A psychosocial model of parent fixation in people with dementia: the role of personality and attachment.

Abstract

This study replicates and extends research into the occurrence of parent fixation in people with dementia by exploring the relationship between demographic, cognitive and psychological factors. Fifty-one people with dementia, living both in the community and in residential/nursing home settings, were interviewed about their parents and a relative of each completed measures assessing the person with dementia’s demographic details, level of cognitive impairment/executive functioning, behavioural consequences of parent fixation and pre-morbid personality and attachment style. Results indicated that parent fixation can be viewed as a psychosocial phenomenon arising from the environment, pre-morbid personality and attachment style and that the behavioural consequences of parent fixation are maintained by the individual’s level of executive functioning and gender. Findings and clinical implications are discussed in relation to Miesen’s (1992, 1993, 1999) theoretical assumption that dementia is a loss process that activates the experience of feeling unsafe and the emotional need for the security of an attachment figure.