Introduction

Emotion has shown that early childhood experiences, especially those related to maternal sensitivity and acceptance, play a role in emotional and social subsequent development. These early experiences of safety and comfort lead to the ability for self-acceptance and self-soothing, especially as those of attachment-orientation (Field et al., 2005; Ginott, Gilchrist, & McKeown, 2009). Research has shown that self-compassion is associated with psychological well-being and lower levels of depression and anxiety (Neff, 2003; Hopp, Kräpelin, & Rüsch, 2007). Given the developmental tasks in adolescence, it may be beneficial for adolescents to develop self-compassion skills (Wagstaff & McGhee, 2010).

Objectives

1. Explore the impact of early memories of warmth and safeness on quality of attachment in adolescence.
2. Explore the relationship between early positive memories, self-compassion, and psychopathology (depressive, anxiety, and stress symptoms).
3. Explore the relative contribution of emotional memories and self-compassion in the prediction of depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Methods

Participants and Procedures

The sample is composed of 661 adolescents, which 330 are boys (50.0%) and 221 are girls (49.9%). From 7th to 12th grade (years of education range = 9.89, SD = 1.27), the mean age was 15.89 (SD = 1.95) years old, ranging from 12 to 19. No gender differences were found concerning the study. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale, based on the sample, was 0.77. The adolescents sample was collected from public schools in the district of Coimbra, Portugal. Ethical approval was granted by the Head Teacher of each school and parent’s were informed about the study. In the second step of research and gave their consent. Adolescents were informed about the purpose of the study, respect of confidentiality and consent.

Measures

Early Memories of Warmth and Safeness Scales for Adolescents (EMWSS-A; Richter, Gilchrist, & McKeown, 2005; Portuguese version by Castelo, Xavier, Marinha, & Atela, 2012) is a self-report questionnaire that measures recall of feeling warm and safe and to which events, i.e., early positive memories of warmth and affection. This is a 21-item scale and is rated on a 5-point scale. On the original version, Richter and colleagues (2005) found a high Cronbach’s alpha of 0.78. In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.75.

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003). Portuguese version for adolescents by Porto-Gouveia, Casela, Xavier, & Cunha, 2011) is a self-report questionnaire that measures self-compassion. This questionnaire is composed by three dimensions describing characteristics of kindness, self-kindness, and common humanity. It consists of 14 items, each rating the degree to which the item applies to the respondent. Adolescents were instructed to choose the option that applied best to them.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995; Porto-Bastos, Honório, & Leal, 2010) is a self-report measure composed of 21 items designed to assess three dimensions of psychopathological symptoms—depression, anxiety, and stress. In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha for subscales were 0.60 for depression, 0.61 for anxiety, and 0.61 for stress.

Results

1. Study of Early Positive Memories and Attachment Styles

In this study, we used the categorical choice of attachment style in the AQ-C and we obtained three groups of attachment styles: namely insecure (n = 294) avoidant (n = 193) and ambivalent (n = 102). We conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare these three groups in terms of early positive memories. This analysis yielded significant differences in early positive memories (EMWSS) of security, anxiety, and ambivalently attached adolescents (Table 1). The groups of insecure attachment did not differ from one another.

Method

The present study shows that the result of emotional memories in childhood (e.g., feelings of warmth and safeness) is associated with self-compassion, on an emotional regulation process; and these two variables may function as protective factors in the development of depressive and anxiety symptoms in adolescence.

Conclusions


References

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Early Memories of Positive Emotions and its Relationships to Attachment Styles, Compa...