MEASURING ATTACHMENT IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF A NEW SELF-REPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

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Keywords: Attachment in Middle Childhood Questionnaire; psychometric properties; attachment; middle childhood

Middle childhood is an important, developmental period in which conscious aspects of attachment representations can be effectively assessed (Bosmans & Kerns 2015). Of the few self-reports currently available, some provide a broad evaluation of security vs. insecurity (e.g., SS; Kerns et al., 1996), while others (e.g., ECR-RC, Brenning et al., 2011) differentiate among insecurity dimensions (i.e., anxiety and avoidance). Both types of measures are often administered together, potentially leading to excessive participant burden and a lack of parsimony due to overlapping item content and the use of different response formats, which may negatively impact on data quality. To address these issues, in three studies we developed and evaluated the psychometric properties of a more comprehensive and less time-consuming tool, the Attachment in Middle Childhood Questionnaire (AMCQ), in a sample of Italian school-age children.

In Study 1 (N = 111; Mage = 8.9 yrs), 30 items selected from the SS and ECR-RC were adapted to the same response format (i.e., “some/other” format; Harter 2012) and subjected to an Exploratory Factor Analysis; 21 items were retained. In Study 2 (N = 234; Mage = 9.2 yrs), Structural Equation Models (SEMs) were used to define the final questionnaire. In Study 3 (N = 727; Mage = 10.5 yrs), the latter was subject to a series of SEMs to test its factor structure, invariance across age and gender, and external validity.

The final questionnaire comprised 10 items (5 for anxiety, 5 for avoidance) and a supplementary felt security subscale (5 items). SEMs supported its: factorial validity, structural invariance across gender and age, and concurrent and convergent validity with a host of external measures.

The AMCQ is a promising tool to assess attachment in middle childhood. Future research may evaluate its cross-cultural validity and associations with other assessment methods.