

Attachment to Parents as a Predictor of Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Among Adolescents*

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of parental attachment in adolescents' life satisfaction. The study group consisted of 470 high school students (237 females, 233 males) who were attended schools in Denizli-Turkey in 2016-2017 academic year. In this study, Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale and Attachment to Parents and Friends Inventory were used to gather data. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between variables for the analysis of data. In addition, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the power of the attachment to parent to predict the sub-dimensions of the life satisfaction. The results showed that positive correlations were found between attachment to parents (mother and father) and life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school and self) in adolescents. In addition, it was found that attachment to the parents was a positive and significant predictor of the life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school, self) in adolescents. Implications of these results are discussed within the context of literature.

Keywords: Attachment to parents, multidimensional life satisfaction, adolescents

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is stated that the concept of subjective well-being is a multidimensional structure that includes the individual's satisfaction in the life in general, the satisfaction in certain living areas such as work-family life, health, enthusiasm, love, pride, and less experiencing the negative feelings such as anger, sadness and anxiety that disturb him/her (Eddington & Shuman, 2005). In this context, subjective well-being covers the cognitive and emotional evaluations of one's life in general, and the life satisfaction constitutes the cognitive dimension of the subjective well-being (Diener, Lucas & Oishi, 2002). Life satisfaction, which is described as the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being, is a general cognitive assessment of whether an individual is satisfied with his/her life, as a whole, or with respect to certain living areas such as family, friends, and school experiences (Diener et al., 2002; Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). The individual examines and compares the events in life according to a series of personal criteria that he/she has created. An individual's life satisfaction will be high when his/her living conditions and experiences meet these criteria (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The evaluation of the individual is important rather than his/her life conditions, because, the value given to concepts such as health, financial situation, energy can change from person to person. It is emphasized that the individual again has to evaluate the satisfaction that he/she gains from these concepts (Diener, Horwitz & Emmons, 1985). Life satisfaction considerably affects individuals' physical and psychological health. Therefore, it is quite important that factors predicting life satisfaction are determined in adolescence (Seligman, 2011). In recent years, there has been an increase in research on adolescents' life satisfaction. These recent studies have indicated that life satisfaction is positively related to positive emotions (Franke, Huebner & Hills, 2017), learning purpose orientation (Özgüngör, Oral & Karababa, 2015), the time with family and the social support from family (Lau & Bradshaw, 2018), and family and peer attachment (Laghi, Pallini, Baumgartner, Guarino & Baiocco, 2016). Therefore, the concept of life satisfaction is associated with positive concepts in terms of mental health.

The literature has shown that life satisfaction is expressed to be based on individual experiences in general (Diener, 1984). These individual experiences may be aimed at environment, school, friends and parents (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). When it is considered that the relationship between each individual and his/her parents has different individual experiences, the emotional bond that is felt as a result of these experiences can be effective on the life satisfaction. In the literature, the emotional relationship between the child and caregivers with consistency and continuity is called attachment (Thompson, 2002).

The attachment was first conceptualized by Bowlby (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Bowlby's attachment theory was influenced by the need to explain the social, psychological and developmental problems of children living in hospitals or nursing homes since infancy. Bowlby examined the effects of these problems on adulthood and suggested that the lack of emotional bond between the baby and the caregiver was important in the emergence

of certain psychological problems (hopelessness, anxiety, depression, anger, indifference) (Bretherton, 1992). During the attachment process, new born babies act to increase their sense of security when they are afraid, vulnerable or distressed, and to maintain physical closeness. The attachment figure (parent or caregiver) acts as a reassurance base that gives a sense of closeness to the baby. Babies are interested in discovering those around them without fear when they feel the attachment figure next to them. When it is separated and then returned, the attachment figure acts as a safe refuge for relaxation, reassurance and support. Thus, the attachment process has three important functions: proximity, security base and a safe haven (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). According to the attachment theory, children form mental representations about themselves and their parents or caregivers during the interaction with them. The models with inner functions, based on early ages' attachment experiences, affect the child's expectations and self-esteem as well as the levels of confidence and comfort in social relationships. The impact of these mental representations or internal functioning models continues throughout the life (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). The models that function internally in secure attachment help to cope with stress situations together with the basic sense of trust, whereas, in anxious attachment, where the family behaves inconsistently or unresponsive, the child feels worthless (Bowlby, 2012). While safely-attached individuals have highly positive communication skills (Guerrero & Jones, 2005), it was concluded that insecurely-attached individuals have low social interaction levels (Anders & Tucker, 2000) and high levels of loneliness (Ilhan, 2012). As a result, an increase or decrease in the level of life satisfaction might be observed according to the level of attachment of the child or adolescent to the parents.

In the completion of the process of becoming an individual for a child, successfully passing through the development periods and the consistency and continuity of the emotional relationships he/she establishes with the mother and father have an important place. There are two important periods in the process of separation and individuation of the child. The first is the period covering the child's first three years (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 2003), and the second is the period of adolescence, in which the parents' ties with the child are changed (Blos, 1989). Adolescence is a period in which many changes are experienced in physical, emotional and social areas, and which involves changes that can affect all developmental areas of life (Yörükoğlu, 2004). Perceptions of quality of life during this period can be the basis for psychological well-being in the future (Özgüngör et al., 2015). Individuals who have a successful adolescence period develop productive, happy, and meaningful social relationships, while those who fail may have an aggressive and destructive future (Aydın, 1999).

Recent studies on adolescents showed that secure attachment can be a possible determinant of subjective well-being (Baytemir, 2016; Ma & Huebner, 2008; Özdemir, 2016). On the other hand, it has been concluded that insecure attachments in adolescents have a significant negative relationship with subjective well-being (Joshnloo, 2018). The concept of life satisfaction is defined as the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being

(Diener et al., 2002). The concept of life satisfaction is examined in the context of general life satisfaction in certain studies and in the context of multidimensional life satisfaction in other studies. Multidimensional life satisfaction is sequenced as friend, family, self, environment and school (Huebner, 1994). There are previous studies evaluating the relationships between life satisfaction and attachment revealed positive relationships between one-dimensional general life satisfaction and parent attachment (Laghi et al., 2016; Özdemir & Koruklu, 2013) and there are studies dealt with multidimensional life satisfaction and parent attachment, which chose the American secondary school students (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004) as the sample. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between parental attachment and multidimensional life satisfaction in adolescents who continue their high school education in Turkey. In addition, it is important to determine whether the thesis that claims the impact of mental representations and internal functioning models continue on a lifelong basis (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999) is valid on adolescents. In line with these explanations, the aim of this research is to examine whether parental attachment predict adolescents' multidimensional life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school, self) significantly.

2. METHOD

Study Group

The study was designed as a correlational study model, in accordance with the purpose of the study. The study group consisted of 470 high school students (237 females 50.4% - 233 males 49.6%) who were attended schools in Denizli/Turkey in 2016-2017 academic year and voluntarily participated in the study. The class levels in the study group were as follows: 132 were 9th graders, 105 were 10th graders, 111 were 11th graders students, and 122 were 12th graders.

Data Collection Tools

Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale

The original form developed by Huebner (1994) is a scale consisting of 40 items, 10 of which are negative. This scale consists of a total of five dimensions: family, friends, school, environment and self. The adaptation of multidimensional student life satisfaction scale to Turkish was done by Çivitci (2007) and as a result of factor analysis, 15th, 24th, 35th and 36th items of the scale were removed from the original form of the scale. The Turkish form of the scale consists of five factors and 36 items in total. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the "Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale" were calculated by Çivitci as: .74 in family sub-dimension, .76 in school sub-dimension, .85 in friend sub-dimension, .70 in self sub-dimension, .75 in living environment sub-dimension (Çivitci, 2007). Within the framework of this study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the "Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale" were calculated as: .82 in family sub-dimension, .83 in school sub-dimension, .85 in friend sub-dimension, .73 in self sub-dimension, .78 in living environment sub-dimension.

Attachment to Parents and Friends Inventory

The original form of this scale was developed by Raja, McGee and Stanton (1992) and adapted by Günaydın, Selçuk, Sümer and Uysal (2005). Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated as .88 for the mother and .90 for the father forms in the adaptation study. Although there are three sub-dimensions, which are trust, communication and alienation, in the original form of the scale, but it was found that the three-factor structure was not validated in the study on the Turkish sample. Therefore, it was expressed that the Turkish form of the scale was one dimensional. In addition, for the scale, the test-retest study, which was conducted at six-week intervals, a correlation of .87 was found between the mother's attachment scores and a correlation of .88 was found between the father's attachment scores. (Günaydın et al., 2005).

Analysis of Data

In the first place, it was checked whether the data were appropriate for the use of parametric statistics. It was determined that the data were suitable for the use of parametric statistics due to the normal distribution (in Table 1). When the skewness coefficients were examined in Table 1, attachment to mother, attachment to father, family, friend, environment, school and self life satisfaction were -1.13, .88, -.57, -.01, -.46, -.73, -.28, respectively. Also when the kurtosis values are examined, it is seen that they are 1.30, .27, -.14, -.63, -.31, .13, -.37, respectively. These values met to propose by Finney and DiStefano (2006) so that all variables have been the normal distribution. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between variables in the analysis of data. In addition, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the power of the attachment to parent to predict the sub-dimensions of the life satisfaction. Analysis was tested in computer with using SPSS program pack.

3. FINDINGS

In this part of the study, the correlation values between attachment to parents and the sub-dimensions of life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school, self) were presented and then regression analyses were conducted.

Table 1.

Correlation between variables and descriptive statistics

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Attachment to Mother	-						
2. Attachment to Father	.48**	-					
3. Family Life Satisfaction	.67**	.65**	-				
4. Friend Life Satisfaction	.26**	.21**	.27**	-			

5. Environment L. Satisfaction	.50**	.38**	.48**	.29**	-		
6. School Life Satisfaction	.21**	.18**	.24**	.25**	.32**	-	
7. Self Life Satisfaction	.24**	.22**	.30**	.48**	.30**	.31**	-
Mean	47.40	44.20	26.61	19.31	20.76	22.17	18.41
Standard Deviation	8.67	10.25	3.63	5.28	4.65	4.52	3.06
Skewness Coefficient	-1.13	-.88	-.57	-.01	-.46	-.73	-.28
Kurtosis Coefficient	1.30	.27	-.14	-.63	-.31	.13	-.37

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 1 showed that there was a significant relationship between attachment to mother and family life satisfaction ($r = .67, p < .01$), friend life satisfaction ($r = .26, p < .01$), environment life satisfaction ($r = .50, p < .01$), school life satisfaction ($r = .21, p < .01$) and self's life satisfaction ($r = .24, p < .01$). Again, Table 1 showed that, there was a significant relationship between attachment to father and family life satisfaction ($r = .65, p < .01$), friend life satisfaction ($r = .21, p < .01$), environment life satisfaction ($r = .38, p < .01$), school life satisfaction ($r = .18, p < .01$) and self's life satisfaction ($r = .22, p < .01$).

Table 2.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results Related to The Prediction of the Sub-Dimensions of Multidimensional Life satisfaction by Attachment to Parents

Predicted Variable	Predicting Variable	B	SH _B	β	t	p	Result of the Regression
Family Life Satisfaction	Attachment to Mother	.25	.02	.47	14.05	.00**	$R = .76$ $R^2 = .59$ $F = 336.87$
	Attachment to Father	.19	.02	.42	12.47	.00**	Durbin-Watson=1.98
Friend Life Satisfaction	Attachment to Mother	.08	.02	.20	3.97	.00**	$R = .27$ $R^2 = .08$ $F = 18.86$
	Attachment to Father	.04	.02	.11	2.23	.02*	Durbin-Watson=2.09
Environment Life Satisfaction	Attachment to Mother	.22	.02	.41	9.15	.00**	$R = .53$ $R^2 = .28$ $F = 88.85$

	Attachment to Father	.08	.02	.19	4.15	.00**	Durbin-Watson=2.04
School Life Satisfaction	Attachment to Mother	.10	.03	.16	3.10	.00**	$R = .23$ $R^2 = .05$ $F = 12.86$
	Attachment to Father	.05	.03	.11	2.06	.04*	Durbin-Watson=1.54
Self Life Satisfaction	Attachment to Mother	.06	.02	.18	3.52	.00**	$R = .27$ $R^2 = .07$ $F = 17.96$
	Attachment to Father	.04	.02	.13	2.59	.01*	Durbin-Watson=1.74

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the prediction of attachment to parents in family life satisfaction in high school adolescents. In Table 2, it is seen that the attachment to the parents had a significant effect on the family life satisfaction ($F_{\text{Reg}} = 336.87, p < .01$). According to the value of R^2 , attachment to parents explained 59% of the variance observed in family life satisfaction. According to the multivariate regression analysis to examine the role of attachment to parents in assessing friend life satisfaction, attachment to parents has been a significant procedure for attachment to friends ($F_{\text{Reg}} = 18.86, p < .05$). According to the corresponding R^2 value, attachment to parents explained 8% of the variance observed in friend life satisfaction. According to the multiple linear regression analysis carried out to analyse the environmental life satisfaction, which is another sub-dimension of multidimensional life satisfaction, the attachment to parents has significantly predicted the environmental life satisfaction ($F_{\text{Reg}} = 88.85, p < .01$). According to the corresponding R^2 value, attachment to parents explained 28% of the observed in environmental life satisfaction. According to the multiple linear regression analysis to examine the role of attachment to parents in school life satisfaction, the attachment to parents has significantly predicted the school life satisfaction ($F_{\text{Reg}} = 12.86, p < .05$). According to the corresponding R^2 value, attachment to parents explained 5% of the observed in school life satisfaction. Finally, according to the multiple linear regression analysis to examine self's life satisfaction, the attachment to parents has significantly predicted the self's life satisfaction ($F_{\text{Reg}} = 17.96, p < .05$). According to the corresponding R^2 value, attachment to parents explained 7% of the variance observed in self's life satisfaction. When standardized regression coefficient (Beta) was examined, it was observed that the importance of attachment to mother in all sub-dimensions of life satisfaction was higher than that of attachment to father.

4. DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of parental attachment in adolescents' life satisfaction. The results showed that there were positive correlations between attachment to parents and life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school, self) in adolescents. In addition, it was found that attachment to the parent was a positive and significant predictor of the life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school, self). In line with the current research findings, the level of life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school, self) increases as the level of attachment to parents increases in adolescents. Considering the literature, there are studies which are similar to the findings of the present research. In the group of pre-adolescent participants Nickerson and Nagle (2004), Chen et al. (2017), and Laghi et al. (2016) found that attachment to parent was a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

The findings of this study revealed that, attachment to the mother more strongly predicted all life satisfaction sub-dimensions compared to attachment to the father. According to the attachment theory, the basic link between the child and his/her mother facilitates the child's adaptation to life and environment (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2004). Children continue their mental representations or models that work internally, which were created during the interactions with their mothers, throughout their lives (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). It can be considered that when the child establishes the basic bond with the mother, it is easier to adapt to life, and when considered that the first caregiver is the mother of the child, the result that attachment to mother more highly predicts than attachment to father is consistent with the literature.

The impact of these mental representations or internal working models continue in a life-long manner (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). The internal working models that are created for the primary care provider are becoming stronger in the development process that extends to adolescence. In particular, it is assumed that the inner working models reach their final form in the adolescence and as a result they become more resistant to change (Zimmermann & Becker-Stoll, 2002). According to Sümer (2006), there are problems such as loneliness and depression caused by feelings of not being loved, disapproval and inadequacy in adolescents with parental attachment problems. In addition, according to Allen, Moore, Kuperminc and Bell (1998), attachment problems that develop as a result of negative experiences towards the parent can lead to depression and behavioural problems in adolescence. Positive parent engagement was associated with self-respect, quality of life, psychological well-being and adaptation to school (Allen et al., 1998; Kuperminc, Allen & Arthur, 1996). Therefore, the attachment to mother and father's significantly predicting all sub-dimensions of multidimensional life satisfaction (family, friend, environment, school, self) consistent with the literature.

In the study, it was found that attachment to parents predicted levels of family life satisfaction more strongly compared to other life satisfaction sub-dimensions. According to the literature, the effect of parental attachment continues during and after adolescence (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; Zimmermann & Becker-Stoll, 2002). It is an expected

and important result that attachment to parent that is associated with concepts such as quality of life, psychological well-being predict the family life satisfaction. In addition, in their study with American secondary school students, Nickerson and Nagle (2004) found a positive correlation between parental attachment and family life satisfaction, which supports the results of the current research.

Secondly, it concluded that attachment to parents also predicted the environmental life satisfaction. Environmental life satisfaction is the sub-dimension of life satisfaction regarding the place of living and the people around this place of living (Huebner, 1994). According to the attachment theory, the child is interested in analysing and exploring his/her surroundings without fear, when he/she feels the attachment figure next to him/her (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Attachment to parents affects the level of trust in other people in the environment (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). In addition, in a study Ersan (2016) found that a positive mother-child relationship increased the positive attitude of the child to the social environment. In addition, the study of Nickerson and Nagle (2004) that found a significant correlation between parental attachment and environmental life satisfaction, supports the results of the research.

Thirdly, it has been concluded that attachment to the mother and the father predicted the friend life satisfaction. Strong attachment with the parent is associated with the attachment with peers (Kuperminc et al., 1996). A teenager who can connect with peers can be considered to have a high level of life satisfaction for his/her friends. In addition, the child who is insecure to the parent, when it comes to adolescence, finds his peers unreliable, perceives his relationships unnecessary, and experiences various difficulties in making friends (Lieberman, Doyle & Mickiewicz, 1999). Such a teenager's friend life satisfaction has the possibility of being in a low level. In other words, the satisfaction levels of the children and adolescents who have a safe attachment to the parent are very high in their relationship with friends, while the satisfaction levels of the children and adolescents who have an un-safe attachment to the parent may be very low in their relationship. Based on this information, it can be said that the findings of this study suggested that the attachment to mothers' and fathers' predicted friend life satisfaction consistent with the literature.

Fourth, it has been concluded that attachment to the mother and the father predicts the self's life satisfaction. According to the attachment theory, children form mental representations about themselves and their parents during their interaction with them. The inner working models based on early age attachment experiences affect the child's expectations and self-esteem (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). According to Bowlby (2012), children who exhibit secure attachment characteristics develop positive mental representations for their own self, such as being well-mannered, talented and lovable. On the other hand, children with insecure attachment characteristics develop negative mental representations for their own self, such as malevolent, incompetent, not worth being loved. The information contained herein supports the conclusions of this research.

Fifth it has been concluded that attachment to the mother and the father predicts the school life satisfaction. It is stated that the relationship of adolescents with high parental attachment with their peers at school, their academic performance and their happiness at school are higher than those with low parental attachment (Kenny & Gallagher, 2002). In addition, the parent attachment was associated with the adaptation to school (Allen et al., 1998; Kuperminc et al., 1996). Based on this information, it can be concluded that attachment to parents is a predictor of school life satisfaction, which is consistent with the literature. In addition, Nickerson and Nagle (2004) found a significant relationship between parental attachment and school life satisfaction in their study, which also supports the results of this study.

This research conducted with the contribution of high school students showed that attachment to parents is a significant predictor of life satisfaction (family, friends, environment, school, self). In addition, the study showed that the claim that the mental representations or the inner working models mentioned in the attachment theory affect the child throughout the life, which also continues to influence the adolescents. Research findings have shown the role of childhood life in the future of the individual. In addition, passing through the critical periods in the development process in a healthy way is important for the adult life of the individual. Parents need to have a high level of awareness and positive behaviors during critical periods when the individuals' attachment to caregivers, especially for their parents, is high. Therefore, in order to support the healthy development of children, especially in infancy and early childhood, awareness-raising trainings and seminars for parents are thought to be important. In addition, these training should be given to psychological counselors or psychologists working in the field of psychology and schools. Current research has certain limitations. Firstly, the fact that this work is carried out at a city in Turkey and with the contribution of 470 high school students can be expressed as a limitation. In addition, this research was not mixed method study, only a quantitative method was conducted in this study. Testing the relationships between the variables in the research with different sample groups (out of school group or apprenticeship training group) and different research methods (experimental, qualitative) is important in terms of the validity of the results.

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In the writing process of the study titled “Attachment to Parents as a Predictor of Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Among Adolescents”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data. “Sakarya University Journal of Education Journal and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.