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Developmental Pathways to Ontological Well-Being: The Roles of Parental Control, Identity Foreclosure, and Authenticity

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Abstract

This study examines developmental pathways linking parental attitudes to ontological well-being in young adulthood. Ontological well-being reflects individuals' sense of life continuity, existential meaning, and future orientation. Although parental control has been associated with psychological adjustment, the mechanisms through which it influences existential functioning remain insufficiently explored.

The study investigated whether identity foreclosure and authenticity processes mediate the relationship between perceived parental acceptance-control and ontological well-being. The sample consisted of 304 young adults aged between 18 and 35 years. Data were collected through validated online self-report measures assessing parental attitudes, identity status, authenticity, and ontological well-being. Serial mediation analyses were conducted using PROCESS Macro.

Findings indicated that parental control significantly predicted identity foreclosure, which was associated with increased authenticity fragility, particularly self-alienation. Self-alienation emerged as the strongest predictor of ontological vulnerability. Serial mediation analyses showed that paternal control influenced ontological risk primarily through identity foreclosure and self-alienation, demonstrating a full mediation pattern, whereas maternal control showed both direct and indirect effects. Additional analyses suggested stronger indirect pathways during emerging adulthood.

The findings highlight the importance of developmental self-processes in understanding existential aspects of psychological well-being.

Keywords: Ontological well-being, parental control, identity foreclosure, authenticity, self-alienation, emerging adulthood