The investigation of the relationship between secure attachment style, self-efficacy, optimism and life satisfaction among the students of Ahvaz Islamic Azad University

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to study the relationship between secure attachment style, self-efficacy, optimism and life satisfaction among the students of Ahvaz Islamic Azad University. The study sample has included 300 students studying at the Islamic Azad University of Ahwaz in the 2014-15 academic years. The research method was correlational. The data collection tools included Hazan and Shaver attachment styles questionnaire, the self-efficacy questionnaire of Sherur et al., the optimism questionnaire of Peterson et al and the life satisfaction questionnaire of Diner. The results in the level of $p<0.05$ significance have indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between secure attachment, self-efficacy, optimism and life satisfaction. The Regression analysis’ results also have shown that there is a multiple significant relationship between secure attachment, self-efficacy, optimism and life satisfaction, and among the predictor variables, self-efficacy is the best predictor for life satisfaction.

Keywords: Secure attachment style, self-efficacy, optimism, life satisfaction, students.
Introduction

The social, economic and political future of every country is dependent on the youth health in that community. Social development, dignity and success of the society lie in the powerful hands of this group. By entering the university the person will face with new changes and mental pressures, and he is going to be exposed to relationships, attitudes, lack of facilities and uncertainty for a bright occupational future that these factors would underlie the vulnerability of the students (Twenge, Gentile & De Wall, 2010). Enhancing the quality of life will lead to well-being, social welfare and reasonable compromise with life circumstances and it also will give the human being the power of living quietly, having peace and making decisions against life crises and pressures (Milanifar, 2002).

Today, the major psychological needs have changed their directions towards new perspectives based on growing strengths and the psychological issues raised in the twenty-first century have mainly focused on positive human experience and what makes the moments to be better moments (Hadian fard and Mozafari, 2005). In recent years, one of the aspects that humanistic approaches have insisted on is the well-being aspect that includes positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction. The first two cases have been more considered but life satisfaction that is considered more in terms of cognitive judgment has been less considered here (Shahaian and Yousefi, 2007). Life satisfaction refers to cognition and process of subjective judgment and the purpose is family, training and experience (Diener, Sun, Lucas, Esmit, 2000, quoted by Zaki, 2007). Attachment styles provide the base of adaptive psychological action in the later stages of growth (Ahadi, Narimani, Abghasemi and Asiaie, 2009). Attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves exchange, joy, care and peace. Attachment includes the three secure, avoidance, and anxiety styles. An individual with secure attachment considers its caregiver available and experiences himself positively. In the pattern of avoidant attachment, the caregiver steadily drives the person out and he is unsafe but forcibly has to trust it. And finally, in the anxious attachment pattern, the person experiences its caregiver to be a dependent and worthless individual. People who positively evaluate and judge themselves are mostly self-sufficient, safe and caring. In contrast, those who negatively evaluate and judge themselves are emotionally dependent and irresponsible. People who evaluate themselves negatively believe that having relationships with others is not pleasant, and they avoid being intimate with others (Shahyad, Besharat, Asadi, ShirAlipour, & Miri, 2011). Chegeni, Behrouzi, Mehrabizade honarmand and Sheikh Shabani (2012) in a research entitled as the study of the relationship between secure attachment style, optimism, social support and life satisfaction among female students have concluded that secure attachment, social support and optimism were respectively the best variable predictors of life satisfaction. Shahyad et al (2011) in a research have indicated that there is a relationship between attachment style and life satisfaction of students. The more the score of secure attachment is, the more the person feels life satisfaction.

Jenellen (2010) in a study on students came to the conclusion that if the secure attachment scores increases, self-efficacy and optimism will increase and ultimately life satisfaction will be enhanced. In another research implemented by Caltabino, & Grosset (2009), the results have indicated that secure attachment has a positive relationship with life satisfaction. Ma & Huebner (2008) have implemented a research entitled as the relationship between parents and peers’
attachment quality with the teenagers’ life satisfaction, a complete collection of 587 high school students from sixth to eighth grades were studied. The results have shown that although parents and peers’ attachment has a positive relationship with teenagers’ life satisfaction, parents’ attachment has been considered a stronger predictor. Paley, Cox, Kanoy, Harter and et al (2005) in a research have studied the relationship between attachment and life satisfaction and they have concluded that secure attachment is positively correlated with life satisfaction of couples. It seems that the difference in the life satisfaction among students is due to their sense of empowerment and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the person beliefs about the ability to apply some control over personal and environmental activation (Bandura, 2001). Self-efficacy is in fact the person beliefs about his abilities to take the performance selective levels that are the leader and shaper of the events affecting the life of the person (Caprara, Steca, Gerbino, Pacielloi, vecchio, 2006). These beliefs would influence the thinking style, feeling, motivation or person’s behavior. The strong sense of self-efficacy would improve the individual positive attitudes and his participation in the activities, setting goals, having commitment and life satisfaction (Strobel, Tumasjan, Sporrle, 2011). Apparently, successful or unsuccessful previous experiences in life can create relatively stable feeling that is dependent on generalizable and measurable circumstances in terms of self-efficacy which can be a good predictor of the students’ life satisfaction. Self-efficacy with its positive effects on individuals’ mental health can be considered a contributing factor in mental prosperity and happiness of the people. Many studies have shown that people with higher self-efficacy are more satisfied with their lives so they will have more optimism (Caprara et al, 2006, Strobel et al, 2011, Pomaki, Karoly, Maes, 2010). Hosein zadeh, Azizi and Tavakoli (2014) in a research named as social support and life satisfaction in teenagers have studied the mediating role of self-efficacy and self-esteem. The results of this research have indicated that the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, and the relationships between self-efficacy and self-esteem and life satisfaction are significantly positive. Abolghasemi (2011) have implemented a research named as the relationship between tolerance, stress, and self-efficacy and life satisfaction in students with high and low academic achievements. The results have shown that tolerance, self-efficacy and life satisfaction in students with high academic achievements compared to students with low academic achievements is significantly more and the stress is less. Ahadi et al (2009) in a part of their research have concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and life satisfaction of employed women. Strobel et al (2011), in their study have shown that individuals who have a higher self-efficacy are more satisfied with their life, and therefore they will be more optimistic. Serin,, Serin ,özbaş (2010), in their research on students have found that self-efficacy can be a predictor of life satisfaction. Caprara et al (2006), in their research on students have concluded that the more the students have self-efficacy, the more they would experience life satisfaction. Optimism is also another factor that its relationship with life satisfaction will be discussed in this research. The New Psychology is trying not to just focus its attention on mental health problems and relies more on the positive aspects of life. The aim of positive psychology is to accelerate the center of psychological gravity, so that in addition to the restoration and treatment of diseases, it would try to make a positive quality of life as well. Optimism is one of the positive human
characteristics that during these past two decades it has attracted a special attention in the psychological and social sciences. Some researchers have expressed their concern over the lack of sustainable theoretical concept for an optimism constructs; while, some other consider optimism as a cognitive tendency that makes the person to expect himself to deal with only positive consequences in the future. Another group claims that it’s better to regard this structure as an attitude and belief. Generally, everybody has defined optimism as what makes a person to evaluate his chance in the future for the most positive consequences and less negative consequences (Buyeri, 2007). Optimism and generally positive beliefs have a great impact on human diseases and physical and mental health. According to previous researches, optimism has a direct and positive relationship with life satisfaction (Strassle Mckee, Plant, 2000).

Optimism refers to the selection orientation in which usually positive consequences are expected and these consequences are considered as a result of constant, general and internal factors. If normal human perception comes along with a positive sense of himself, personal control and an optimistic and even false view about the future, not only it helps people to handle the ups and downs of daily life, but also to cope with stressful and threatening events (Buyeri, 2007). Optimistic students gain more positive results because they consider their goal to be achievable and they use problem-solving process until they deny it (Treboux, Crowell, Waters, 2004).

Optimism has a relationship with positive mood and good manners and it also has a positive relationship with perseverance, career success, and health and life satisfaction (Rogers, Chamberlin, Ellison, Crean, 2000). Hamzezadeh, Bagherian and Mansuri sepehr (2011) in a research have studied the impact of optimism on attentional bias in interaction with purposeful. This research indicated the difference between optimists and pessimists in paying attention to information and environmental positive and negative stimuli, but due to the cognitive nature of attention, also expectations and goals have had roles in paying attention to the stimulus role. The research results show that the interactive effects of optimism and purpose are on the people attentional bias and these two as emotional and cognitive structures modulate each other's effects. Salmanian and Firuzabadi (2010) in their research have concluded that life satisfaction has a relationship with having good feelings about the future (optimism) and also having perceptions of important goals in life. Karademas (2006) in a research has found that optimism factor modulates the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived social support with various aspects of psychological well-being such as life satisfaction. In a research implemented by Turkum (2005) on Turkish students, it has been shown that optimism has a relationship with feeling of well-being and life satisfaction among university students.

**Method**

The research is correlational. It’s a descriptive survey. The community of this research is all of the students studying in Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz in the year 2014-15 that their total number was 1400. The study sample included 300 students (150 girls and 150 boys) of Azad University that were selected according to Cohen, Manysun and Morrison’s table (2001). The sampling method in this research is multistage random cluster. Due to the lack of access to the list of students’ names, three faculties among all of them and two fields from each faculty have
been randomly selected, and also among the classes in each filed, two classes have been selected randomly; and the questionnaires were administered on the students in each class.

The research instruments

**Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ):** this questionnaire is made by Hasene & Shior (1987) (quoted by Zarei, 2007). The test contains 15 questions and the three secure attachment, avoidant, and ambivalent styles are placed in the 5 Likert scale (1 = very little, 2 = low, 3 = average, 4 = high, very high = 5), and the participants in response to each question should choose one of the options from the range of 5 modes (from very high to very low). The reliability of the questionnaire is based on Cronbach's alpha and the relaunch has been estimated at intervals of one to two years approximately 0.70 and 0.89. Zarei (2007) has calculated the reliability coefficients of this questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha and split-half methods. The reliability coefficients by Cronbach Alpha method for secure attachment styles has been achieved 0.27, for insecure 0.50 and for ambivalent 0.52, and with split-half method the coefficients have been achieved respectively 52.0 and 0.18, 0.64 and 0.61. In the present study, only the secure attachment style has been used, and by Cronbach's alpha method the reliability coefficient of secure attachment style has been calculated 0.775.

**Self-efficacy Scale:** this scale is made by Sherur and et al (1982) that include 17 articles. The method of scoring the self-efficacy questionnaire is to give 1 to 5 points to each article. The scores of articles 1, 3, 8, 9, 13, 15 increase from right to left, and the scores of the rest increase in reverse order or left to right. The reliability of this scale in the research of Barati (1997) has been achieved 0.79, in the research of Abdinia (1998) 0.85, and in the research of Arabyan et al (2004) has been achieved 0.91 (quoted from Abolghasemi, 2011). In the research of Abolghasemi (2011) in order to investigate the reliability of self-efficacy, Cronbach's alpha has been obtained 0.85. In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire has been obtained 0.822 by Cronbach's alpha.

**Attributional Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ):** this questionnaire is a self-report instrument made by Peterson et al. (1982, quoted from Movahed, 2003) has been provided in 2003, and for the first time it has been translated, edited and validated by Shahni yeilagh and et al (2003). This questionnaire consists of twelve hypothetical situation including six good six bad situations that participants must assume themselves in each of these situations, and then respond to questions about each situation. The reliability of this scale in research of Peterson and et al (1982, quoted by Movahedi, 2003) has been obtained 0.44 to 0.69, and in the research of Buyeri (2007), it has been obtained 0.91. In order to assess the reliability of optimism, Cronbach's alpha or consistency of 0.85 has been obtained. In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire has been obtained 0.781 by Cronbach's alpha.

**Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS):** In this study, in order to assess the life satisfaction of students, the life satisfaction questionnaire of Diener was used. This questionnaire contains 48 articles that have been developed to measure psychological well-being and its components including life satisfaction, spirituality, joy and optimism, personal growth and development, positive relationships with others and self-Compliance. These instruments have been prepared by Ryff, Lee, Essex & Schmutte (1994), and for the first time, Zanjani Tabassi (2004) has conducted it in Iran. Each question of this 5-choice questionnaire (strongly agree, agree, no idea, disagree,
and strongly disagree) has been designed with Likert method and they will be scored respectively from 1 to 5. In some of the questions the scoring is reverse. Zanjani Tabassi (2004) has evaluated the reliability of this questionnaire using internal consistency method. Cronbach’s alpha for the total scale has been obtained 0.94 and the subscales have been obtained in the range of 0.62 to 0.90. Zanjani Tabassi (2004) in order to investigate the content validity of this questionnaire has correlated its subscales, and the obtained correlation coefficients between its subscales have indicated the relatively favorable validity of this questionnaire. In the present study, the reliability of this satisfaction questionnaire has been obtained 0.899 by Cronbach's alpha.

Finding
The results of the research data are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, lowest, highest scores of participants (attachment styles and subscale, self-efficacy, optimism, life satisfaction)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure attachment style</td>
<td>10.24</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>57.42</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>165.77</td>
<td>20.80</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>22.80</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 1 shows that respectively the mean and standard deviation for secure attachment are 10.24 and 1.91, for self-efficacy are 57.42 and 11.02, for optimism are 165.77 and 20.80 and for life satisfaction are 22.80 and 4.21.

Hypothesis 1: there is a relationship between secure attachment style and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz.

Hypothesis 2: there is a relationship between self-efficacy and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz.

Hypothesis 3: there is a relationship between optimism and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz.

Table 2: Pearson’s correlation to study the relationship between the factors of secure attachment style, self-efficacy and optimism and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The criterion variable</th>
<th>Life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure attachment style</td>
<td>0.712**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>0.685**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>0.452**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significance even at level of 0.01, * significant even at level of 0.05
As Table 2 shows, the Pearson correlation coefficient between secure attachment style and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz is $r=0.712$ which is significant at the level of $0.001 > p$.

Therefore, the first hypothesis has been confirmed. In other words, if the secure attachment style of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz enhances, along with that the life satisfaction will increase.

According to table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient between self-efficacy and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz is $r=0.685$ that is significant at the level of $0.001 > P$. Therefore, the second hypothesis has been confirmed. In other words, if the self-efficacy of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz enhances, along with that the life satisfaction will increase.

According to table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient between optimism and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz is $r=0.452$ that is significant at the level of $0.001 > P$. Therefore, the third hypothesis has been confirmed. In other words, if the optimism of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz enhances, along with that the life satisfaction will increase.

**Hypothesis 4**: there is a multiple relationship between secure attachment, self-efficacy and optimism and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University Ahvaz.

Table 3: Multiple correlation coefficients between secure attachment style, self-efficacy and optimism and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz with input method (Enter)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A: stepwise Statistical indexes</th>
<th>Multiple correlation MR</th>
<th>Determination coefficient RS</th>
<th>F ratio Probability p</th>
<th>Regression coefficient ($\beta$)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure attachment styles</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>F=108.013</td>
<td>$P=.000$</td>
<td>$\beta=.126$</td>
<td>2.828</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>F=263.856</td>
<td>$P=.000$</td>
<td>$\beta=.685$</td>
<td>16.244</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>.713</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>F=153.536</td>
<td>$P=.000$</td>
<td>$\beta=.214$</td>
<td>4.836</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significance at the level of 0.01** *significance at the level of 0.05

As shown in Table 2, the multiple correlation coefficient for the linear combination of secure attachment style, self-efficacy and optimism and life satisfaction is (F =108.013 and p > 0.001), MR = 0.723 and RS = 0.523 is significant.

The coefficient of determination indicates that these three predictor variables (secure attachment, self-efficacy and optimism) explain about 52% of the variance of criterion variable that is life satisfaction.
In order to more accurately investigate, the relationship between predictor variables (secure attachment style, self-efficacy and optimism) and life satisfaction as the criterion variable, the stepwise method has been also used.

Table 4: multiple correlation of secure attachment style, self-efficacy and optimism variables and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz, with (stepwise) method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stepwise</th>
<th>Statistical indicators</th>
<th>Multiple correlation MR</th>
<th>Determination coefficient RS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>p Probability</th>
<th>Regression coefficient (β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>F=108.013</td>
<td>P=.000</td>
<td>β=.215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significance at the level of 0.01  *significance at the level of 0.05

As shown in Table 4, according to the results of the regression analysis and stepwise method, from the predictive variables, self-efficacy plays a greater role in the students’ life satisfaction. According to the determination coefficient, about 43% of the variance of students’ life satisfaction is explained by self-efficacy.

Discussion and conclusion
The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and life satisfaction of the students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz.

The first hypothesis: there is a relationship between secure attachment styles and life satisfaction of students.
According to the research findings, there is a positive and direct relationship between secure attachment styles life satisfaction. This means that, if the secure attachment styles enhances, the life satisfaction will be also increased. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is confirmed. The findings of this research are consistent with findings of Chegeni, Behrouzi, Mehrabizade honarmand and Sheikh Shabani (2012), Shahyad et al (2011), Maw Hyunbor (2008), Pali, Cox, of Conway, and Harter (2005). These findings explain that people who have secure attachment assess themselves and others more positively. This assessment leads to life satisfaction among people.
These findings explain that an individual with secure attachment considers its caregiver available and experiences himself positively. People who positively evaluate and judge themselves are mostly self-sufficient, safe and caring. In contrast, those who negatively evaluate and judge themselves are emotionally dependent and irresponsible. People who evaluate themselves negatively believe that having relationships with others is not pleasant, and they avoid being intimate with others (Shahyad, Besharati, Asadi, ShirAlipour, & Miri, 2011). These positive and negative evaluations have influences on life satisfaction.

The second hypothesis: There is a relationship between self-efficacy and life satisfaction of students.
According to the research findings, there is a positive and direct relationship between self-efficacy and life satisfaction. This means that, if the self-efficacy enhances, the life satisfaction will also increased. The findings of this research are consistent with findings of Abolghasemi (2011), Ahadi, Narimani, Abolghasemi, Asiae (2009), Strobel, Tumasjan, Sporrle (2011), Serin, Serin özbaş (2010), Caprara, Steca, Gerbino, Pacielloi, vecchio (2006), and Shurdefger, Conormeno, Shnafvan (2008). These findings can explain that self-efficacy is the individual personal judgment about his ability to initiate a task and have a successful performance that requires developing the individual efforts and maintaining them in dealing with problems (Bandura, 1997). The theory of social cognition is based on the eminent tripartite pattern of the behavior, environment and the person. This pattern emphasizes the person interactions with behavior, environmental influences and personal factors (cognitive, emotional and biological factors) that refer to an individual's perception to describe the psychological functions. In Bandura system, self-efficacy is a sense of competence, efficiency and capability to cope with life. He believes that people with high self-efficacy compared to people with weak beliefs show more efforts to do their task and naturally their performance is much better (Bandura, 1993).

The third hypothesis: There is a relationship between optimism and life satisfaction. According to the research findings, there is a positive and direct relationship between optimism and life satisfaction. This means that, if optimism enhances, the life satisfaction will be also increased. The findings of this research are consistent with findings of Chegeni, Behrouzi, Mehrabizade honarmand and Sheikh Shabani (2012), Hamzezadeh, Bagherian, Mansuri sepehr (2012), Salmanian and Firuzabadi (2011), Strobel, Tumasjan, Sporrle (2011), Jenellen (2010), Karadmas (2006), Turkum (2005), Strassle Mckee, Plant (2000). These findings can explain that optimism solve the problems, make plans for activities, and then acts on them; optimists believe that everything will happen according to their view and they have a positive view toward life. They believe that the affairs leave their effects so they are encouraged to try harder. Generally, they define optimism as what makes the person to evaluate his luck for most positive consequences and less negative ones.

The fourth hypothesis: there is a multiple relationship between secure attachment styles, self-efficacy and optimism and life satisfaction of students. These findings can explain that life satisfaction shows how a person evaluates his whole life. Therefore, these evaluations cover the entire life and the person even evaluates his parents’ sensitivity and attention toward his parents, his childhood needs. Healthy growth of stable emotional bonds would be for positive evaluations of life. Attachment styles create a construction that all of the information related to the life attachment would pass this filter (Weiss, 1999). Some of the other cognitive frameworks that affect the attitude to life are self-efficacy and person’s believes about his abilities towards life duties. People who evaluate themselves as inefficient tolerate more stress and pressure in challenges and this issue reduces their life satisfaction (Karadimus, Kalanatari, 2004). Having positive beliefs and being optimistic are the other cognitive that make the person more powerful against problems and issues of life, and they lead to better compatibility, mental and physical health, and ultimately positive assessment of life.
References


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