Identity dimensions and self-esteem as predictors of school attachment in adolescence period

Ümit Morsünbül, *Aksaray University,* Turkey, *morsunbulumit@gmail.com* ORCID: 0000-0002-0750-5015
Pınar Çetiner, *Aksaray University,* Turkey, *pcetiner_pdr@hotmail.com* ORCID: 0000-0001-6769-2740

Abstract. The aim of this study is to investigate whether identity dimensions and self-esteem significantly predict the level of school attachment. The study group consisted of 185 female (62.7%) and 110 male (37.3%) who were studying at High School in Uşak province and they accepted to participate in the study as voluntary. Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale, School Attachment Scale for Children and Adolescents and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were used to collect data. According to regression analysis results identity dimensions and self-esteem significantly predicted attachment to school, attachment to teacher and attachment to friend. Cultural, educational, artistic and sportive activities should be planned to enable students to realize their potential for a healthy identity development and self-esteem.

Keywords: School attachment, self-esteem, identity dimensions

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the life periods in which individuals experience change and development. Individuals spend the majority of their times at school during this period. School is important socialization place that provides opportunities for individual to experience different attachment relationships (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming & Hawkins, 2004). Being in social groups such as school and feeling belonging to them play an important role in gaining positive behaviors (Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott & Hill, 1999). Hirschi (1969) proposed that parents, peers and school were the three most important sources of school attachment. The concept of school attachment is related to interest in school, feeling happy in school, and satisfying school life (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). School attachment is a concept that includes three basic dimensions as cognitive, emotional and behavioral. The cognitive dimension reflects motivation, using strategy. The emotional dimension includes feelings, values, interests and finally behavioral dimension related to belonging are mentioned as commitment, obeying rules, participating in social activities and performing academic tasks (Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris 2004). Blum (2005) listed factors such as liking school, developing sense of belonging to school, perceived teacher interest, and willingness to participate in school activities as main characteristics of school attachment. Students with high school attachment show less dropout, absenteeism or behavioral problems, while they show high academic achievement, extracurricular social activities, and higher school attendance rates (Klem & Connell, 2004).

When the literature is examined, it is emphasized that there is positive relationship between school attachment and social, emotional and academic adjustment. Previous studies indicated that the level of school attachment is negatively related to criminal behavior, truancy (Somers & Gizzi, 2001), depression, suicide (Anderman, 2002), problematic behaviours that decrease academic achievement in school (Murdock Hale & Weber (2001). On the other hand, it was stated that there is a positive relationship between school attachment level and academic achievement and motivation (Samdal et al., 1999). Therefore, school attachment is considered as a protective factor for many basic developmental functions in the life of children and adolescents.

Many variables are related to school attachment level of adolescents. In this study effect of identity dimensions and self-esteem were investigated. When the literature examined, it is seen that researcher couldn't meet at a common point on the concept of identity. The reason for this is that identity is a concept that includes physical, cognitive and social elements (Erikson, 1968). Marcia (1993) defined the concept of identity as a dynamic structure of the individual's beliefs, impulses and personal history. The sense of consistent identity is one of the important tasks for both adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). If adolescents experience healthy identity process they will deal with more easily the task in the later life periods (Erikson, 1968; Morsünbül & Çok, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2011). A Three-dimensional model that focuses on three basic process in identity development was proposed based on Marcia's (1980) Identity Statuses Model (Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani & Meeus, 2010). This model includes three dimensions. Commitment making reflects clarification of the choices made for various areas of identity development. As a second dimension exploration in depth indicates active search about individual's existence commitment. And finally reconsideration of commitment reflects that individuals have entered the research process in order to find alternatives when they are not satisfy with their existence commitment.

Since identity development is important task during adolescence studies are focused on how identity formed. Grotevant and Cooper (1986) emphasized the relationships between individuals' identity development and appropriate communication with their families during adolescence. In another study conducted with adolescents indicated that individual's decisions and their acceptance and approval within the family were important for a healthy identity development and decision making process (Papini et al., 1989). In adolescence, healthy identity formation, being member of different groups, individuals' self-acceptance in different fields are important in the relationships with friend, teachers and others in the school environment (Papini et al., 1989).

Another variable examined in this study is self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as person's sense of self-worth and self-respect (Yörükoğlu, 2000). Low self-esteem is positively associated with mental health problems such as stress symptoms, depression, anxiety, anger, hostile feelings towards others, fear of attachment, communication disorders, inability to handle criticism (Morganett, 2005), while high self-esteem positively associated with success by overcoming internal problems, positive perception of future and positive mental health characteristics (Kuzgun, 2002). Developing positive self-perception in adolescence makes individuals easier to show more autonomous and independent behaviors in social relationships in school life (Tutar, 2013). In this case, low self-esteem may cause students to fail at school, make big mistakes to influence teachers and peers, and be reluctant to participate in school activities (Yavuzer, 2006).

In the literature, there are studies (Lim & Lee, 2017; Savi-Çakar & Karataş, 2017) showing the relationships between self-esteem and school attachment, but no research findings indicating the predictive role of identity development in school attachment. It is thought that this study is important in terms of filling the gap in the literature and forming the basis for new studies in the field. In light of the literature, the aim of this study is to investigate whether identity dimensions and self-esteem significantly predict the level of school attachment.

METHODS

This study was conducted in the light of correlational descriptive model. In the study, school attachment was determined as dependent variable and identity development dimensions and self-esteem were determined as independent variables. In this context, whether identity development dimensions and self-esteem variables predict adolescents' school attachment was investigated.

Research Group

The study group consisted of 185 female (62.7%) and 110 male (37.3%) who were studying at Orhan Dengiz Anatolian High School in Uşak province in the 2018-2019 academic year and they

accepted to participate in the study as voluntary. Of these participants, 76 (25.8%) were in the 10th grade and 219 (74.2%) were in the 12th grade and their ages are between 16-18 years old (mean=17.05±.08).

Measures

Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale

In order to determine identity development dimensions Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale was used. This scale was developed by Crocetti et al. (2008) and adapted to Turkish by Morsunbul et al. (2014). The scale is a 5-point likert type scale and consisting of 26 items and three dimensions. Samples items were "My education gives me security in life" (commitment), "I try to find out a lot about my education" (in-depth exploration), "I often think it would be better to try to find a different education" (reconsideration of commitment). Cronbach`s alphas were .89 for commitment, .76 for in-depth exploration, and .67 for reconsideration of commitment.

School Attachment Scale for Children

School Attachment Scale for Children was used to determine school attachment. This scale was developed by Hill (2005) and adapted to Turkish by Savi-Çakar and Karataş (2017). The scale is a 5-point likert type scale and consisting of 15 items and three dimensions. Samples items were "I am proud to be at this school" (school attachment), "I love my friends at this school" (peer attachment), "I love my teachers" (teacher attachment). Cronbach`s alphas were .87 for teacher attachment, .84 for peer attachment, .79 for school attachment, .85 for total school attachment.

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

In order to determine self-esteem Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was used. This scale was developed by Rosenberg (1965) and adapted to Turkish by Çuhadoroğlu (1986). The scale is a 4-point likert type scale and consisting of 10 items. Samples items were "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself", "I feel I do not have much to be proud of". Cronbach`s alpha was .78.

Procedure

The data set of the study was obtained from students attending secondary school on the basis of volunteerism in 2018-2019 academic years. In order to data collection the necessary permissions were obtained from the school administration. Participants were informed about study and scales before the measurement tools were applied. Data collection was carried out in the classroom and it took approximately 20-30 minutes.

RESULTS

In this part, firstly results of descriptive statistic were presented. Then, results of regression analysis were presented.

Correlations among variables

Table 1 presents the means, standart deviations for the variables and correlations among them. As can be seen in Table 1 the strongest variable related to school attachment is commitment (r = .25, p<.01) while the weakest variable is reconsideration of commitment (r = -.17, p<.01). Commitment (r = .32, p<.01) is the strongest variable related to teacher attachment, while the weakest variable is reconsideration of commitment (r = -.16, p<.01). Commitment is the strongest variable related to peer attachment (r = .29, p<.01), while the weakest variable is self esteem (r = .16, p<.01).

Table 1. *Variables' means, standard deviations and correlations among them*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. School attachment	15.23	2.97							
2.Teacher attachment	15.36	3.35	.50**						
3.Peer attachment	21.16	3.57	.33**	.26**					
4.Commitment	3.96	.68	.25*	.32**	.29**				
5.In-depth exploration	3.15	.61	-.00	.17**	.00	.20**			
6.Reconsideration of commitment	2.74	.63	-.17**	-.16**	-.09	-.25**	.30**		
7.Self-esteem	30.93	5.65	.23**	.30**	.16**	.22**	-.06	-.04	

* p<.05, ** p<.01

Regression Analysis Results

Regression analysis was conducted in order to determine how well variables predict school, teacher and peer attachment. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined to determine whether the data were suitable for multiple regression analysis and these values were found to be between +1.5 and -1.5. Correlations between variables were examined in order to see whether there is a multicollinearity problem. No .80 and above correlation was found between variables. Again, VIF (ranging from 1.09 to 1.31) and Tolarance (ranging from .76 to .91) values were examined to determine the multicollinearity problem and no multicollinearity problem was found.

As can be seen in Table 2, the independent variables significantly predict school attachment (R=.33, R^2=.11, F=7.44, p<.01). According to regression analysis self-esteem (β=.20, p<.01) and commitment (β=.17, p<.01) significantly predict school attachment.

Table 2. *Regression analysis results (school attachment)*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Standart Error	Beta	t	R	R^2
Constant	10.27	1.66		6.18		
Gender	.22	.35	.03	.63		
Commitment	.76	.27	.17	2.83**	.33	.11
In-depth exploration	.01	.30	.00	.04		
Reconsideration of commitment	-.56	.29	-.12	-1.89		
Self esteem	.10	.03	.20	3.46**		

* p<.05, ** p<.01, Gender: 0=Male, 1=Female

Table 3 shows regression analysis results conducted to how well variables predict teacher attachment. The independent variables significantly predict school attachment (R=.45, R^2=.20, F=14.92, p<.01). According to regression analysis self esteem (β=.27, p<.01), in-depth exploration (β=.19, p<.01) and commitment (β=.18, p<.01) significantly predict teacher attachment.

Table 4 shows regression analysis results conducted to how well variables predict peer attachment. The independent variables significantly predict peer attachment (R=.32, R^2=.10, F=6.85, p<.01). According to regression analysis only commitment significantly predict peer attachment (β=.27, p<.01).

Tablo 3. *Regression analysis results (teacher attachment)*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Standart Error	Beta	t	R	R²
Constant	5.59	1.77		3.15		
Gender	.24	.38	.03	.63		
Commitment	.91	.29	.18	3.15**	.45	.20
In-depth exploration	1.06	.32	.19	3.31**		
Reconsideration of commitment	-.86	.31	-.16	-2.72**		
Self esteem	.16	.03	.27	4.95**		

* p<.05, ** p<.01, Gender: 0=Male, 1=Female

Tablo 4. *Regression analysis results (peer attachment)*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Standart Error	Beta	t	R	R²
Constant	14.96	2.00		7.46		
Gender	-.50	.43	-.06	-1.17		
Commitment	1.44	.32	.27	4.41**	.32	.10
In-depth exploration	-.18	.36	-.03	-.50		
Reconsideration of commitment	-.13	.35	-.02	-.38		
Self esteem	.05	.03	.08	1.50		

* p<.05, ** p<.01, Gender: 0=Male, 1=Female

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

In this study it was investigated whether identity dimensions and self-esteem significantly predict the level of school attachment. Significant relations were found between the school attachment sub-dimensions and self-esteem, and identity development sub-dimensions. Firstly, the findings of this study indicated that self-esteem and commitment were significant predictors of school attachment. Participation in school activities is one of the indicators of high level school attachment (Dotterer, McHale & Crouter, 2007). Individuals with high self-esteem are confident in their decisions and choices (Cemalcılar, 2010). Individuals with commitment are also those who can make their decisions more clearly and healthy (Morsünbül, Crocetti, Çok & Meeus, 2016). In this context, when individuals are expected to increase their participation in school activities and make more correct choices in school related decisions, this may strengthen the link between them and the school. Previous studies also indicated that school attachment is related to student's participation in school activities (Yuen et al., 2012).

The second research finding showed that self-esteem, commitment, in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment were significant predictors of teacher attachment. Individuals develop a sense of healthy identity through commitment and in-depth exploration processes (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx & Meeus, 2008). Individuals who develop a healthy identity are who know what they want, self-confident, individuals with advanced social skills and high self-esteem. These individuals are likely to establish good relationships with their teachers. Hovever, if individuals decide that their existing commitment is not suffcient, they will review their commitment and look for a new identity (Crocetti, Sica, Schwartz & Meeus, 2013; Morsünbül et al., 2016).

The research finding showed that commitment was significant predictor of peer attachment. Commitment contributes positively to the peer attachment. The relation with friend is important during adolescence and individuals need to friend to share their concerns, feelings,

fears and stress (Karakuş, 2012). Making the right decision in the choice of friends effect positively peer attachment and social relationships (Kading, 2014).

There are some limitations in this research. The first limitation of this study is the cross-sectional study design. In order to understand better the relations between school attachment, identity and self-esteem, we need to carry out a longitudinal study. Another limitation of the study is that the data were obtained from 295 students attending an Anatolian high school in Uşak province. The variables of the present study may be tested in different study groups in future studies. As a result, the study indicated that the predictive effect of self-esteem and identity development on adolescents' school attachment. In this respect, it's important to carry out studies about the awareness of individuals about themselves. In addition, cultural, educational, artistic and sporting activities should be planned for students to realize their own potential and develop a healthy identity.

REFERENCES

Anderman, E. M. (2002). School effects on psychological outcomes during adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *94,* 795–809.

Blum, R. (2005). *School connectedness: Improving the lives of students*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. http://cecp.air.org/download/MCMonographFINAL.

Can, Y., & Polat, M. (2004). Kayseri ili ilköğretim öğrencilerinde kayak sporuna yönelik fiziksel uygunluk normlarının araştırılması. *Erciyes Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Dergisi, 13*(1), 48- 54.

Cemalciler, Z. (2010). Schools as socialisation contexts: Understanding the impact of school climate factors on students' sense of school belonging. *Applied Psychology, 59*, 243.

Crocetti, E., Rubini, M., Luyckx, K. ve Meeus, W. (2008). Identity formation in early and middle adolescents from various ethnic groups: From three dimensions to five statuses. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 37*, 983-996.

Crocetti, E., Schwartz, S., Fermani, A., & Meeus, W. (2010). The utrecht management of identity commitment scale (U-MICS): Italian validation and cross national comparisons. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 26*, 169–183.

Crocetti, E., Sica, L., Schwartz, S. J., & Meeus, W. (2013). Identity styles, dimensions, statuses, and functions: Making connections among identity conceptualizations. *Revue européenne de psychologie appliquée, 63*, 1-13.

Çuhadaroğlu, F. (1986). *Adolesanlarda benlik saygısı.* (Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi), Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Ankara.

Dotterer, A. M., McHale, S., & Crouter, A. C. (2007). Implications of out-of-school activities for school engagement in african American adolescents. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 36*, 391-401.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis.* New York: Norton.

Fredricks,J.A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potentialof the concept, state of the evidence. *Rewiev of Educational Research, 74*, 59-109.

Grotevant, H. D., & Cooper, C. R. (1986). Individuation in family relationships: A perspective on individual differences in development of identity and role taking skill in adolescents. *Human Development, 26*, 82-100

Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., Kosterman, R., Abbott, R., & Hill, K. G. (1999). Preventing adolescent health-risk behaviors by strengthening protection during childhood. *Arch Pediatric Adolescence Medicine*, *153*(3), 226-234.

Hawkins, J. D., Guo, J., Hill, K. G., Battin-Pearson, S., & Abbott, R. D. (2001). Long-term effects of the Seattle Social Development Intervention on school bonding trajectories. *Applied Developmental Science,* 5, 225–236.

Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press. http://www.sagepub.com/upmdata/36812_5.pdf.

Kading, M. (2014). *School connectedness: an analysis of students' relationship with their school*. Winona State University.

Karakuş, Ö. (2012). Ergenlerde bağlanma stilleri ve yalnızlık arasındaki ilişki. *Toplum ve Sosyal Hizmet*, *23*(2), 33-46.

Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262– 273.

Kuzgun, Y. (2002). *İlköğretimde rehberlik*. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım.

Lim, Y., & Lee, O. (2017). Relationship between parental maltreatment and adolescents' school adjustment: Mediating roles of self-esteem and peer attachment. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26*(2), 393-404.

Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in adolescence. In J. Adelson (Ed.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (pp.159–187). New York: Wiley.

Yörükoğlu, A. (2000). *Gençlik çağı ruhsal sağlığı ve ruhsal sorunları* (11. bs.). İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları.

Yuen M., Patrick S. Y. Lau, Queenie A. Y. Lee, Norman C. Gysbers, Raymond M. C. Chan, Ricci W. Fong, Y. B, Peter M. K., & Shea, Y. (2012). Factors influencing school connectedness: Chinese adolescents' perspectives. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 13*(1), 55-63.