

## FAMILY AND PARTNER RELATIONS: IS IT POSSIBLE TO PREDICT ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE QUALITY OF FAMILY RELATIONS?

Dušan Todorović, Milica Tošić Radev, Ivana Zubić

Department of Psychology, University of Niš, Serbia

### Abstract

*The main goal of the study is to investigate the prediction possibilities of the dimensions in partners' attachment on the basis of the quality of individuals' experiences of relations in primary family.*

*The sample of 448 students was tested with the modified version of Brennan's Questionnaire for evaluating partners' attachment – PAB (Kamenov & Jelić 2003) and Family interaction quality scale – KOBI (Vulić - Prtorić 2004).*

*The results shows that dimensions of family functioning can predict only 3% of the variabilities on avoidance dimension in a partner relationship. As far as the possibility of predicting the dimension of anxiety in partner relations is concerned, the results show that 8% of the variabilities can be explained in terms of the differences existing among respondents in regard to the dimensions of the family interaction quality, in which case three predictors establish statistically significant links to the criterion: maternal rejection and acceptance and rejection by father.*

*This can lead to a conclusion that luckily, throughout a life, we have more than one significant other based on whom we evaluate oneself and the world around us and adjust our behaviour.*

**Key words:** family relation quality, dimensions of romantic attachment, parental rejection and acceptance

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Relationships with one's family and partner are the two most important life spheres. The childhood is mostly confined to the first, family sphere, while the youth, adult and old age is marked by the existence of a partner or love relationships. The question of overlapping between these two spheres, their mutual influence or at least connection is a frequently asked one, however, not so often examined. We tackled the problem of evaluating the prediction from the two compatible theories' point of view: Parental Acceptance - Rejection Theory (Rohner & Rohner, 1980) and the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1973).

Parental Acceptance - Rejection Theory (PART theory, Rohner, 1986) is a theory of individual's socialization and development. The basic postulate of the PART theory is that psychological adjustment and functioning of children is directly influenced by the experienced parents' (mother's and father's) acceptance-rejection (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002). Parent's acceptance and rejection create a dimension of parenthood defined as emotional warmth. This dimension or continuum is a place where all people could be differentiated from one another, since all of them experienced love of a lesser or higher degree provided by parents or caregivers during the childhood. This dimension is related to the quality of affectional relations between parents and children, as well as with physical, verbal and symbolic behaviour parents use to show their emotions. One part of this continuum is defined as parent's acceptance and it is comprised of warmth, attention, care, ability to please, nurture, support or, simply put, love that children can feel through interaction with their parents or caregivers. The other part of the continuum is defined as parent's rejection and it can appear when there is absence or significant lack of positive emotions. Furthermore, it often includes the presence of various physical and psychological damaging effects and behaviour. Extensive cross-cultural research over the past fifty years (Rohner, Khaleque & Cournoyer, 2009) revealed that the parents' rejection can be manifested in four ways: 1) cold and emotionless, opposite of warm and emotional; 2) hostile and aggressive; 3) indifferent and neglecting; 4) undifferentiated rejection, a person's belief that his/her

parents do not care about him/her, do not love him/her, although clear behavioural indicators of the inadequate relation towards the child are lacking.

Within the PART theory, one of the many sub-theories (sub-theory of personality) is based upon the assumption that all people, during the process of evolution, develop a permanent biologically based emotional urge to get positive responses from the people they care about (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Leary, 1999). The urge for positive responses includes a wish, need and desire for a pleasant feeling, for support, care, attention, nurture and similar activities. People who can successfully satisfy this need are usually parents who have raised a child; however, other people can play an equally important role. In adult life, this need to get positive responses becomes further complicated and differentiated in a greater degree, so it comes to include the desire to get praise and concern from the people an individual is emotionally attached to. Sub-theory of personality aligned with the PART theory presupposes that the adult individual will remember acceptance-rejection provided by his/her parents in the childhood and that this experience will influence future psychological adjustments of that individual. A further assumption is that the acceptance perception experienced by the intimate partner or another important figure to which an individual is attached will be connected to the same form of psychological adjustment experienced by the parents' acceptance in the childhood (Rohner, 2004). In fact, according to the sub-theory of personality within the PART theory, the feeling of emotional safety and emotional wellbeing depends on the experienced quality of relationship an individual had with his/her parents.

It is interesting to note that most of the research was concerned with the analysis of relationship between a child and its parents, but without differentiating between relations of mother-child and father-child, hence the focus was on mother's behaviour. However, recent research indicate that mother's and father's behaviour can have different effects on psychological adjustment of a child (Veneziano, 2000). Some researchers point out that father's acceptance is just as important as that of a mother (Rohner, 1998; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001) and that father's and mother's influence can have similar effects on a different aspects of child's development (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008; Veneziano, 2000). Empirical evidence of these postulates can be found in certain researches (Khaleque, 2001; Rohner & Khaleque, 2008) that show how the psychological adjustment of women in partnership is in correlation with perceived acceptance experienced by the partner, but also with the memories associated with father's acceptance and that this correlation is of greater influence than the one associated with mother's acceptance.

In the attachment theory, the need for contact is a primary human need and, during the first two years of life, a child gradually develops an affectional bond with a primary parent, usually a mother (Bowlby, 1973). In early phase of interaction between a mother and a child numerous signals are interchanged, and according to the way in which a mother responds to child's signals, the child forms a presentation about himself/herself and about the external world, i.e. the child forms working models of himself or herself and others. Internal working models of attachment are comprised of personal beliefs, expectations, attitudes and emotions toward oneself and the others. In fact, a child internalizes experiences acquired from its interaction with a mother and develops an image of itself as a being more or less worthy of mother's attention and an image of a mother as a person who is or is not there when it needs her. Depending on a model quality, Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) differentiates between three types of attachment in children: secure, insecure/avoidant and insecure/ambivalent. Later research (Main & Solomon, 1986) discovered the fourth type – insecure/disorganized – which can be caused by the intimidating behaviour of a mother.

More specifically, children with a secure type of attachment form a model of themselves as beings worthy of love and attention and a model of others as reliable people whom they can trust. Insecure/avoidant type of attachment makes children protect themselves from future disappointments by building a shield between themselves and other people, thus creating a defensive image of themselves and an image of others as people not fond of them. Children with ambivalent attachment create a positive model of other people, in accordance with emotional investment, but on the other hand, the image of themselves turns out to be a negative one. These characteristics children express are consequences of repeated experiences with mothers who are either insensitive to children's signals,

in case of avoidant pattern of attachment, or inconsistent in their responds, in case of ambivalent pattern of attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Internal working models are created in the childhood when they become a part of our emotionality and, in most cases, persist throughout the life and influence formation of our characteristics and our behaviour. As an individual characteristic, they influence the understanding of future experiences so that they become assimilated, i.e. adjusted and understood in accordance to existing model by cognitive processing (Stefanović-Stanojević, Mihić & Hanak, 2012). Early formed patterns of attachment present a permanent asset of an individual, that are stable and resistant to change. They persist throughout the lifetime of an individual, shaping all of hers/his adult relations. Affectional bonds are present throughout a whole life and romantic partners are the figures in the adult life to whom we transfer early patterns of attachment (Bowlby, 1988).

Hazan and Shaver (Hazan & Shaver 1987) were the first to examine the possibility of conceiving adult partner's love as a process of attachment and they assumed that the three bond types identified by Mary Ainsworth (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) can be transferred to three types of attachment in partner relationships of adults. The type of attachment formed in childhood will define characteristic desires, beliefs, feelings and a characteristic behaviour, as well as expectations from oneself and a partner in intimate relationships. Kim Bartholomew (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) continued the research of Hazan and Shaver and she discovered four types of attachment manifested differently in partnership: secure, preoccupied, fearful and dismissing. Having employed factor analysis, she found that the in the core of these styles operate two dimensions: dimension of anxiety and dimension of avoidance that she interpreted as the model of self (anxiety) and the model of other (avoidance). Dimension of anxiety is defined as the expressed need for intimacy, acceptance, support, safety and assurance of love and dimension of avoidance is reflected in the feeling of discomfort in intimate relationships (Feeney, 2002). By combining these dimensions and models, dismissing, secure, preoccupied and fearful patterns of romantic attachment are created.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. *The Research Question*

The research question is the examination of the prediction of the degree of avoidance and anxiety dimensions in romantic attachment based on the degree of quality dimensions in family relationships. In addition to the basic research question, we also examined the gender differences both in experience of family relationships and in adult partner relationships.

### 2.2. *Participants*

The research was conducted on the sample of 448 students, with the equal number of both males and females. The sample was comprised of students from 6 different faculties of the University of Nis, Serbia (Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Electronic Engineering, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Natural Science and Mathematics and Faculty of Philosophy). Respondents' age was from 18 to 29.

### 2.3. *Instruments*

The Scale of family interactions quality - KOBİ (Vulić - Prtorić, 2004). The scale measures the interaction between a parent and a child on two different dimensions, most often described as acceptance (emotional warmth, intimacy) and rejection (control, emotional negligence, punishment). These two dimensions were conceptualized in accordance with the theory of parents' acceptance and rejection formulated by Ronald Rohner (Rohner, 1989, 1999, according to Vulić - Prtorić, 2004). The KOBİ scale consists of 55 statements: 22 of which describe child's relation to a mother, 22 of which describe child's relation to a father and remaining 11 statements refer to the general atmosphere in the family. The scale includes 5 sub-scales: satisfaction with the relationship in one's own family, mother's acceptance, father's acceptance, mother's rejection and father's rejection. The sub-scale of family satisfaction examines the feelings of respondent related to his/her family and

family life in general. Theoretical span on specific sub-scales is: father's/mother's acceptance from 10 to 50 and father's/mother's rejection from 12 to 60. Higher score on a specific scale implies greater perception of one of the defined characteristics of family interactions (acceptance or rejection). In this research we also verified the validity of the scale of family relationships quality (KOBI) (Cronbach  $\alpha = ,618$ ). Validity of the sub-scales of the family relationships quality (KOBI) were verified as well: (Family satisfaction,  $\alpha = ,897$ ; Mother's acceptance,  $\alpha = ,878$ ; Mother's rejection,  $\alpha = ,873$ ; Father's acceptance,  $\alpha = ,900$ ; Father's rejection,  $\alpha = ,896$ ), thus the high level of validity of described sub-scales is noticeable.

In this research we used modification of Brennan's Questionnaire for measuring romantic attachment - PAV (Kamenov & Jelić, 2003). The questionnaire consists of 18 statements that are scored using the seven degrees Likert's scale (statement example: "I try to avoid excessive bonding with members of my family"). The questionnaire operationalizes two dimensions – avoidance and anxiety. Dimension of avoidance, i.e. ability or inability to bond is a bipolar dimension and it compares aspects of secure and avoiding descriptions ("I feel comfortable when I share my intimate thoughts or feelings with my partner" versus "I do not feel comfortable when I open up to my partner"). This is a dimension that on the one end of the spectrum has acceptance and on the other rejection of intimacy and that represents internal working model of other people. Dimension of anxiety represents internal working model of oneself and it deals with crucial issues that are possible causes of developing anxiety, such as concern about requited love, worrying about being left alone or the need for excessive intimacy ("I sometimes feel that I am forcing my partner to show more feelings and greater commitment" or "I worry that I am going to be alone"). This is a dimension that on the one end has a low and on the other a high level of anxiety. Validity of a sub-scale for measuring avoidance is Cronbach  $\alpha = ,762$  and validity of the sub-scale for measuring anxiety is Cronbach  $\alpha = ,753$ .

### 3. RESULTS

Table 1 provides a summary of the average values of dimensions of romantic attachment and the quality of family relations. According to respondents' answers, average values of dimensions of romantic attachment are somewhat lower than the theoretical average value (for avoidance Mean=23.60; for anxiety Mean=24.82). Arithmetic means of dimensions of quality of family relations for family satisfaction (Mean=47.09), mother's acceptance (Mean=41.43) and father's acceptance (Mean=37.85) are above the theoretical average value, while arithmetic means of dimensions for mother's rejection (Mean =19.85) and father's rejection (Mean =20.97) are below theoretical average value.

|                            | N   | Min.  | Max.  | Mean    | SD       |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| <b>Avoidance</b>           | 448 | 9.00  | 60.00 | 23.6004 | 10.33678 |
| <b>Anxiety</b>             | 448 | 9.00  | 60.00 | 24.8214 | 10.27559 |
| <b>Family satisfaction</b> | 448 | 14.00 | 55.00 | 47.0987 | 7.74273  |
| <b>Mother's acceptance</b> | 448 | 14.00 | 50.00 | 41.4302 | 7.30361  |
| <b>Mother's rejection</b>  | 448 | 12.00 | 54.00 | 19.8578 | 8.10313  |
| <b>Father's acceptance</b> | 448 | 10.00 | 50.00 | 37.8565 | 8.79413  |
| <b>Father's rejection</b>  | 448 | 12.00 | 57.00 | 20.9707 | 9.18196  |

**Table 1.** Prominence of romantic attachment dimensions and quality of family relationships dimensions

Table 2 presents the correlations between the anxiety and avoidance that person experiences with partner in romantic relationship and his or her feelings about the quality of family relationships (satisfaction with the relationship in one's own family, mother's acceptance, father's acceptance, mother's rejection and father's rejection).

|                    | Family satisfaction | Mother's acceptance | Mother's rejection | Father's acceptance | Father's rejection |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Avoidance</b> r | -.189**             | -.142**             | .165**             | -.167**             | .170**             |
| <b>Anxiety</b> r   | -.177**             | -.030               | .227**             | -.085               | .218**             |

\*\*correlation significant at level 0,01; \*correlation significant at level 0,05; r – intensity of correlation

**Table 2.** Quality of family relationships dimensions and avoidance and anxiety in romantic attachment

The obtained results for correlations indicate that the expression of anxiety and avoidance in partnership is connected to the variations of family satisfaction, namely mother's and father's acceptance and rejection.

Negative correlations of low intensity were found, with the statistical significance of 0.05, between the dimension of avoidance in romantic relationship and family satisfaction and mother's and father's acceptance. In other words, the higher the family satisfaction and the feeling of acceptance by mother and father is, the lower is the possibility for the individual to develop a feeling of avoidance and withdrawal in a relationship with a partner. Positive correlations with the statistical significance of 0.05 were found between the dimensions of avoidance and anxiety on the one hand, and mother's and father's rejection on the other. In fact, rejection from both mother and father is related to the incidence of higher avoidance of intimacy and higher possibility for anxiety and concerns in affectional bonds in partnership. In addition, statistically significant and negative correlation was discovered between the dimensions of anxiety and family satisfaction. In fact, the general feeling of unpleasant family atmosphere and dissatisfaction with the family life are related to the anxiety that an individual feels in his/her relationship with a partner.

Using the procedure of regression analysis we examined relations and possibility for prediction between the dimensions of quality of family interactions and the expression of dimension of avoidance in romantic attachment. (Table 3).

| R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| .219 <sup>a</sup> | .048     | .037              | 10.13055                   |

  

| Model      | Df  | F     | Sig.              |
|------------|-----|-------|-------------------|
| Regression | 5   | 4.313 | .001 <sup>a</sup> |
| Residual   | 430 |       |                   |
| N          | 435 |       |                   |

  

| Predictor variables: | Standardized Coefficients | t     | p    |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|                      | Beta                      |       |      |
| Family satisfaction  | -.087                     | -1.33 | .181 |

|                            |       |       |      |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| <b>Mother's acceptance</b> | -.002 | -.023 | .982 |
| <b>Mother's rejection</b>  | .061  | .837  | .403 |
| <b>Father's acceptance</b> | -.070 | -.988 | .324 |
| <b>Father's rejection</b>  | .047  | .645  | .519 |

**Table 3.** Quality of family relationships dimensions (KOB scale) as predictors of level of avoidance in romantic attachment

By examining results presented in Table 3 we can conclude that the multiple correlation coefficient ( $R = .219$ ) is statistically significant ( $\text{Sig.} = .000$ ). In accordance with this, it is evident that linear connection exists between the set of five predictors considered as a group on the one hand, and expression of the dimension of avoidance in respondents' answers on the other. From the general variability in relation to this criteria variable, around 3% of variability (Adjusted R Square = .037) can be explained with regards to differences that exist between the respondents' dimensions of family interactions quality. If we consider partial standardized regression coefficients we can notice that not even one predictor creates statistically significant relations with the criterion.

| <b>R</b>          | <b>R Square</b> | <b>Adjusted R Square</b> | <b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| .310 <sup>a</sup> | .096            | .085                     | 9.68020                           |

  

| <b>Model</b>      | <b>Df</b> | <b>F</b> | <b>Sig.</b>       |
|-------------------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>Regression</b> | 5         | 9.134    | .000 <sup>a</sup> |
| <b>Residual</b>   | 430       |          |                   |
| <b>N</b>          | 435       |          |                   |

  

| <b>Predictor variables:</b> | <b>Standardized Coefficients</b> | <b>t</b> | <b>p</b> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
|                             | <b>Beta</b>                      |          |          |
| <b>Family satisfaction</b>  | -.068                            | -1.073   | .284     |
| <b>Mother's acceptance</b>  | .252                             | 3.745    | .000     |
| <b>Mother's rejection</b>   | .282                             | 3.953    | .000     |
| <b>Father's acceptance</b>  | .064                             | .920     | .358     |
| <b>Father's rejection</b>   | .165                             | 2.314    | .021     |

**Table 4.** Quality of family relationships dimensions as predictors of level of anxiety in romantic attachment

In Table 4 there are results obtained by performing regression analysis of the connection between the expression of quality of family interactions dimension and the expression of anxiety dimension in respondents' romantic attachment. Multiple correlation coefficient ( $R = .310$ ) is statistically significant ( $\text{Sig.} = .000$ ). In relation to this criteria variable, around 8% of variability (Adjusted R Square = .085) can be explained with regard to differences that exist between the respondents' dimensions of family interactions quality. If we consider partial standardized regression coefficients, we can notice that three predictors create statistically significant relations with the criterion, which include acceptance

of mother and rejection of both, mother and father. The greatest partial contribution to the explanation of the individual differences in relation to the expression belongs to the mother's rejection. This means that rejection by both parents, not only by mother, can partially predict the degree of respondent's anxiety, concerns and unrest that he/she experiences in emotional relationship with a partner.

In the process of comparing answers of male and female respondents regarding the expression of dimensions of avoidance, anxiety, family satisfaction and mother's and father's rejection, statistically significant differences were not found (Table 5).

| Dimension           | Gender | Mean    | SD       | p    |
|---------------------|--------|---------|----------|------|
| Family satisfaction | male   | 40.5405 | 6.90764  | ,113 |
|                     | female | 42.3198 | 7.59087  |      |
| Mother's acceptance | male   | 20.1364 | 7.57547  | ,761 |
|                     | female | 19.5830 | 8.60029  |      |
| Mother's rejection  | male   | 39.1345 | 8.61644  | ,807 |
|                     | female | 36.5785 | 8.80325  |      |
| Father's acceptance | male   | 40.5405 | 6.90764  | ,010 |
|                     | female | 42.3198 | 7.59087  |      |
| Father's rejection  | male   | 20.1364 | 7.57547  | ,473 |
|                     | female | 19.5830 | 8.60029  |      |
| Avoidance           | male   | 24.3750 | 9.85512  | ,113 |
|                     | female | 22.8259 | 10.76329 |      |
| Anxiety             | male   | 24.6861 | 10.53951 | ,761 |
|                     | female | 24.9821 | 10.04339 |      |

**Table 5.** Gender differences in quality of family relationships and attachment dimensions

When the comparison of these two sub-samples was taken into consideration, the only significant difference was found in the relation to the dimension father's acceptance. Namely, girls have a stronger experience of father's acceptance than the boys.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this paper we analyzed the possibility to predict the degree of expression of avoidance and anxiety dimensions in romantic attachment on the basis of the degree of expression of family relationship quality dimension. Furthermore, by interviewing the sample of 448 students from six different faculties, it was expected to discover the difference across genders regarding evaluation of quality of family and partnership relationships.

All of the initial assumptions were partly confirmed. When the possibility of prediction of avoidance dimension in adult partner relationship based on the dimension of family relationships is taken into consideration, the hypothesis was only partly confirmed. Namely, although there is a possibility to

predict behaviour of an individual in adult relationship based on the evaluation of relationship quality in primary family, the percentage of defined variance is not high. Mother's and father's acceptance and rejection and family satisfaction, as established dimensions of family relationships, account only for 3% of variability of avoidance dimension in adult relationship and none of the predictors has statistically significant relations to the criterion. If we consider the degree of expression of anxiety dimension in romantic relationships, we can come to a conclusion that 8% of variability can be explained on the basis of differences in family interactions quality dimensions among the respondents, while three predictors create statistically significant connection with the criterion, i.e. mother's acceptance and rejection and father's rejection. Therefore, obtained results partly confirm general hypothesis and, furthermore, the theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1973) and PART theory (Rohner, 1986) that the quality of early relationship between a child and a primary caregiver, usually a mother, has an effect on the quality of relationship that an individual builds later in life, including the relationship with a romantic partner.

The findings that are certainly evident and true and deserve our attention refer to the fact that the quality of family relationship dimension is a better predictor of anxiety than the avoidance dimension in a relationship with a partner. Having in mind that the dimension of anxiety represents internal working model of oneself, our findings indicate that the relationship with parents is a better predictor of the image of oneself than of the other people. Mother's acceptance, as well as mother's and father's rejection, significantly contribute to the creation of negative image of oneself, which can further lead to the feeling of insecurity, concern and unrest in relationships with other people, since the individual always questions his/her virtues and self-worth. On the other hand, family relations do not have a significant effect on determination of the degree of avoidance and withdrawal in adult relationships with a partner. This can lead to a conclusion that the working model of others can change more easily or more often throughout life and can be influenced by the experience from other relationships, thus it does not affect relationships with partner as expected. To put it simply, it seems that the feeling of acceptance or rejection in the primary family does not have a great influence on how much an individual will withdraw or feel uncomfortable when the time comes to establish an open and intimate relationship with a partner. If the partner or another close person becomes a secure base, the image of other people does not have to remain negative and a person does not necessarily need to fear bonding or expressing his/her feelings. On the other hand, parents' rejection and non-acceptance and negative image of oneself and one's own self-worth formed as a consequence seems to be resistant to changes and a stronger determinant of our behaviour in a relationship with a partner. This result is somewhat logical and can be explained by the fact that, throughout a life, we have more than one significant other based on whom we evaluate the world around us and adjust our behaviour towards others, but only one image of ourselves formed very early and thus more influenced by the experiences in primary family.

It should also be highlighted that obtained results also partly confirm the assumption of importance of the father figure and affectional bond between a child and a father (e.g. Rohner & Khaleque, 2008; Veneziano, 2000; Mihić, 2012). Namely, our results indicate that the rejection by both parents, not only mother, can partly predict the degree of respondent's insecurity and anxiety demonstrated in a relationship with a partner.

When differences across gender on the dimensions of family and partnership behaviour are considered, there are no significant differences on most of the dimensions. The only significant finding worthy of attention is the one signaling greater experience of father's acceptance with girls than with boys in this sample. In accordance with the patriarchal system widespread in our environment, it is possible that fathers exhibit more strict behaviour with their sons than daughters, which can account for obtained differences in results.

On the other hand, if one bears in mind the fact proven many times in the past that relationship with parents leave a lasting impression on an individual and that the models of oneself and of others that people build on the basis of experience within the family tend to be relatively stable throughout life, then the question of why the possibility of prediction is so small inevitably arises. One of the reasons to explain this phenomenon may be that the analyzed experiences with parents were collected as the

answers of adult respondents – students. Each relationship in our life is a dynamic one, so even the one with parents cannot be seen as a constant. In this way, we managed to catch evaluation of family relationship of an individual at one specific moment, long after the childhood, and this is the period when, according to the theory of affectional bond, internal working models of oneself and of others are formed. Furthermore, our respondents are students who, in accordance to their higher education, could even be more competent in differentiation and evaluation of their actions, adjustment of personal attitudes and actions in accordance to current situation and relationship with other people. A biased sample like this can be a disadvantage of the research aimed to examine the possibility of predicting a certain phenomenon. Namely, it is possible that the regression analysis would show different results on another sample, especially if we take into consideration the fact that the students could come from families where parents are highly educated, provide better living conditions or transfer completely different attitudes to their children. All of this can have an influence on the characteristics of family behaviour dimensions, and in addition, to results obtained in our research. However, these results pose a question of the factors that make up the rest of the variability. Numerous other factors could shed additional light on the relationship in question, for example: socio-demographic data, social context specific to the countries in transition, characteristics of the respondents' current relationships with a partner etc., and this could be a recommendation for future research.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this paper we analyzed the possibility to predict the degree of expression of avoidance and anxiety dimensions in relationships with a partner on the basis of family relationship quality dimension on the sample of students. The results show that the dimensions of family relationships accounts for only 3% of variability in avoidance dimension in a relationships with a partner and 8% of variability in anxiety dimension of romantic attachment. Although there is a possibility to predict behaviour of an individual in a relationship with a partner on the basis of evaluation of the quality of relations in the primary family, which is much greater with the anxiety dimension than with the avoidance one, the percentage of described variance is not high. This poses a question of a degree to which relations with parents can be considered significant determinants of the relationship with romantic partner and highlights the need to find other factors that can be more important in the shaping our attitudes and expectations from ourselves and our partners in relationships than the dimension of family relations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The creation of this paper was supported by a research grant from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia within the framework of the 179002 project.

## REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, M, Blehar, MC, Waters, E & Wall, S 1978, *Patterns of attachment A psychological study of the Strange Situation*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale New York
- Bartholomew, K & Horowitz, ML 1991, 'Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 61, pp. 226-244. DOI: 10.1037//0022-3514.61.2.226.
- Baumeister, RF & Leary, M R 1995, 'The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation' *Psychological Bulletin*, vol.17, pp. 497-529. DOI: 10.1037//0033-2909.117.3.497.
- Bjorklund, DF & Pellegrini, AD 2002, *The origins of human nature: Evolutionary developmental psychology*, APA Books, Washington
- Bowlby, J 1973, *Attachment and loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and anger*, Basic Books, NewYork

Bowlby, J 1988, *A secure base*, Basic Books, New York

Feeney, JA 2002, 'Attachment-related dynamics: What can we learn from self-reports of avoidance and anxiety?', *Attachment and Human Development*, vol.4, no.2, pp. 193-200. DOI: 10.1080/14616730210157475.

Hazan C & Shaver P 1987, 'Romantic Love Conceptualized as an Attachment Process', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 52, no.3, pp. 511-524. DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511.

Kamenov, Ž & Jelić, M 2003, 'Validacija instrumenta za mjerenje privrženosti u različitim vrstama bliskih odnosa: Modifikacija Brennanova Inventara iskustava u bliskim vezama', *Suvremena psihologija*, vol. 6, pp. 73-91.

Khaleque, A 2001, 'Parental acceptance-rejection, psychological adjustment, and intimate adult relationships' Unpublished master's thesis, School of Family Studies, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT.

Khaleque, A & Rohner, RP 2002, 'Perceived parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment: A meta-analysis of cross-cultural and intracultural studies', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 64, pp. 54-64. DOI: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2002.0054.x.

Leary, MR 1999, 'Making sense of self-esteem', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 8, pp. 32-35. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8721.00008

Main, M & Solomon, J 1986, 'Discovery of an insecure-disorganized/disonented attachment pattern'. in TB Brazelton & MW Yogman (Eds.), *Affective development infancy*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, NJ, pp. 95-124.

Mihić, I 2012, Trijada kao jedinica afektivne vezanosti: partnerski odnosi među roditeljima i afektivna vezanost deteta. In T Stefanović Stanojević, I. Mihić, N. Hanak (Eds.). *Afektivna vezanost i porodični odnosi: razvoj i značaj*, Centar za primenjenu psihologiju, Beograd, pp. 107-119.

Rohner, RP & Rohner, EC 1980, 'Worldwide tests of parental acceptance-rejection theory', *Behavior Science Research*, vol. 15, pp. 1-21.

Rohner, RP 1986, *The warmth dimension: Foundations of parental acceptance-rejection theory*, Sage Publications, Inc, Beverly Hills, CA

Rohner, RP 1998, *Parental acceptance and rejection bibliography*, University of Connecticut, Center for the Study of Parental Acceptance and Rejection, Storrs, CT:

Rohner, RP & Veneziano, RA 2001, 'The importance of father love: History and contemporary evidence', *Review of General Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 382-405. DOI: 10.1037/1089-2680.5.4.382.

Rohner, RP 2004, 'The "parental acceptance-rejection syndrome": Universal correlates of perceived rejection', *American Psychologist*, vol. 59, pp. 830-840. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.59.8.830.

Rohner, RP & Khaleque, A 2008, 'Relations between perceived partner and parental acceptance.' in JK Quinn & IG Zambini (Eds.), *Family relations: 21st century issues and challenges*. Nova Science Publishers, Inc, New York, NY,

Rohner, RP, Khaleque A & Cournoyer, DE 2009, *Introduction to parental acceptance-rejection theory, methods, evidence and implications*, viewed 3. March 2016, <[http://www.cspar.uconn.edu/introduction%20to%20parental%20acceptance\\_09.pdf](http://www.cspar.uconn.edu/introduction%20to%20parental%20acceptance_09.pdf)>

Stefanović-Stanojević, T, Mihić, I & Hanak, N 2012, *Afektivna vezanost i porodični odnosi: razvoj i značaj*, Centar za primenjenu psihologiju, Beograd.

Veneziano, RA 2000, 'Perceived paternal and maternal acceptance and rural African American and European American youths' psychological adjustment', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol.62, no.1, pp. 123-132. DOI: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00123.x.

Vulić-Prtorić, A 2004, Skala kvalitete obiteljskih interakcija, *Zbirka psihologijskih skala i upitnika II*. Sveučilište u Zadru, Zadar.