PARENTING STYLE AND ATTACHMENT

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A doctoral thesis on „Perceived Parenting Style and Attachment to Significant Others in Early Adulthood", defended in 2014, is the base of this book. Three are the main motives behind printing the book almost ten years later. The first motive is related to the fact that studies on parenting and attachment is even more needed nowadays, and different research views are esential in their better understanding. The second motive is related to the new knowledge that the conducted research brings. The applied author's approach to the study of parenting style and attachment, together with the obtained results and the conclusions, is precisly that – a unique perspective on the two constructs. The third motive concerns the developed and adapted methods for assessing parenting style and attachment and the possibility of making them available to all doctoral students and researchers in their scientific work. The publication of the book in itself is valuable for several reasons: 1) it provides a coherent and comprehensive theoretical overview of two classic theories of parenting style and attachment; 2) it applies an innovative author's approach to parenting style research, bringing out perceived mixed styles of parenting in early adulthood; 3) it proves that the degree of responsiveness and warmth is leading in the evaluation of parental behaviour in a retrospective plan; 4) it demonstrates that the established attachment style to the mother and father is successfully projected in the relations with the other significant figures; and 5) it outlines individual differences in perceived parenting style and attachment.

The main goal of this book is to clarify parenting as a system and to enrich the existing idea of parenthood nowadays. In this line, one of the highlights of the work is an in-depth study of the perceived parenting style in early adulthood. The vast research body does not provide clear and definitive answers regarding the inconsistent behaviour of the parents in the process of interactions and the implementation of practices from different parenting styles. In today's society, we can talk about practising and experiencing mixed parenting styles. The study also traces the formed attachment styles and their reproducibility in terms of various significant figures in life – mother, father, intimate partner, and best friend. The research investigates the relationship between perceived parenting style and attachment in early adulthood. The influence of both constructs is outlined in terms of specific individual characteristics.

The conclusions are several:

1. It is proven that responsiveness and warmth in relationships with parents are crucial in assessing parenthood retrospectively. Over time in the evaluation of parenting, people are more likely to keep a level of warmth and responsiveness than a level of control and rigour.
2. A thorough understanding of the characteristics of the perceived parenting style reveals that the style is perceived the same regardless of the parent who applies it. Warmth, support and understanding provided by at least one of the two parents promote better personal development and a stable attachment. There is partial dominance of the perceived parenting style of one of the parents in shaping the total perceived parenting style. This result states that this study opens up new horizons where studies can outline the dominance of one of the parents in the overall perception of parenting.
3. The study proves the existence of perceived mixed parenting styles in early adulthood. There is evidence of three different combined parenting styles in early adulthood – authoritative-permissive, authoritarian-neglectful and undifferentiated style. That confirms the flexibility and changes occurring in the parents` behaviour and stresses the importance of responsiveness and warmth in parent-child interaction. The undifferentiated parenting style is emerging as a flexible style that is not unambiguously defined, and its perception depends on the overall family environment.
4. The study of the interaction between parenting style and attachment in different interaction contexts reveals that the specifics of parenting style are essential in attachment formation, which in turn regulates individual behaviour. The main point is that the attachment is constructed with a relatively stable character and extends to all significant figures.

In conclusion, the book and the presented study have theoretical and practical implications. In the academic plan, this research laid the foundations for further investigation in the field of combined parenting styles and the factors that influence the perception of these styles. In practical terms, the results may be incorporated into the development of various programs - education for parents, counselling, individual and group work.