

The contributions of child and romantic attachment to sleep quality
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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the relation between attachment and sleep, although both develop around the first year of life and mutually influence each other. Furthermore, attachment styles and dimensions have been associated with sleep difficulties in both childhood and adulthood. However, these findings have not been consistent, especially among dismissing individuals. In addition, the specific contributions of both child and romantic attachment to sleep quality have not been investigated thus far. This cross-sectional study aims to examine the ways child and romantic attachment are associated with sleep quality. A sample of 671 heterosexual residents of the United States, aged 18 to 65 years, were recruited through social media platforms. It was hypothesized that: 1) Romantic attachment significantly and positively explains the association between child attachment scores (higher scores indicate less security) and poorer sleep quality so that this association is weakened in the presence of romantic attachment; 2) Dismissing or secure romantic attachment is related to good sleep quality while preoccupied or fearful romantic attachment is related to poor sleep quality. Analyses were stratified by sex and were adjusted for age, race/ethnicity, education, income, marital status, length of current romantic relationship, and recruitment site. The mediational hypothesis (1) was supported for models examining the relation between child anxious attachment and sleep quality in men and women. The test of the second hypothesis revealed a significant relation between romantic attachment dimensions and sleep, but no specific attachment style was associated with sleep quality. The links between romantic attachment insecurity and sleep dysfunction by sex suggests that men and women regulate affect differently. Considering attachment as part of the broader framework of emotion regulation provides a window into individual differences in sleep quality, and sleep-wake patterns may be understood as manifestations of attachment behaviors in research, prevention, and treatment of sleep difficulties in adults.