What Makes Adolescents Feel Loved by Their Parents? Daily Dynamics Among Support, Conflict, and Relationship Quality

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Introduction

Feeling loved by parents provides essential security for children (Bowlby, 1969; Maslow, 1943)
- Feeling consistently loved by one's caregivers serves as the underpinnings of one's sense of security
- Which has long-term effect on individual development—high self-esteem and happiness, and low psychological and behavioral problems (Forsman, 1989; Khaleque, 2002; Slieck & Schulte, 2006)

Parent-adolescent closeness, supportive parenting and less parent-adolescent conflict are important for adolescents’ feeling of love (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013; McNeely & Barber, 2010)
- Little is known about if daily fluctuation of support and conflict make them feel more or less loved

Daily diary design
- Capture the within-person variation above beyond the between-person comparison
- Decompose the effects of general trait and daily variance

The Present Study
- Explore the fluctuation of adolescents’ felt love on a daily time frame
- Include both daily support and daily conflict as predictors to daily felt love
- To compare with prior work, general parent-adolescent closeness is included as a second-level predictor

Study Questions

Q1: How dynamic felt love is during adolescence?
- Hypothesis: there is fluctuation for each adolescent’s felt love during the 21 days.

Q2: What family characteristics account for the within-person variation in felt love from day to day?
- Hypothesis 1: On days when adolescents received more support and had less conflict with parents, they felt more loved by their parents.
- Hypothesis 2: Overall closeness with parents was related to higher average levels of adolescents’ felt love by their parents.

Method

Participants and Procedure
- Family with one 9th or 10th grade student
- Having two caregiving adults living in the same house for at least two years
- Adolescents live in one household continuously
- Baseline and 21-day daily diary for both the adolescent and the primary caregiver

Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>99</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62.6% Female, 37.4% Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age M (SD)</td>
<td>14.49 (0.79)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregivers</td>
<td>90.9% Mothers, 5.1% Fathers, 2% Stepmothers, 1% Foster Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>White/European American 89%, Black/African American 6%, American-Indian/Native American 2%, Asian American 5%, Hispanic/Latino 1%, Other 3%</td>
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Notes: Parental support was divided into general support and daily support (i.e., daily deviation from within-person mean); Parent-adolescent conflict was divided into general conflict and daily conflict in the same way.

Results

For Q1: Adolescents’ Felt Love Exhibits Variability Across 21 Days

![Graph showing adolescents' felt love variability](image)

For Q2: Table 1. Parameters in the Final Multi-Level Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1:</th>
<th>Level 2:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>y_{ij}LOVE_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ daily support}<em>{ij} + \beta_2 \text{ daily conflict}</em>{ij} + \text{ daily support}<em>{ij}\text{ daily conflict}</em>{ij} + \epsilon_{ij};</td>
<td>\beta_0 + \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \text{ general support}<em>{ij} + \gamma</em>{02} \text{ general conflict}<em>{ij} + \gamma</em>{03} \text{ closeness}<em>{ij} + \mu</em>{ij};</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\beta_{1} = \gamma_{10} + \mu_{1i};</td>
<td>\beta_{1} = \gamma_{10} + \mu_{1i};</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\beta_{2} = \gamma_{20} + \mu_{2i};</td>
<td>\beta_{2} = \gamma_{20} + \mu_{2i};</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\beta_{3} = \gamma_{30};</td>
<td>\beta_{3} = \gamma_{30};</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Equations for the final model listed on the right.

Discussion

- Adolescents’ feeling of love indeed varies day to day
  - There is a decent amount of fluctuation in daily feeling of love
  - Each adolescent has different trajectory within 21 days
- Bid daily family interactions and general family relationships account for adolescents’ variation in felt love from day to day
  - Compared with between-person approach, within-person approach is able to disentangle the effects of daily variance versus person-mean
  - The results highlight daily variance (i.e. within-person effect) as a driver

On days when adolescents received more parental support, they felt more loved by their parents
- Love is a positive emotion that makes people come most fully alive and feel most fully human
- On a daily time frame, parental support is related to children’s better coping with daily stress so that facilitate positive affect

On days when adolescents had less conflict with parents, they felt more loved by their parents
- Extending prior work that parent-adolescent conflict is closely associated with adolescent psychological well-being and positive mental health (Shek, 1997), our study highlighted the daily conflict have more influence above beyond the general conflict with parents

In general, adolescents who have high closeness with their parents would have higher average levels of felt love
- In line with attachment theory, closeness and relational bonding is the core of attachment and feeling love in parent-adolescent relationship
- Although felt love fluctuates day by day, general relationship closeness sets the tone for adolescents’ average levels of felt love

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