 2009). The purpose of this study was to examine sleep as a possible mediator between attachment styles and self disclosure. The current sample consisted of 202 participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Results indicated that sleep quality (indicated by insomnia and sleepiness) mediated the relationship between attachment and health factors, such as sleep, throughout life (Escolas, Hildebrandt, Maiers, Baker, & Mason, 2013 via Bowlby, 1998, Shaver, 2008).

There are different types of attachment, such as secure, anxious ambivalent, and avoidant. Secure, or healthy attachment refers to individuals who are confident and secure when exploring new environment and in relationships. Individuals with an anxious ambivalent style demonstrate uncertainty and anxiety and tend to be more clingy individuals. Lastly, avoidant styles of attachment represent individuals who presuppose rejection from others and furthermore do not seek closeness. (Escolas, Hildebrandt, Maiers, Baker, & Mason, 2013 via Bowlby, 1973).

There is evidence that adult attachment is related to sleep quality, as it could increase self disclosure in relationships. (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991 via Bowlby 1973).

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The goal of the current study is to examine the mediating role of sleep quality (e.g. sleepiness, and insomnia) in the attachment style and self disclosure relationship.

Participants: This sample included 202 adult individuals from sampled from Amazon Mechanical Turk. Measures: Sleep Quality was measured by indicators of insomnia and sleepiness. Insomnia was measured using the DSM-IV Sleep 50 questionnaire (Espormaker, Verbeek, Bunt, and Clij 2000). Sleepiness was measured using the Wolfson and Carskadon (1998) Sleepiness scale on.5. Self disclosure was measured using two scales; the Self Disclosure Index, and a revised Emotional Self Disclosure Scale. The Self Disclosure Index was the first scale used on.93 (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1918). Emotional self disclosure was measured using a revised Emotional Self Disclosure Scale (Snell, Miller, & Belk, 2013). This scale measures the extent to which one discloses certain emotions with their partner. The first 30 questions from this scale were used. Attachment Style was measured using the Revised Adult Attachment Scale (Collins and Reed, 1990). This scale is divided with two dimensions; anxious attachment style (r=.25) and avoidant attachment style (r=.71).

Analyses: Mediated regression analysis was performed using the PROCESS macro v3.4 in SPSS (Hayes, 2009).

Methods

Hypothesis

Attachment theory supports the idea that parental responsiveness equips children with knowledge about worldly expectations and how to handle distress. (Mikulincer & Nachson, 1991 via Bowlby 1973)

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Self disclosure points to the execution of revealing personal thoughts and feelings. This has shown to positively influence sleep quality (Kane, Slater, Reynolds, Repetti, & Robes, 2014 as cited in Dahl, 1996)

Previous literature indicates a relationship between adult attachment and self disclosure in relationships. Those who rate high on secure and anxious ambivalent attachment styles tend to disclose more. In contrast, those who rate high on avoidant attachment tend to disclose less (Mikulincer & Nachson 1991)

Ample evidence also suggests a relationship between sleep and self disclosure, such that self disclosure may reduce negative emotions that attribute to poor sleep quality (Kane, Slater, Reynolds, Repetti, & Robes, 2014 as cited in Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006, Pennebaker & Chung, 2011)

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Results

Figure 1: The effect of attachment style on self disclosure in romantic relationships. (Bravais-Pearson, .25, p<.01)

Figure 2: The effect of attachment style on self disclosure in romantic relationships. (Bravais-Pearson, .25, p<.01)

Figure 3: The effect of attachment style on self disclosure in romantic relationships. (Bravais-Pearson, .25, p<.01)

Figure 4: The effect of attachment style on self disclosure in romantic relationships. (Bravais-Pearson, .25, p<.01)

Figure 5: The effect of attachment style on self disclosure in romantic relationships. (Bravais-Pearson, .25, p<.01)

Figure 6: The effect of attachment style on self disclosure in romantic relationships. (Bravais-Pearson, .25, p<.01)

Discussion

Purpose: To explore the mediating role of sleep in the link between Attachment Styles and Self Disclosure.

Mediation Analyses

- Generally, those with the Anxious Ambivalent attachment style who experienced poor sleep quality engaged in less self disclosure.
- Those with the Anxious Avoidant attachment style who experienced poorer sleep quality also engaged in less emotional self disclosure of fear.

Conclusion: Results indicated that sleep quality mediated the relationship between attachment style and self disclosure.

Limitations:

- This was a self report measure
- Smaller sample size
- Poor reliability for the Anxious Ambivalent attachment style scale

Future Research:

- Should include a larger sample size
- Explore different types of relationships such as same-sex and transgender couples
- Objective measures of sleep patterns

References