

Investigating the relationship of attachments styles and feeling of loneliness with general health in Payam – e Nour University students of Ilam

By

¹Shahram Mami and ²Narges Ghanbaran

¹Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University Science & Research , Ilam Branch, Iran.

²MA student in Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research, Ilam, Iran.

Abstract

The objective of the present research is to examine the relationship of attachment styles and feeling of loneliness with general health of the students. This is a correlation applied research. The statistical universe of the research includes all of the students of Ilam Payam – e Nour University who were studying in academic year of 2013 – 2014. The sample is composed of 200 girl students studying for BA degree, selected through multistage random sampling. In order to collect data, Shover & HoZen attachment styles inventory, feeling of loneliness and general health questionnaire were used. In order to statistically analyze data, correlation coefficient and regression analysis were employed. The results of the research showed that there is a positive relationship between avoided attachment styles and ambivalent – anxious styles. In addition, there is a significant negative relationship between feelings of loneliness and mental health. Thus, the secure attachment style results in enhancing general health and avoided anxious ambivalent styles and feeling of loneliness leads to reducing mental health.

Keywords: Attachment styles, feeling of loneliness, general health

1. Introduction

One of the main elements of the society health evaluation is the mental health of the members of that society. No doubt, mental health has a great role on guaranteeing and dynamism and efficiency of a society. As the university students are among the capable and the elite group of the society and also the constructors of the future of the society, their mental and psychological well – being is very central in learning and enhancing their scientific knowledge (Saki & Keixani, 2002). Entering university is accompanied by a great deal of changes in social and human relationships. In these conditions which are often combined with change, pressure and anxiety, the performance and the function of the individuals is affected (Lehtinen et al, 1990). Relationship with the family and friends, eating and sleeping habits, and loneliness, too, inversely influence some of the students (Ross et al, 1999). It seems that interaction between some kinds of stressful factors, and more importantly, the way they conceive this phenomenon, results in tension or anxiety, a phenomenon in which the kind and the number of existing social support resources and cultural effects play an important role (Chambers et al, 1998).

The theory of attachment (Bowl by, 1969, 1973, 1980) is based on the fact that the earlier affective connections between the child and the mother (care taker) are internalized in the form of mental models, generalized to the child's wide range of interpersonal relationships, and the model of these relationship remain relatively constant throughout life (Bretherton, 1991; Main et al, 1985; West et al, 1994). Attachment styles determine affective and cognitive rules and are the strategies which direct individuals' emotional feelings and interpersonal relationships. The secure, avoided and ambivalent individuals use different strategies for emotional organizing and processing emotional data (Shaver et al, 1996). To organize their emotions, the individuals having secure attachment style make use of the strategies which minimize the tensions and activate positive emotions (Mikulincer et al, 2001). The individuals who have unsecure attachment styles make use of emotional organizing strategies which are based on negative feelings, suppress emotional experience (those who tend to avoidance) and experience the situations as

more stressful (ambivalent). The authors believe that organizing emotions in the framework of the adults' attachment operates as a "seam – like" process (Fuendeling, 1998).

Feeling of loneliness is an individuals' painful psychological state which faces, those involved with it, with the feeling of nothingness, sadness and belonging to no one and influences their relationships in life in different ways. The anxiety resulting from the understanding of this feeling and the often negative attitude of the members of the society to this feeling usually prevents from its expression. Researches have shown that the top of feeling of loneliness is in adolescence period (Cushner and McClelland, 1992). In a study, Russel examined the reason of loneliness and suggested that the main factor of the loneliness is selfishness and egocentrism and a little attention to spiritual subjects can put an end to it (Hatala, 2005). The researches believe that loneliness results in many disorders as in depression, anxiety, mental disorders, suicide, little support from the family, low income, bodily performance decrease and the like (TSAI, 2010).

Takakura and Sakihara (2001), in a research on the emergence and the continuation of the symptoms of depression in high school students of Japan claimed that the pressure of stressful factors may be the factor of the risk. Conversely, the positive practices of health, social support and self – esteem may be the protective factors against depression which is itself a result of feeling of loneliness. Although in Bowlby's theory, attachment and feeling of loneliness have not been considered as interrelated, some of the researchers believe that attachment theory can provide a framework for examining the formation of feeling loneliness in childhood (Berin, 1995).

The researches have shown that the mental health of the secure attached is higher than that of the insecure ones (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 1998; Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). Some cases have been observed that the secure and avoiding individuals have some differences in the variables of mental health. Milkucini and Florina (1998) and Bifulco et al (2006) showed that insecure attachment styles predict depression and anxiety and are intermediary for mental health. Paredes et al (2014) reported that the young individuals, who have more restrictions in their individuality, have less healthy behaviors. The anxiety of separation, attachment and the quality of effective attachment has not a relationship with physical or mental health. Sayadi et al (2014) reported that there is a significant positive relationship between mental health and anxious and avoiding attachment styles; moreover, the results of regression showed that anxious attachment style is a predictor of mental health. According to the researches performed, the aim of this research is to investigate the relationship of attachment styles and feeling of loneliness with the general health of the students of Ilam Payam – e Nour University.

2. Method

The statistical universe of the research included all of the girl and boy students in Ilam Payam – e Nour University who were studying in academic year of 2013 – 2014. The volume of the sample in this research has been determined to be 200 through Morgan's table for determining the volume of the sample. Sampling in this research was done through stratified random sampling. The data collected was analyzed by Pearson correlation coefficient and step – by – step regression method.

Instrument

Goldberg and Hiller's health questionnaire (1972), which has 22 questions: The questions of the 28 – question form includes 4 subscale have been arranged sequentially, so that, the questions of 1 to 7 relate to bodily symptom scale, 8 to 14 relate to anxiety, 15 – 21 relate to malfunction in social performance, and 21 to 22 relate to depression scale.

The results of 43 studies on validating different version of the questionnaire in different countries showed that the reliability of the questionnaire having 28 items is for the scales of anxiety, depression,

malfunction in social performance, bodily complaints and its concurrent validity has been reported Beck's anxiety test and Zungs' depression test, respectively (Abolqasemi & Narimani, 2005).

The questionnaire of loneliness (UCLA): To assess loneliness the scale of loneliness was used (Russell, 1996) which is the best known scale of loneliness and, compared to other scales has higher psychoanalytical health (Hartshorne, 1993). This scale is composed of 20 questions which are arranged based on 4 point Linkert scale. This scale has been executed in four groups which are students, nurses, teachers, and the aged individuals and the range of α has been obtained from 0.89 to 0.94 (Russell, 1996). In the present research, the reliability of this scale was calculated Cronbach alpha at 0.80.

The questionnaire of adults' attachment: The new version of Hozen and Shaver attachment has been designed in 1993. This questionnaire measures both secure and insecure attachments. It has been composed of 2 sections which in the first section (AAQ1) the subjects answers to 3 paragraphs, which have been planned in the form of descriptive statements, in a 7 – point scale. In the second section (AAQ2) the same descriptive sentences have been offered, but this time, the subject just by ticking one of them, expresses his/her similarity to one of those descriptive sentences.

The second part of the questionnaire is based on categorical scale. It is used for the grouping of the respondents' attachment styles. The reliability of internal consistency coefficients for this part, through Cronbach alpha and the reliability of retesting of this test have been reported to be 0.79 and 0.72, respectively. The validity coefficient of the adults' attachment questionnaire is satisfactory and significant (Crowell et al, 1999). In the research by Basharat (2000) to evaluate the reliability of the adults' attachment questionnaire, bisection method was used. By this method the correlation coefficient of 0.92 ($r=0.92$) was obtained for both of the test performances.

3. Findings

Table 1 shows the indices of statistical description (mean, stand deviation, and correlation coefficients) for the whole sample according to the attachment styles scores (secure, anxious/ambivalent, avoidance) and feeling of loneliness with general health.

Table 1: mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrix of attachment styles and feeling of loneliness with general health

variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
General health	21.75	6.75	1			
Feeling of loneliness	38.42	6.77	0.80	1		
Secured style	15.25	3.29	0.74	-0.69	1	
Anxious/ambivalent style	20.08	1.89	-0.60	-0.67	0.42	1
Avoiding style	10.75	2.90	-0.81	-0.73	-0.57	0.49

*= $p<0/001$

According to the results in table 1, all of the variables of the research have a significant relationship with each other, showing the internal consistency between these variables. Moreover, as there is a significant relationship between each one of predictor variables (attachment styles and feeling of loneliness) with criterion variable (general health), the regression method can be used for prediction.

In order to investigate the predicting role of attachment styles and feeling of loneliness with general health, multivariate step by step regression show that attachment styles and feeling of loneliness have a relationship with general health.

Table 2: The results of multivariate regression of attachment styles and feeling of loneliness with general health through step by step method

Predictor variables	R	R ²	sig	B	Beta	T	P
Avoiding	0.81	0.66	0.001	-0.03	-0.44	-9.49	0.001
secure	0.88	0.77	0.001	0.64	0.31	7.03	0.001
Anxious/ambivalent	0.89	0.80	0.001	-0.54	0.15	-3.54	0.001
Feeling of loneliness	0.90	0.81	0.001	-0.16	0.16	-2.53	0.001

In the first step, avoiding attachment ($R^2= 0.66$) can 66 percent predict the variance of general health ($P < 0.007$); in the second step the secure attachment style ($R^2= 0.77$) can 77 percent predict the tendency to use narcotics ($p < 0.007$); in the third step anxious/ambivalent attachment style ($R^2= 0.89$) can 89 percent the variance of general health ($P < 0.007$); in the fourth step, feeling of loneliness ($R^2= 0.90$) can 90 percent predict the variance of general health ($P < 0.007$).

4. Results and Discussion

The aim of this research was to investigate the relationship of attachment styles and feeling of loneliness with the general health of the students. According the researches done, it was revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between secure attachment styles and the well – being. This relationship indicates that secure attachment style lead to the students mental health which is supportive the principal role of secure attachment in mental health. The anxious/ambivalent and avoiding attachment and feeling alone have a low general health.

Thus, attachment styles are among the intrapersonal resources which can reduce the level of stress and inability in unpleasant conditions, and lower the negative effects of the stress. According the results of the researches done on this context, the kind of attachment style has a great prediction role in mental health (Bifulco et al, 2006; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Mikulince and Florian, 1998; Sayadi et al, 2014; Paredes et al, 2014; and Ahadi, 2009).

The individuals having a high level of the feeling of loneliness, due to the fact that they have not enjoyed constant physical connection during their childhood which has led to physical and emotional disorders, have a low level of self – esteem, are in doubt as to their own capabilities, are sensitive and vulnerable to affective and emotional arousals, and in interpersonal behaviors show the states of shyness, anxiety, audacity, embarrassment, low risk – taking, being introverted and etc , suffer from low mental health.

In the end, the results can support the importance of secure, avoiding, and ambivalent attachment styles and feeling of loneliness in preserving and enhancing general health. In addition, the results of this research imply that these variables can explain a level of variability in students' mental health.

In general, loneliness is a stressful experience which has main unpleasant effects on mental performance and physical health. Feeling of loneliness is accompanied by low social skills and results in increasing social anxiety (Madani Por and Sepahmansour, 2013). So, the factors creating loneliness and its hazardous factors should be taken into account and due cares should be considered for them.

Regarding the increasing level of unsecure attachment styles, and decreasing secure styles in recent years and the effect of these attachment styles on students' well – being (Konrath et al, 2014), further attention should be paid to these styles and the stresses which the students experience.

This research has had some limitations, including: The sample was restricted to the students of Ilam Payam – e Nour University. The collection of data was done through the scales of self – reporting which, due to unconscious defenses, bias in answering and the personal methods of introduction are exposed to deviation. So, it is suggested in future research, the sample be selected from non – student society and be investigated. Moreover, the repetition of this research in other Universities and being aware of whether or not the correlations obtained in this research are true in other situation and education courses is necessary.

References

- Abolqasemi, Abbas; Narimani, Mohammad. (2005). psychological tests"; Ardabil; Bagh-e Rezwan
- Ahadi, Batoul (2009). The relationship of feeling loneliness and self-esteem with attachment styles of the students; *Psychological studies*; 5(1):95-112
- Basharat, M.A. (2000). "Normalization of Adults' attachment Styles"; (researching report); University of Tehran.
- Berlin, L. J, Cassidy J & Belsky, J. (1995). Loneliness in young children and infant-mother attachment: A longitudinal study, *Merill-Palmer Quarterly*, 41, 91-103.
- Bifulco, A., Kwon, J., Jacobs, C., Moran, P.M., Bunn, A & Beer, N. (2006). Adult attachment style as a mediator between childhood neglect/abuse and adult depression and anxiety. *Soc. Psychiatry Psychiatr Epidemiol.* 41(10), 796-805.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss: Sadness and depression*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. , (1973) . *Attachment and loss*: New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J., (1969) . *Attachment and loss: Separation*. Vol .I. Attachment. New York: Basic Books.
- Bretherton, I., (1991) The roots and growing points of attachment theory. In C. M. Parkes, J. S. Hinde, & P. Marris (Eds.), *Attachment across the life cycle* (pp.9-32). London: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P.(1999). *Handbook of attachment :Theory, research and clinical applications*. New York :Guilford Press.
- Chambers, J. W., Kambon, K., Brown, J., Dixon, P., & Robbins-Brinson, L, (1998). Africentric cultural identity and the stress experience of African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 24(3), 368- 396.
- Crowell, J. A., Fraley, R. C., & shaver, P. R. (1999). Measurement of individual differences in adolescent and adult attachment In, J. Cassidy & P. R. shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: theory, research and clinical applications* (PP. 434-465). New York: The Guilford Pres
- Cushner K. McClelland A. (1992). "Human diversity in education", New York: McGraw – Hill.
- Fuendeling, J.M. (1998). Affect regulation as a stylistic process within adult attachment. *Journal OF Social and Personal Relationships*, 15, 291-322.
- Hartshorne, T. S. (1993). Psychometric properties and confirmatory factor analysis of the UCLA Loneliness Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 61(1), 182-195.
- Hatala R J(.2005.)"Loneliness and aloneness," *Journal of psychology*, Vol 1, No. 28
- Konrath SH, Chopik WJ, Hsing CK & O'Brien EH. (2014) .Changes in Adult Attachment Styles in American College Students Over Time A Meta-Analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 18 (2):
- Lehtinen, V., Joukama, M., & Lahtela, K., (1990) Prevalence of mental disorders among adults in Finland. Basic result from the mini Finland health survey. *Acta psychiatr scand.* 81 (5), 418-425.

Investigating the relationship of attachments styles and feeling of loneliness with general health in Payam
– e Nour University students of Ilam

- Madanipour N, Sepah Mansour M. (2013). Relationship between Loneliness and Attachment Styles among University Students. *FORSCHUNG IN DER*, 102(11),
- Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J.(1985) .Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. In I. Bretherton & Waters (Eds.), *Growing points of attachment theory and research*. Monograph of the society for research in child development, 209, pp.50, 66-104
- Mikulincer, M., & Florian, V. (1998). The relationship between adult attachment styles and emotional and cognitive reactions to stressful events. In Jeffrey A. Simpson & Steven, Rholes (Eds.), *Toward the end Attachment theory and close relationships* New York: The Guilford Press.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2003). The attachment behavioral system in adulthood: Activation, psychodynamics, and interpersonal processes. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 35, pp. 53 – 152).
- Paredes, A.C, Ferreira G, Pereira Mda G. (2014). ttachment to parents: The mediating role of inhibition of exploration and individuality on health behaviors. *Fam Syst Health*.;32(1):43-52.
- Ross, S. E., Niebling, B. C., & Heckert, T. M., (1999). Sources of stress among college students. *College Students Journal*, 33 (2), 312- 317.
- Russell, D. W. (1996). UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3): Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 66(1), 20-40
- Saaki, Kouros; Keixani, Satar (2002). " Investigating the Mental well-being of the students of Ilam University"; *Journal of medical science of Ilam*; 10(34&35):11-15
- Sayadi A, Khodayari H, Saadat,S, Jahangiri S. (2014). Survey the Relationship between Attachment Styles, Coping Strategies and Mental Health among Students at University of Guilan, Iran, *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*,4 (1),253-262.
- Shaver, P.R., Collins, N., & Clark, C. L .(1996). Attachment styles and internal working models of self and relationship patterns. In G. J. O. Fletcher & J. Fitness (Eds.), *Knowledge structures in close Relationships: A social psychological approach* (pp. 25-61). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum
- Takakura M. and Sakihara S .(2001). "Psychological correlates of depressive symptoms among Japanese high school", *Journal of adolescent health*, Vol 28, Issue1. P: 82-89.
- West, M., & Sheldon-Keller, A. E. (1994) . *Patterns of relating*. New York: Guilford.