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Emotional autonomy and separation process during adolescence

In the past few decades the definition and operationalization of emotional autonomy have been greatly debated (“detachment debate”, Silverberg & Gondoli, 1996). More recently Beyers, Goossens, Van Calster and Duriez (2005) have confirmed the multidimensional measure of emotional autonomy using EAS (Emotional Autonomy Scale, Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) and indicated its possible relation with developmental outcomes even though conceptual foundations of emotional autonomy, and by extension, the detachment debate, have not been clarified. On the other hand, aloneness/loneliness during adolescence is associated with identity construction and individuation/separation process (Goossens & Marcoen, 1999). The aim of the present study is to investigate the internal structure of the Italian version of the EAS (Ingoglia, 2001) and analyse the relation between emotional autonomy and aloneness/loneliness during adolescence. The Italian versions of LLCA (Melotti et al., 2006) and of the EAS (Ingoglia, 2001) were administered to 775 Italian adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years. Data have confirmed the factorial structure proposed by Beyers et al (2005) with two second higher-order factors ($\chi^2(71) = 82.95; p = .157$), even though the “Detachment” factor has shown low internal consistency. A relation between “Separation” factor and loneliness toward parents has also emerged. These findings have important implications for the detachment debate, identifying a possible indicator of the developmental process of disengagement from parents in the “Separation” factor.