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Family Contexts as a Background for the Development of Romantic Competencies in Adolescents

Konteksty rodzinne jako płaszczyzna kształtowania się kompetencji romantycznych adolescentów

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Abstract

Introduction. Adolescence is a critical developmental period during which young people gain experiences that prepare them for social and emotional life as adults. The family, as the primary socialisation environment, plays a significant role in shaping relational patterns and attitudes toward close relationships.

Aim. This study aims to understand the influence of family contexts on the development of adolescents' romantic competencies. Particular emphasis was placed on factors such as attachment style, parenting practices, family climate, and sibling relationships.

Methods and materials. The study is based on a systematic literature review conducted in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. Sixteen publications were analysed from 1,631 records retrieved from databases such as Scopus, ERIC, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost, Oaister, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. A principle-based concept

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analysis approach was applied to identify antecedents of romantic competence rooted in the family of origin.

Results and conclusion. Supportive parenting practices and positive family relationships directly enhance the development of adolescents' romantic competence, while family conflicts, neglect, and violence increase the risk of relational difficulties. Sibling relationships can act as both a protective factor and a source of conflict.

The study highlights the need for implementing preventive and intervention programs that promote engaged and supportive parenting as well as foster family relationships that serve as a platform for adolescents to practice communication, conflict resolution, and self-regulation skills. Special attention should be given to tailoring support to the specific needs arising from different family structures and cultural norms in adolescents' developmental processes.

Keywords: adolescents, romantic competencies, family, literature review, romantic relationships

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. Adolescencja to kluczowy okres rozwojowy, podczas którego młode osoby zdobywają doświadczenia przygotowujące je do życia społecznego i emocjonalnego w dorosłości. Rodzina, jako podstawowe środowisko socjalizacyjne, odgrywa istotną rolę w kształtowaniu wzorców relacyjnych oraz postaw wobec bliskich związków.

Cel. Celem niniejszego badania jest zrozumienie wpływu kontekstu rodzinnego na rozwój kompetencji romantycznej u adolescentów. Szczególny nacisk położono na czynniki takie jak styl przywiązania, praktyki wychowawcze, klimat rodzinny oraz relacje między rodzeństwem.

Metody i materiały. Badanie opiera się na systematycznym przeglądzie literatury przeprowadzonym zgodnie z wytycznymi PRISMA. Spośród 1 631 wyników, pozyskanych z baz danych, takich jak Scopus, ERIC, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost, Oaister, Google Scholar oraz ResearchGate, przeanalizowano szesnaście publikacji. Wykorzystano podejście analizy koncepcji opartej na zasadach, aby zidentyfikować antecedenty kompetencji romantycznej, mające źródło w rodzinie pochodzenia.

Wyniki i wnioski. Wspierające praktyki wychowawcze oraz pozytywne relacje rodzinne bezpośrednio sprzyjają rozwojowi kompetencji romantycznej u adolescentów, podczas gdy konflikty rodzinne, zaniedbanie i przemoc zwiększają ryzyko trudności w nawiązywaniu i utrzymywaniu relacji. Relacje między rodzeństwem mogą pełnić zarówno funkcję ochronną, jak i stanowić źródło konfliktów.

Badanie podkreśla potrzebę wdrażania programów profilaktycznych i interwencyjnych, które promują zaangażowane i wspierające rodzicielstwo oraz wzmacniają relacje rodzinne jako platformę do rozwijania umiejętności komunikacji, rozwiązywania konflik-

tów i samoregulacji u młodzieży. Szczególną uwagę należy zwrócić na dostosowanie wsparcia do specyficznych potrzeb wynikających z różnych struktur rodzinnych norm kulturowych w procesach rozwojowych młodzieży.

Słowa kluczowe: adolescenci, kompetencje romantyczne, rodzina, przegląd badań, związki uczuciowe

Introduction

Forming close and meaningful relationships, particularly romantic ones, is a critical developmental task for adolescents as they transition into young adulthood. Adolescents' romantic experiences contribute significantly to their relational development and can predict the quality of their intimate relationships later in life (Connolly *et al.*, 2014). The current study was designed to provide a comprehensive review of research on family factors that underline the development of adolescents' romantic relationships. Using a systematic review as a method, an attempt was made to answer the question: What family factors influence the development of romantic competencies in adolescents, and how can this information be used to identify risk and protective factors as well as to plan possible forms of support? This approach is possible because systematic reviews, as a form of secondary-level analysis (secondary research), summarise existing research to establish what is already known about the phenomenon, subject, or topic, and integrate findings from primary studies to provide a clear and comprehensive answer to a research question (Newman & Gough, 2020).

Romantic Competence in Adolescence

Experiences of relationships during adolescence hold developmental value for relationship formation and constitute an integral part of the social framework upon which young adults' romantic relationships are built (Meier & Allen, 2009). Romantic competencies play a crucial role in this process, comprising a complex set of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, attitudes, and knowledge manifesting through specific behaviours in interactions with others. These competencies enable individuals to perform tasks, navigate challenges, and function effectively in romantic relationships. When integrated, they facilitate the building, maintenance, and development of healthy, lasting, and satisfying romantic partnerships (Kacprzak-Wachniew & Spychalska-Stasiak, in review).

Through these relationships, adolescents gain opportunities to engage in more mature forms of intimacy, explore and develop a sense of identity, and learn to navigate the complexities of interpersonal dynamics. These processes are critical for their successful transition into young adulthood and the formation of healthy, lasting romantic partnerships (Collins, 2003; Connolly *et al.*, 2014; Xia *et al.*, 2018). Recognising this developmental significance, researchers have begun to focus on the roots of these relationships, noting that the impact of these experiences can vary depending on the broader family context in which they occur (Connolly *et al.*, 2014).

The justification for exploring the connections between family context and adolescents' romantic competencies stems from the growing number of divorces and changes in family structures. According to data from the *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* [Central Statistical Office] (GUS, 2024), since 2011, there has been a decline in the number of existing marriages in Poland and an increase in the number of divorces. Parental divorces, along with changes in family structures, influence adolescents' romantic development (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2008), for instance, by differentiating the timing of adolescents' entry into romantic relationships (Steinberg *et al.*, 2006) and shaping their beliefs about, and behaviours in, romantic relationships (Mahl, 2001). Further systematic analysis of the relationship between the development of romantic competencies and family-related factors can help identify risk and protective factors. This, in turn, may support intervention efforts in dysfunctional families and provide insights into how best to assist adolescents in forming healthy relationships in an increasingly dynamic society. This is particularly important because adolescence is a period when young people begin to engage in their first romantic relationships.

The lack of adequate romantic competencies can lead to risky behaviours, such as in the domain of sexual behaviours (Cucci *et al.*, 2020; Davila *et al.*, 2009) or aggression within relationships (Fosco, Xia *et al.*, 2016). Among emerging adults, romantic competencies have been associated with greater security, healthier decision-making, higher relationship satisfaction, and fewer internalising symptoms (Davila *et al.*, 2017). The role of the family in shaping appropriate relational patterns and skills is crucial to ensuring that young people's relationships serve as a source of satisfaction and psychological well-being.

As the primary educational environment, the family provides young people with behavioural models and shapes their attitudes toward romantic relationships. Thus, the family context serves as a significant backdrop for the development of adolescents' romantic relationships. Several theoretical frameworks offer insights into these processes. John Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) emphasises that early experiences with caregivers shape internal models of intimacy and relationships. The DEARR model (Development of Early Adult Romantic Relationships) expands on these assumptions by incorporating variables such as family structure and relationships with family mem-

bers (Karney *et al.*, 2007). Additionally, socio-cultural theories highlight the family as a system and a key context for emotional and relational socialisation. These include family systems theory (Bowen, 1974), social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Nangle *et al.*, 2010), and the heuristic model of emotional socialisation (Eisenberg *et al.*, 1998). Each of these frameworks underscores the importance of the family environment in developing the relational competencies that underpin adolescents' romantic relationships.

Methods

The aim of this article is to discuss the links between family functioning and the development of romantic competence in adolescents. A systematic review of 17 texts, selected during previously completed research based on a principle-based approach to analysing the concept of romantic competence (Kacprzak-Wachniew & Spychalska-Stasiak, *in press*), was conducted. Principle-based Concept Analysis offers a structured, multidimensional framework for examining complex concepts according to four broad philosophical principles: epistemological, pragmatic, linguistic, and logical (Smith & Mörelius, 2021). Using keywords related to romantic competence and adolescent romantic relationships, the following databases were searched: ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost, Oaister, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. The review additionally included an analysis of bibliographical references. The selection process followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. A flow diagram depicting the flow of information through the different phases of a systematic review is included in Appendix B. Out of 1,631 records, 70 texts were selected for analysis (excluding duplicates, meta-analyses, and texts with a subject matter other than the targeted research focus—romantic, interpersonal, or heterosocial competence).

In previous research (Kacprzak-Wachniew & Spychalska-Stasiak, *in review*), antecedents of romantic competence were identified—factors originating from the individual, the couple, the peer group, and the family of origin. This article focuses on discussing family-related antecedents, interpreting them as a significant area for preventive work with parents and adolescents. Antecedents are understood differently within existing approaches to concept analysis (see Walker and Avant's Model in Walker Olszewski & Avant, 2005; Rodgers, 2000). In Principle-based Concept Analysis (Smith & Mörelius, 2021), antecedents are not treated as a separate, formal category but rather as an important element to help understand the conditions under which a concept develops and which factors influence it.

Results

The article focuses on the analysis of the studies, included in Appendix A, which are assigned to eight groups: attachment style, parental relationships, parental divorce/romantic behaviour, parenting practices, family climate, support, siblings, parent-child relationships, and child abuse and neglect (see Table 2). The texts were grouped based on the variables studied.

Table 2

Antecedents of romantic competencies that have their sources in the family of origin

Attachment	Parental relationships	Parenting practices	Family climate	Support	Siblings	Parents-child relationships	Children abuse and neglect
Jorgensen-Wells <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Crawford <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Hauck (2021)	Fosco, Van Ryzin <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Laursen <i>et al.</i> (2006)	Doughty <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Szwedo <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Labella <i>et al.</i> (2018)
Kumar & Mattanah (2016)	Hauck (2021)	Shulman <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Xia <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Shulman <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Gallagher <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Fosco, Xia <i>et al.</i> (2016)	
Steinberg & Davila (2008)	Shulman <i>et al.</i> (2012) Conger <i>et al.</i> (2000)	Xia <i>et al.</i> (2018) Conger <i>et al.</i> (2000)		Shulman <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Conger <i>et al.</i> (2000) Updegraff <i>et al.</i> (2006)	Updegraff <i>et al.</i> (2006)	

Source: Kacprzak & Spychalska-Stasiak, in review.

The Importance of Attachment in Romantic Competence

Both studies (Jorgensen-Wells *et al.*, 2021; Kumar & Mattanah, 2016) confirm the crucial role of attachment in shaping romantic competence but differ in the processes considered (direct vs. mediational) and in their approach to the influence of mothers and fathers on this process. The former proposes a more complex theoretical model, whilst the latter offers an empirical perspective on the impact of attachment on psychosocial adjustment.

McKell Jorgensen-Wells, Spencer James, and Erin Kramer Holmes (2021) highlight that family context, such as attachment, provides individuals with relational models that are crucial in adulthood. Secure attachment to both mothers and fathers was as-

sociated with better psychosocial adjustment. Romantic competence and relationship satisfaction mediated the link between attachment to mothers and psychosocial adjustment, but this was not the case for attachment to fathers. Secure attachment to mothers predicted better romantic competence and relationship satisfaction.

Parental emotional availability, defined as parents who demonstrate warmth, consistency, understanding, support, and positive communication (mainly based on attachment security) and conflict resolution styles with their child and partner, was an important moderator of the relationship between romantic competence and depressive symptoms. Girls with parents low in emotional availability may struggle to develop the skills needed to navigate romantic relationships, increasing their risk of depression. In contrast, for participants with high parental emotional availability, lower romantic competence was not significantly associated with depressive symptoms. Importantly, although not explicitly described in the article's main text but shown in the results table, all three measures used—assessing adolescents' perception of their relationships with parents, participants' relationship styles with their mother and father, and the evaluation of secure attachment based on information about the parent-adolescent relationship with both parents—revealed that the level of romantic competence positively correlated with measures of secure attachment (Steinberg & Davila, 2008).

Attachment, described as an internal working model, was also included as an element of the family context, indirectly influencing romantic competence and the development of attachment in adolescents' romantic relationships. Within this theoretical model, family-originating factors also encompass parental control (Kumar & Mattanah, 2016).

Parental Relationships, Romantic Behaviours, and Divorce as Factors Differentiating the Development of Adolescents' Relational Competencies

Kenya Crawford, Susan McHale, and Christine Stanik (2013) investigated how parental relationship dynamics, including marital quality (love and conflicts), influence adolescents' perceived romantic competencies. Their findings indicated that as mothers' reports of marital conflict increased adolescents' reports of romantic competence decreased. Children raised in high-conflict environments faced difficulties in developing interpersonal skills and establishing healthy relationships. Lauren Hauck (2021) was also interested in how parental relationships, as perceived by their children rather than reported by the parents themselves, influence the development of adolescents' romantic competencies, but she observed no significant direct or interactive effects of parents' romantic behaviours, such as love, conflict, or problem solving.

Shulman, on the other hand, did not focus solely on relationships between current partners but also examined those who had divorced, providing insight into the relational and developmental challenges associated with parental divorce, particularly in the context of developing romantic competencies. The findings indicated that divorce

significantly explained the romantic competence of adolescent girls. However, contrary to expectations, the quality of parental relationships had little impact on romantic competence (Shulman *et al.*, 2012). This is also confirmed by the research of Rand Conger, Ming Cui, Chalandra Bryant, and Glen Elder (2000), which indicates that marital interactions, among other factors, were significantly associated with participants' behaviours toward their romantic partners. However, these interactions indirectly impact the later interpersonal competence of young adults, primarily mediated through parental socialisation practices.

A close relationship with the mother could act as a protective factor, mitigating the adverse effects of marital conflict and divorce (Crawford *et al.*, 2013; Shulman *et al.*, 2012). Intimacy in the parent-child relationship enhanced adolescents' ability to form and maintain satisfying romantic relationships. Mothers who provided emotional support and consistently fostered relational closeness with their children supported the development of positive romantic behaviours (Crawford *et al.*, 2013).

Parenting Practices and the Development of Romantic Competencies

Positive parenting practices are essential for fostering healthy relationships in the future. Conversely, a lack of parental involvement or a conflict-ridden family environment can negatively impact adolescents' ability to form satisfying relationships (Hauck, 2021; Shulman *et al.*, 2016; Xia *et al.*, 2018).

Hauck (2021) examines how parents manage their children's romantic relationships and how this influences their development. The study indicates that a consultative approach — where parents discuss and advise on romantic relationships rather than imposing restrictions or directives — was a significant and positive predictor of adolescent love and the development of romantic competence. Consulting, however, was not related to adolescent poor problem-solving or conflict.

Better problem-solving skills in relationships, but not feelings of love within those relationships, were identified as outcomes of effective (positive) parenting practices. Mengya Xia, Gregory Fosco, Melissa Lippold, and Mark Feinberg's (2018) study analysed these practices in the context of discipline and reasoning. Positive parenting practices, such as consistent and appropriate discipline and inductive reasoning, directly predicted specific aspects of young adult romantic relationship outcomes. Adolescents who benefited from more effective parenting practices were less likely to use violence in later romantic relationships.

Conger *et al.* (2000) conducted comprehensive research on various family-origin factors and analysed parental socialisation practices, marital interactions, and sibling behaviours. The findings revealed that parenting practices (nurturant — involved parenting characterised by warm, supportive, low hostility interactions) were the only significant family-origin predictor of later interpersonal competence. Family interac-

tions, including relationships among siblings and spouses, may indirectly influence young adults' interpersonal competence through parental socialisation practices.

In the context of parenting practices, examining the relationships between parental attitudes and their children's romantic competence is also interesting. Mothers and fathers reported similar levels of supportive attitudes toward their children's romantic involvement, but with distinct motives: fathers supported sons' romantic and sexual experimentation, while mothers aimed to enhance intimacy in both genders. Maternal supportive attitudes were linked to greater romantic competence in sons and daughters, while a maternal protective attitude promoted stable relationships in girls. In contrast, a paternal protective attitude negatively affected daughters' romantic agency, reflecting traditional gender scripts in shaping romantic relationships (Shulman *et al.*, 2016)

Family Climate and the Development of Interpersonal and Romantic Competencies

Gregory Fosco, Mark Van Ryzin, Mengya Xia, and Mark Feinberg (2016) focused on the impact of family climate and interpersonal hostility on the development of young adults' romantic relationships. Their research found that a positive family climate—characterised by higher cohesion, higher organisation, and low levels of family conflict—was associated with romantic competencies. They found that initially, more positive family climates, based on early family functioning, were associated with more feelings of love and connectedness in romantic relationships and lower levels of relationship violence, while maintenance in family climate was a key predictor of relationship problem-solving skills. The low initial family climate was associated with low problem-solving skills, while declines in family functioning were linked to an increase in hostile-aggressive behaviour (HAB) and, indirectly, to violence in relationships. The interplay between a positive family climate and hostility suggests that a supportive family atmosphere can mitigate the negative effects of aggressive interpersonal behaviours.

Similarly, Xia *et al.* (2018) confirmed that young adults from families characterised by cohesion, organisation, and low levels of conflict—the same indicators of a positive family climate as identified by Fosco *et al.* (2016)—reported using more constructive problem-solving strategies and engaging in less violence in their romantic relationships. These studies suggest that family relationships help youth develop problem-solving skills that can prevent destructive conflict and carry over into future romantic relationships.

The Impact of Support on the Development of Romantic Competencies

Emotional support from family, peers, and romantic partners is crucial for developing interpersonal competencies. Adolescents who experienced high social support in all three relationships demonstrated higher self-esteem and greater interpersonal

competence than those who did not have a romantic relationship and reported low support from mothers and friends. Given that these relationship patterns remained stable over time, it can be inferred that receiving support from the mother served as a foundation for developing subsequent relationships and was linked to global self-esteem (Laursen *et al.*, 2006).

A parent's attitude toward an adolescent's involvement in romantic relationships is also important. High scores achieved by the mother indicated that she displayed a realistic and supportive approach toward her adolescent's romantic involvement, which was consistently associated with an increase in the adolescent's romantic competence, regardless of the influence of divorce. When mothers expressed support for their daughters' romantic involvement and trust in their behaviour, daughters were more likely to be engaged in stable relationships, have a more positive and mature perception of romance, and demonstrate better skills in managing their relationships (Shulman *et al.*, 2012).

The role of parent-child interactions in shaping adolescents' ability to establish healthy, stable romantic relationships has already been highlighted (see Shulman *et al.*, 2016). Importantly, studies emphasise that parental support not only aids in developing relational skills but also plays a vital protective role against the negative effects of adverse experiences. These include family conflicts and divorce (Shulman *et al.*, 2012), violence in relationships (Fasco *et al.*, 2016; Xia, 2018).

The Role of Sibling Relationships in the Development of Romantic Competencies

Siblings play a fundamental role in the socialisation process, exerting both short-term and long-term influences on adolescents' relational lives (Doughty *et al.*, 2015; Gallagher *et al.*, 2018). Sibling relationships provide adolescents with early interpersonal experiences that form the foundation for later romantic relationships. Patterns such as cooperation, sharing, and conflict resolution within sibling relationships translate into skills for managing romantic relationships.

It is interesting to consider whether the gender and age of siblings play a role in developing romantic competence. According to research, adolescents with same-gender siblings did not show changes in their perceived romantic competence. In contrast, those with opposite-gender siblings experienced an increase in romantic competence over time (Doughty *et al.*, 2015). After controlling for intimacy in parent-child relationships, during periods when adolescents reported greater closeness with their siblings, they also reported higher levels of romantic competence. The importance of boys' relationships with their sisters was also highlighted by Kimberly Updegraff, Alan Booth, and Shawn M. Thayer (2006). However, experiencing a high level of sibling conflict has been associated with lower romantic competence (Doughty *et al.*, 2015). Acts of relational aggression also influence adolescents' perception of their romantic competence; however, this relationship was observed only in the case of older siblings. When older siblings

experienced more relational aggression from their younger siblings than usual, they reported lower romantic competence. Researchers suggest that experiencing relational aggression may undermine older siblings' self-confidence and their perception of their abilities to build romantic relationships.

However, the research of Conger *et al.* (2000) indicates that sibling behaviours toward the participants, although linked to other family factors, were not an independent factor influencing later behaviours toward romantic partners. Interactions between siblings and other family members may be part of the complex, reciprocal influences within the family of origin.

The Parent-Child Relationship and Its Impact on the Development of Romantic Competencies

Parents' acceptance and successful positive influence behaviours (giving helpful advice, thinking well of their adolescent, and modelling positive behaviour) were particularly significant during early adolescence (at age 13), leading to long-term positive changes in personality traits (*e.g.*, agreeableness, conscientiousness, or emotional stability) between ages 23 and 27. With age, this significance diminished in favour of behaviours from romantic partners, but parental behaviours remained important in certain areas: predicting increased attachment closeness in relationships and greater agreeableness. However, high levels of parental acceptance during late adolescence were associated with reduced functional independence in young adulthood, which, due to a lack of challenges, may lead to increased dependence on parents (Szwedo *et al.*, 2022).

Supportive and warm parent-child relationships play a critical role in developing interpersonal skills, but the impact of the parent-child relationship varies by the child's gender. The study by Updegraff (Updegraff *et al.*, 2006) analysed the interaction between testosterone levels in adolescents and the quality of parent-adolescent and sibling-adolescent relationships in the context of peer experiences. The article highlights that, for boys, close and warm relationships with opposite-sex family members, such as mothers and sisters, play a particularly significant role as models for developing social skills needed in peer relationships.

The nature of family interactions (closeness and conflicts), both those between parents and children as well as triadic interactions involving the inclusion of the adolescent in parental relationships, also impacts the character of adolescents' romantic relationships. It was found that for boys, close relationships with parents fostered more effective behaviours in dating relationships (*e.g.*, using positive conflict resolution strategies). At the same time, this association was not significant for girls. On the other hand, parent-adolescent conflict was associated with more frequent verbally abusive behaviours. Girls in families with high levels of conflict and triangulation were more likely to experience physical violence in their dating relationships (Fasco, Xia *et al.*, 2016)

Neglect and Abuse in Childhood and Their Impact on the Development of Romantic Competencies

Experiences of childhood abuse and neglect predict both romantic competence and relational violence in adulthood. This was confirmed by the results of longitudinal studies, where assessments of relational competence and violence in romantic relationships were conducted repeatedly between the ages of 20 and 32. Particularly significant was the role of the mother as a perpetrator of abuse or neglect, whose behaviour predicted lower romantic competence. The long-term effects of such adverse experiences highlight the critical need for interventions aimed at addressing the relational challenges faced by individuals with histories of abuse and neglect (Labella *et al.*, 2018).

Risk and Protective Factors Rooted in the Family

The presented research clearly shows how family contexts—spanning parent-child relationships, parental interactions, and sibling dynamics—affect the development and shaping of romantic competencies in adolescents and young adults.

Emotional support and constructive parenting practices are the most critical protective factors. Such parenting helps young people learn empathy, conflict resolution, and the ability to form close, satisfying relationships. Additionally, it acts as a buffer in the adolescent's challenging family or relational situations.

Early relational experiences with caregivers form a template for later friendships and romantic relationships. Secure attachment (especially with the mother) is a protective factor—it predicts better romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. In contrast, individuals with a history of childhood trauma often experience difficulties in building healthy intimacy, resolving conflicts, and maintaining stable relationships, particularly in the absence of subsequent psychological and emotional support (a risk factor).

Sibling relationships can serve as a *training ground* for cooperation and conflict resolution, skills that are transferable to future romantic relationships. However, they can also be a source of tension. Negative experiences such as violence, neglect, conflicts, lack of support, rivalry, or aggression between siblings increase the risk of feeling inadequate in the area of romantic competence.

Conclusion for Pedagogical Practice

This article provides a comprehensive overview of current research, which can be valuable for both parents and practitioners working with families and adolescents, particularly in the context of family therapy or psychological counselling.

The findings suggest that among the family factors associated with the development of romantic competence, the most effective interventions may involve enhancing

parenting skills and improving relationships within the family. Educators and therapists working with adolescents and families are encouraged to develop workshops and educational programmes focused on emotional communication, conflict management, and recognising and expressing needs. Depending on the family context (*e.g.*, divorce or blended families), it is essential to tailor the form of support to each family's specific needs and challenges.

Suppose parents want to support their children in developing romantic competence. In that case, they should focus on improving communication and fostering their children's emotional development by nurturing empathy, cooperation, and conflict-resolution skills. It is crucial to provide adolescents with support and acceptance, especially when they engage in new experiences related to romantic relationships. A parenting approach based on monitoring and consultation will be far more supportive than one centred on prohibitions or excessive control.

The earlier difficulties in family relationships (*e.g.*, violence, neglect, or persistently high levels of conflict) are identified, the greater the chance of preventing problems in adolescents' future romantic relationships.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One limitation of the conducted analyses is that only texts addressing the development of romantic, relational, or interpersonal competencies were considered, rather than individual skills that contribute to these competencies. Given the longer tradition of research in this area, a search focusing on individual skills in the context of the family's role in their development might yield different results. Additionally, exploring connections between various aspects of family functioning and adolescents' romantic experiences (viewed as outcomes of the presence or absence of these competencies) could provide further insights.

The analysed texts were categorised into eight areas: attachment style, parental relationships, divorce/parental romantic behaviours, parenting practices, family climate, support, siblings, parent-child relationships, and abuse and neglect. Below are suggested additional areas that may be of interest for further exploration:

- Renegotiation of parent-child relationships during adolescence: This stage is critical for the development of adolescent autonomy. It would be interesting to study how specific parenting styles and parental monitoring influence teenagers' romantic competencies and romantic experiences.
- Gender roles and family context: Families play a significant role in shaping beliefs about gender roles. Gender socialisation likely impacts the development of romantic competencies, as gender roles dictate norms, expectations, and beha-

viour patterns in romantic relationships. For example, girls who held traditional beliefs about weak women and strong men were more likely to experience dating violence (Vives-Cases *et al.*, 2021, as cited in Jankowiak, 2023).

- Romantic relationships in reconstructed families: It would be valuable to examine how children raised in reconstructed families (formed from previous relationships) construct their vision of romantic relationships, especially when exposed to diverse communication patterns and parenting styles.

Understanding these dynamics not only enriches the theoretical framework of romantic competence development but also provides practical insights for creating targeted strategies to support adolescents and families in fostering healthy and fulfilling relational patterns.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Summary of Articles Included in the Analysis

Authors (Year)	Subject of Study	Variables	Key Findings
Conger <i>et al.</i> (2000)	The impact of family of origin on early adult competence in romantic relationships.	Care-based upbringing, marital interactions, sibling interactions, interpersonal competence, behaviour towards partner, relationship satisfaction, relationship commitment.	Care-based upbringing was associated with higher levels of warmth towards the partner. Family interactions influenced romantic relationship behaviour. Interpersonal competence played a key role in the quality of romantic relationships. Sibling behaviour influenced behaviour towards the partner.
Crawford <i>et al.</i> (2013)	The impact of parental marital conflict on children's romantic competence.	Marital conflict (mothers and fathers), romantic competence, parental education, offspring gender, offspring age	Higher marital conflict is linked to lower adolescent romantic competence; mother-child intimacy is positively correlated.
Doughty <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Role of sibling intimacy, conflict, and gender constellation in romantic competence development.	Sibling intimacy and conflict, gender constellation, and romantic competence.	Youth with opposite-sex siblings showed increased romantic competence over time. Greater sibling intimacy correlated with higher romantic competence, while higher sibling conflict was associated with lower romantic competence.
Fosco, Xia <i>et al.</i> (2016)	The relationship between inter-parental conflict, triangulation, and closeness in parent-child relationships.	Inter-parental conflict, triangulation, parent-child closeness, parent-child conflict, anger regulation, age, and gender.	Parent-adolescent closeness predicts dating competence; triangulation into conflicts is linked to abuse.
Fosco, Van Ry- zinet <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Effects of adolescent hostile-aggressive behaviour and family climate on young adult romantic relationships.	Hostile-aggressive behaviour (HAB), family climate, romantic problem-solving, and relationship violence.	Positive family climate predicts better problem-solving; hostile behaviour predicts relationship violence.

Authors (Year)	Subject of Study	Variables	Key Findings
Galla- gher <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Impact of sibling relational aggression on adolescent adjustment, including romantic competence.	Sibling relational aggression, gender, romantic competence, and adolescent adjustment.	Relational aggression predicts lower romantic competence; effects vary by sibling gender and birth order.
Hauck (2021)	Interaction of parental management, adolescent perceptions of marriage, and attachment on romantic competencies.	Parental management, perceptions of marriage, attachment, and romantic competencies.	Parental management strategies predict romantic competence; traditional values influence Latino adolescents.
Jor- gensen- Wells <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Developmental processes of attachment security in adolescent romantic relationships.	Attachment security in romantic relationships, emotional disclosure, and physical affection.	A theoretical model illustrating how the interaction of emotional disclosure and physical affection (direct influences) may lead to the development of attachment security within the context of cognitive development, romantic competence, and family of origin effects (indirect influences).
Kumar & Mattanah (2016)	Impact of parental attachment on romantic competence and psychosocial adjustment in emerging adults.	Parental attachment, romantic competence, relationship satisfaction, psychosocial adjustment.	Secure parental attachment predicts better psychosocial adjustment mediated by romantic competence and satisfaction.
Labella <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Effects of childhood abuse and neglect on adult romantic relationship functioning.	Abuse type, chronicity, co-occurrence, romantic competence, and relational violence.	Abuse and neglect predict lower romantic competence and higher relational violence in adulthood.
Laursen <i>et al.</i> (2006)	The effects of social support in relationships with mothers, friends, and romantic partners on adolescents' self-esteem and interpersonal competence.	Mother support, close friend support, romantic support, global self-esteem, social acceptance, friendship competence, romantic competence, and gender.	Adolescents with high support in all three relationships (mother, friendship, and romantic relationships) had higher self-esteem and interpersonal competence.

Authors (Year)	Subject of Study	Variables	Key Findings
Shulman <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Impact of parental divorce, parenting quality, and maternal history on daughters' romantic competence.	Romantic competence, divorce status, parenting quality, maternal history.	Divorce negatively affects romantic competence; quality parenting and maternal coherence mitigate effects.
Shulman <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Gender-specific patterns in adolescent romantic competence and parental attitudes.	Romantic competence, parental attitudes, and gender differences.	Girls exhibited higher romantic maturity; maternal attitudes influenced romantic competence more than paternal attitudes.
Steinberg & Davila (2008)	Connection between romantic functioning and depressive symptoms, moderated by parental emotional availability.	Romantic functioning, depressive symptoms, and parental emotional availability.	Poor romantic competence is linked to depression; the effects are stronger with emotionally unavailable parents.
Szwedo <i>et al.</i> (2022)	The influence of parental and romantic partner behaviour on adolescents' personality development and relational competence.	Parental acceptance, parental influence, romantic toleration, relational competence, personality traits, independence.	Parental behaviours (acceptance and caring) at early adolescence predict personality traits in young adulthood; romantic partner behaviours at late adolescence predict relational competence.
Updegraff <i>et al.</i> (2006)	Interaction between family relationships, testosterone levels, and peer experiences in adolescence.	Testosterone, family relationship quality, and peer experiences.	Close relationships with mothers and sisters moderated testosterone's impact on peer competence for boys.
Xia <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Influence of family climate and interpersonal skills during adolescence on young adult romantic relationships.	Family climate, parenting practices, interpersonal skills, and romantic relationships.	Positive family climate and parenting practices predicted better problem-solving skills and loving bonds in young adult relationships.

Note. Table Development Using AI Tool – NotebookLM.

Appendix B

Figure 1

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses



