Place Attachment in University Students.
Case study: Shiraz University

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Abstract

Place is a phenomenon that the human has given meaning and attached to during his life. It includes both material and non-material aspects and inspires a type of feeling in its occupants. Through such feelings, a sort of attachment to the place has been created in individuals, and such attachment leads to the creation of social relations between a person and the place. The current research aims to study expectancy and results of place attachment in students of Shiraz University. The findings indicate that the results of the hypothesis model are approved, and the practical signs have led to a perception of scientific and social life of students.

1. Introduction

Every year, thousands of students leave their homes to attend university and experience a new and independent life away from their families. During this move, and over time, some people establish a positive relationship towards the new environment while others are not able to establish such a relationship. So the environment can be divided into two categories: natural environment and social environment. It seems that creating positive relationships with friends and classmates or in other words, the social environment, could play an important role in causing attachment to place and promote emotional interaction between individual and the natural environment. On the other hand, it seems that...

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developing the sentiment with the environment can assist the individual to achieve his goals (Altman and Low, 1992). Accordingly, one of the main goals of individuals who enter the university is increasing motivation and thus improving their educational level. So this seems to suggest that positive emotional relation to the environment or in other words attachment to the university place can help the students to develop their academic motivation to study science. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the relationship between attachment to place, and student’s academic motivation. Accordingly, hypotheses of interest in this study are:

- Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between positive social interactions and university attachment.
- Hypothesis 2: There is a positive significant relationship between establishing positive scientific motivation and university attachment.
- Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between adult attachment (older students) and social interactions.
- Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between the students’ age (older students) and the university attachment.
- Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between students’ age (older students) and scientific motivation.
- Hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship between social interactions and scientific motivation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Attachment to the place of the university

In Dehkhoda’s lexicon attachment means amour, passion, friendship, amity, love and tendency. Attachment to place as a concept is the relationships and the connections between people and places. Today, the concept of place attachment plays an important role in environmental, psychological studies. Attachment to place is a chain between individuals and meaningful environment (Giuliani, Ferrera and Barabotti, 2003, Altman and Low, 1992).

Studies show that the attachment to place plays an important role in motivation and care of public places such as urban squares and parks (Moore & Graefc, 1994, Williams et al., 1995; Kyle et al., 2004). Many researchers believe that a sense of place includes concepts such as spatial identity, place attachment, and place dependence (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). Attachment to place, while radiating from experiences, behaviours and social and emotional organization of individuals, also stimulates individual’s behavioural motivation and establishes purposeful behaviour so that individuals with their behaviours and interactions in an environment pay more attention to and care more about it. Place attachment will be the basis of positive emotional communication and interaction with the place and establishes through individual, collective, social and cultural characteristics, (Altman and Low, 1992:5). Establishing this emotional communication causes human connection with the place and gives a sense to the place (Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992: 139), as well as invokes more interest in the place (Bonaiuto et al., 1999:3332). In addition, the attachment to the place is related to reciprocal actions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge associated with the place (Proshansky, Fabin and Kaminoff. 1983: 59).

Researchers have employed different terms to express the concept of place attachment. This concept is sometimes referred to with terms such as "belonging" or "sense of belonging" to school (Baskin, Vampold, Quintana and Enrigt, 2010; Freeman, Anderman and Jensen, 2007, Pittman and Richmond, 2008), and sometimes attached to a university or school (France, Finney, Swerdzewski, 2010). These terms, however differently, are exchanged among researchers.
2.2. The meaning of attachment to place of university

Attachment to place of the university is the emotional connection of the individual with the place that is rooted in an individual’s experiences and characteristics; the place should be responsive to the needs and expectancies individuals and have the capacity to fulfil them. Attachment to place will be constructed on the basis of cognitive, affective, and functional interaction between individuals, groups and socio-physical places over time (Charkhchiyan, 1388).

Emotional relationship between the individual and place based on the judging method, and preferential to the place leads to the connection to the place so that one considers himself as part of the place and according to his experiences of symptoms, meanings, functions and his character depicts a role for the place in his mind and the place becomes necessary and respective for him (Falahat, 1384). Therefore, in forming attachment to place, person, place, time, and human interactions, and place in terms of cognitive, emotional and functional aspects are necessary. Attachment, stables the desire to live with others and purposeful behaviour (Maris, 1996). Moreover, attachment sometimes builds in the context of the social and behavioural systems, such as the process of personal sociability, and becomes activated by security threats (Goldberg, 2000). In fact, attachment to place is a symbolic association with the place which is created by affective meanings and shared cultural sense that individuals give to a particular location (Low and Altman, 1992). Attachment to place is arising from activities and interactions between human-places and human-human in a particular place (ibid).

2.3. Indicators of attachment to the university place

There are various theories to evaluate the indicators and different dimensions of attachment to place. Attachment to the university place is consists of the combination of environmental characteristics and individuals conceptual models. The concept is established by physical characteristics of the environment and their evaluation by beneficiaries and differs from person to person (Riley, 1992). Accordingly, attachment to the university place is directly related to the social and personal characteristics of the addresses, rate of individual’s connection in the place and the extent of participation in the public events (Brown and Werner, 1985:535). Thus, the presence of individuals with similar characteristics such as social class, ethnicity, religion, economic class, lifestyle, income and education, plays an important role in the continued presence of the person in the place. This positive sense of social interaction and communication makes leaving the desired position difficult (Fried, 1963). Attachment to a university deepens when the place is felt by the participants, and it fulfils functional requirements as well as being designed to fit the behavioural goals of misusers (Williams, 1995: 85).

Attachment to a particular environment is influenced by the quality and characteristics of the place. Characteristics of each place are the diagram of potentials and unique features of that place (Ibid). Attachment to place increases as the period of living in and visiting the place prolonged and also it depends on personal interaction with others in that place (Relph, 1976: 33). The role of religion, mythology and tradition is so important in creating a sense of retention to the place, and destruction of religion causes location death (Ibid: 31). Ralph considers "being in a place" as a sense of belonging and being attached to it and states that the deeper the sense of being in the place, the stronger the sense of identity with the place will be (Ibid). Economic globalization, standard production and public urban areas, have a weak link to local landscapes, ecosystems, history, culture and economy and has become one of the weakening factors of the sense of place (Wheeler, 2004). The result is the current trend towards the development of urban spaces that fade attachment to place undermines its purpose, and it leads to diversity of spatial experience.
In this study attachment to the university place is derived from individuals’ interaction with the place and meanings and features associated with the environment that motivates the person to remain in the place, and it will be possible through a spatial sense of the place. Thus, the designers need to psychological understanding so that they could add the dimensions of attachment to the place in their plans and programs.

2.4. Consequences of attachment to the university place

Attachment to the university place affects people's moods and behavior for example, the tendency to local employment and enterprise activities in the future (Rollero and Piccoli, 2010). Other studies showed that people who are willing to relocate to another location have a lower level of attachment to the place where they live in (Kelly and Hosking, 2008). Researches showed that higher level of attachment is related to a higher level of concern about the environment (Vorkinn and Riese, 2001). These studies have been primarily focused on natural resources or attachment to a particular city, not the university students. The findings that show how to predict the consequences of attachment to the university are quantitative.

3. Method

Familiarity with the group in each study is a beginning of statistical analysis of its relationships. The target population is students of the master program in Shiraz University and the sample size is calculated by Cochran formula to be 316 master students. In this section, we discuss the results of descriptive and inferential tables of the research. In the descriptive section, we explain statistics such as frequency, percentage and cumulative percentage of the total population. In inferential section, we used the Pearson correlation coefficients for variables (dependent and independent) that are discrete variables, and for the variables that are in a rank-discrete level F-test or ANOVA were used.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. Evaluation of hypotheses

In this section, according to the data, we examine the relationship between place and process, person and place. According to a study concerning the attachment to the university place, we have 6 main hypotheses.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between positive social interactions and university attachment.

Pearson correlation coefficient has been selected to confirm or refute the hypothesis according to the measured level of the two variables which are discrete.

The correlation coefficient of these two variables is 464/0 with the significance level of 000/0. Hypothesis has been approved because the significance level is less than 05/0, so the assumption that there is a relation in this hypothesis proves. Additionally, Correlation coefficient 464/0 is at an average level. Thus, there is a positive relationship between social relations and the university attachment at an average level.
Table 1. The correlation coefficient of hypothesis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>The correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive social interactions - university attachment</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive significant relationship between the university attachment and establishing positive scientific motivation.

Pearson correlation coefficient has been selected to confirm or refute the hypothesis according to the measured level of the two variables which are discrete. The correlation coefficient of these two variables is 0.655 with the significance level of 0.000. Hypothesis has been approved since the significance level is less than 0.05, so the assumption that there is a relation in this hypothesis proves. Additionally, Correlation coefficient is at high level. Thus, there is a strong positive relationship between social relations and the university attachment.

Table 2. The correlation coefficient for hypothesis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>The correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing positive scientific motivation - university attachment</td>
<td>0.655</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between adult attachment (older students) and social interactions.

Table 4 shows the effect of independent variables (age, education) on the dependent variables (social interactions). F-test or ANOVA was used since the measurement level of the independent variable is multilateral, and the dependent variable is discrete. Results in the form of a one-way ANOVA showed that the relationship between students’ age and social interactions exists at the significant level of 95%. F-Test rate is 2.908 and significance level of 0.037 which is less than 0.05. Thus, there is a positive correlation between students’ age and social interactions.

Table 3. ANOVA for hypothesis 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between students</td>
<td>556.791</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>185.597</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the group</td>
<td>7787.653</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>63.833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between the students’ age (older students) and the attachment to the university place.

Table 5 shows the effect of independent variables (students’ age) on the dependent variables (attachment to the university place). F-test or ANOVA was used because the measurement level of the independent variable is multilateral, and the dependent variable is discrete. Results in the form of a one-way ANOVA showed that there is a relationship between students’ age and attachment to the university place at significance level of 95%. F-Test rate is 2.908 and significance level is 0.037 which is less than 0.05. Thus, there is a positive correlation between students’ age and attachment to the university place.
Table 4. ANOVA for hypothesis 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student's age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between group</td>
<td>2044.992</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>511.248</td>
<td>10.003</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the group</td>
<td>8892.773</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>51.108</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between students’ age (older students) and scientific motivation.

Table 6 shows the effect of independent variables (students’ age), on the dependent variables (academic motivation). Results in the form of a one-way ANOVA showed that a relationship exists between students’ age and scientific motivation significant at 95%. F-Test rate is 3.029 and the significance level equals to 0.035 which is less than 0.05. Thus, there is a significant relationship between students’ age and academic motivation.

Table 5. T-test for hypothesis 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student's age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between group</td>
<td>3050.812</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1016.937</td>
<td>3.029</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the group</td>
<td>25179.051</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>335.721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship between social interactions and scientific motivation.

Pearson coefficient has been selected, to temporarily confirm or refute the hypothesis according to the measured level of the two variables which are discrete. The correlation coefficient of these two variables is 0.765 at significance level of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Thus, the existence of the assuming relation in this hypothesis is confirmed. So, there is a significant relationship between social interactions and scientific motivation.

Table 6. The correlation coefficient for hypothesis 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interactions - scientific motivation</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Multivariate Regression Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Significant F</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Added R²</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First step</td>
<td>Scientific motivation</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>136.437</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td>0.537</td>
<td>5.447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second step</td>
<td>Social interactions</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>78.661</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>0.570</td>
<td>5.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third step</td>
<td>Students’ age</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>55.426</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.593</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>5.169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, bivariate tests to assess the accuracy of the assumptions that are used in the study are essential, but in order to achieve a more clear picture of the factors affecting the attachment place, we used multiple regression analyses stepwise. In this method, the variable that is most correlated with the dependent variable enters the equation. The second variable that is entered into the equation is the variable that has the higher rate in the explained variance after separating former variable. For multiple regression analyses, considering the rate of attachment to the university place, as the dependent variable, all independent variables entered the equation and were analysed. Therefore, social interaction, age, education, and scientific motivation entered the models in order to analyse the significance in the multivariate analysis. Test result in table 7 indicates that the variables of motivation, social interactions, and students’ age has entered the model, and R² 0.593% of the variance explained attachment to the university place.

Beta values in Table 8 show that variables entered in the first step (scientific motivation) had a positive correlation with the dependent variable. Variable in the second step (social interactions) has direct, and positive correlation with the dependent variable, and the third variable (students’ age) has a direct and positive correlation with the dependent variable. Therefore, the prediction of attachment to the university place for our population is:

\[ \text{Attachment to university place} = 12.761 + (2.365)(X_1) + (1.061)(X_2) + (1.196)(X_3) \]

Therefore, it should be stated that scientific motivation, social interactions, and students’ age had an important role in attachment to the university place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable</th>
<th>Name of variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Significant level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1</td>
<td>Scientific motivation</td>
<td>2.365</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>10.118</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td>Social interactions</td>
<td>1.061</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>3.326</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td>Students’ age</td>
<td>1.196</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>2.088</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant amount</td>
<td>12.761</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>3.593</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So it could be stated that the variables that affect the attachment to the university place in this regression are scientific motivation, social interactions, social and students’ age. These factors play a fundamental role in attachment to the university place from the view of students’ of the University of Shiraz. About 0.593 of the variance of the sense of place is related to these three variables.
5. Conclusion

The data obtained from this study confirmed the theoretical model. In particular, students’ age significantly predicted social interactions better. Having good social interaction at university has predicted significantly higher spatial attachment, which in turn predicted higher scientific motivation. Students’ age is a significant predictor of the scientific motivation. An advantage of the obtained data is that it determined the critical role of place attachment in predicting scientific motivation through social interaction. Non-significant direct effect (Statistics stated it was significant) showed that the place attachment mediated the relationship between social interactions and academic success. A study on typical young students in one study has shown that students social interactions predict higher interest in school and higher goal orientation (for example, Ryan and Patrick, 2011; Tenzel, 1998). These findings are indebted to effect of social support or positive emotions (Tenzel, 1998). Previous studies showed that when people become attached to a place, they become more dependent on that, which was in line with that of previous research (for example, Lewicka, 2005; Painton, Falton and Anderson, 2005). Therefore, when students are more attached to school they may feel more responsibility towards school (university) - related activities such as academic (scientific) studies.

Understanding the students’ scientific motivation, particularly in the context of the university is important. College is an important period leading to independence and students’ thought importance and critical life skills during their lifetime (Macmillan, 1987). These skills require students to know that they are highly motivated, active learners (in line with Fasione, P. A., Fasione, N. C., And Giyankarlu, 1996; Garcia and Pintrich, 1992). But today lack of motivation among students is frequent. Educated and researchers have tried to organize and provide materials to develop methods to enhance students’ motivation, (for example, Bidwel, 1990; Wan and Voorhis, 1995). This study will provide another option. The present data determines the relationship between people and relationships with the university place as the main factors influencing the students' motivation and shows that educated people may cause motivated students begin healthy social school interactions and develop a sense of attachment to school. The study analyses the relationship between romantic relationships and close friendships that is related to the attachment to the university place. The study also shows that students’ age predicts attachment to the
university place through social interactions and social interactions mediated the relationship between students’ age and place attachment. It also explains why students’ age predicts scientific motivation. However, another possible explanation is that individuals with a secure attachment may waste less time and energy worrying about these relationships, so they can better focus on academic affairs. And their perspective towards life and human relations could also be more positive, leading to better overall health. This health depends on having higher motivation in their life (Ryan and Dichi, 2000).

Finally, the present study, despite its limitations and shortcomings, steps towards a better understanding of human relationships with individuals and human interactions with a place in an academic field. The study tries to give evidence for the relationships between students’ age and place attachment, as well as between students’ age and academic motivation. Our study is also limited to place of a particular university (Case study of Shiraz University) and MS students. The findings show that the results confirmed the theoretical model and have given scientific symptoms of understanding the students’ social and academic life; it means as the age goes up people are more socially interacted resulting in strong attachment to the university and as the age decreases, individuals will experience lower social interactions, and weaker attachment to the university.

This paper will present the following suggestions: 1) According to the results of scientific study motivation is the most effective factor. Therefore, university administrators and program planners should provide programs in order to strengthen the scientific motivation; such as providing adequate space for study, training and research. 2) According to the results, social interaction is in the second place. The university planners and authorities should plan to promote and foster social interactions and also to prevent student isolation and by which affect the sense of attachment to university places; this can be effected through the programs such as meetings, distributing leaflets, films, books, etc. in order to increase students' social interactions; it also it has an impact on the students’ learning and attachment to the environment. 3) It is suggested that more facilities are needed to improve the older students’ psychological and scientific situations, such as free internet and coupons for buying books. 4) Since the university is a sacred place, as the students enter the university and spend part of their life there, universities should provide the scientific accommodations for the students. This establishment of the sense of mental and psychological security leads to more attachment to the university place and enjoy staying there.

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