

## The Role of Attachment Styles and Religious Attitudes in the Adjustment of Students

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### Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Adolescence is one of the most important stages of life in this period, due to physical, psychological and behavioral changes, the need to adapt to family and society is felt more. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of attachment styles and religious attitudes in predicting adjustment of students.

**Methods:** The present study was a descriptive correlational study. The research samples included 162 students who were selected by a Multi-stage cluster sampling method of first high school students in the city of Najaf Abad. To collect the data of the Sinha & Singh adjustment Questionnaire (1993), Hazen and Shaver Attachment Styles Questionnaire (1987), Barahani and Golriz Religious Attitude Questionnaire (1975) were used. To analyze the relationships among the variables and to predict variances in adjustment, the Pearson correlation coefficient and the stepwise regression analysis were used.

**Results:** The results showed that there is a significant relationship between attachment styles and religious attitude with students' adjustment ( $P < 0.001$ ). The regression analysis results showed that the strongest compatibility predictor variables in students are ambivalent attachment style, religious attitude and avoidant attachment style ( $P < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** These results indicate that ambivalent attachment style, religious attitude and avoidant attachment style can be important factors in adjustment of students.

**Keywords:** Adjustment, Attachment Style, Religious Attitude, Students.

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### Introduction

One of the most important social problems in different societies today is behavioral and mental abnormalities and methods of dealing with them. There is no doubt that in the issue of mental health, adjustment is more important. Consecutive adjustment to the constant changes of life and balancing between personal needs and the demands of the environment are the results of adjustment (1). Emotional, social and educational adjustment of adolescents, especially in educational environments, is one of the

important factors that has a significant effect on increasing academic performance, learning and future success of adolescents (2, 3).

Important social factors play a role in the development of adjustment, one of which is the parent's response to the child's needs in childhood and leads to the formation of attachment styles in the child (4). Attachment includes patterns of emotion, thinking, and individual behaviors in close association with the caregiver, emotional partner, and other intimate individuals (5). Bowlby believed that

the development of a secure relationship depends on the regular interaction between parental care behaviors and child attachment behaviors. The formation of a secure attachment in the individual will lead to the development of self-esteem, positive emotions, satisfactory communication with others and personal independence (6). When the child is worried and anxious, if the parents are not available to him/ her, he/ she may react to the situation by inhibiting the attachment system, and repeating this can lead to the development of insecure attachment styles (7). The development of secure attachment in the first 2 years of life is closely related to the child's socialization, parental acceptance, and effective emotion regulation. On the other hand, insecure attachment patterns before the age of 2 are associated with difficulty in socialization and poor interaction with peers in childhood and adulthood (8). Insecure attachment style in children and adolescents is associated with ineffective psychological performance (9), unadjusted behavioral patterns (10), behavioral problems and symptoms of high-risk behavior (11), depression, anxiety, antisocial personality disorder and adjustment disorder (12). Attachment to parents has a unique role in children's inner characteristics such as loneliness, sense of cohesion, hope and effort and behavioral disorders (13).

Other effective factors in the people adjustment are religion and religious beliefs (14). In adolescence, a person is faced with identification. Identity formation in adolescents is a crisis (15, 16). Religious identity gives a person the power to act with a heartfelt belief in religious teachings, which will have consequences such as directing life, having a positive approach on the future, enjoying social acceptance, and giving meaning to the world (17). Well-known psychologists such as Allport and Jung have studied the role and positive effect of religion on people's lives and consider it important (18). Religious psyches are a major factor in the higher adjustment of religious individuals (19). Religion is associated with individual's mental health and social adjustment (20). Various Eastern and Western religions have common and

influential factors on mental health, prevention of depression and anxiety and thus increase psychological adjustment (21). Religious people show more resistance to anxiety and depression caused by illness by dealing with religion (22) and even when suffering from incurable diseases, they maintain a higher level of hope and show greater adjustment (23). Religion and religious rites are the best predictors of social adjustment and increase the quality and quantity of interpersonal relationships (24).

Adjustment is one of the main signs of mental health and human beings, through adjustment to new conditions, reduce anxiety, stress and depression and maintain their mental health and provide the basis for their success. However, many theoretical and experimental efforts have been made to identify the factors related to adjustment, but less effort has been made to identify the role of religious beliefs and attachment styles in the adjustment of certain groups, especially students. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the role of attachment styles and religious attitudes in student adjustment.

## Methods

The present study was descriptive correlational. The statistical population consisted of all seventh, eighth and ninth grade students of the first high school for boys in Najafabad who were studying in the 2017-2018 academic year (3745 people). In addition to the desire of individuals, inclusion criteria in the present study were studying in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades and having relative general health and the exclusion criteria included unwillingness to continue cooperation with researchers and failure to complete the questionnaire. According to Morgan's table, the sample size consisted of 354 male students who were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. In order to collect data and eliminate cultural differences, educational areas were divided into three areas, and then two schools from each area and three classes from each school (seventh, eighth and ninth grade) and in each class several students were randomly selected. In order to observe ethical

considerations, researchers first introduced themselves and explained the goals and methods of research, as well as obtaining informed satisfaction from individuals. The sample group was assured that their information would remain confidential.

In the present study, three questionnaires of adjustment, attachment styles and religious attitude were used.

### ***1- Sinha and Singh adjustment questionnaire (AISS- 1993)***

It is a 60-item scale that assesses student adjustment in three emotional, social, and educational dimensions. In scoring this questionnaire, for answers that indicate adjustment, a score of one and otherwise a score of zero is considered. The sum of the total scores indicates the general adjustment of the individual and the sum of the individual scores in each dimension of adjustment (emotional, social and educational) indicates the individual adjustment in that area. The maximum score for each scale will be 20 and the overall adjustment score will be 60. Therefore, a high score on the subscales and the whole test is a sign of adjustment. This questionnaire has good reliability and validity. In a study, this questionnaire was conducted to 164 high school students and its reliability was reported based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient for general adjustment as 0.82 and for educational, emotional and social adjustment as 0.70, 0.68 and 0.65, respectively (25).

### ***2- Attachment style questionnaire***

This scale was made by Hazen & Shaver (26) and has been standardized on students of University of Tehran in Iran. This questionnaire has 15 items which 5 items are assigned to each of three secure, avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles. Scoring on this scale ranges from very low (score one) to very high (score five). Attachment subscales scores are obtained by an average of 5 questions per subscale. Five items of the questionnaire are related to secure attachment style, five items are related to avoidant attachment style and five items are related to ambivalent attachment style (27). Hazen & Shaver (26) obtained a

total retest of this questionnaire 0.80 and reliability with Cronbach's alpha 0.78. They also reported good face and content validity and reported its construct validity as very good. Also, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was obtained in a study for the whole questionnaire, ambivalent style, avoidant style and secure style, respectively, 0.75, 0.83, 0.81 and 0.77, which shows a good reliability (28).

### ***3- Religious Attitude Questionnaire***

This questionnaire has been prepared by Braheni and Golriz (1974) which includes 25 questions and each question has five grades and has a score of zero to 4 based on Likert and its total score is 100. Classification of scores from 0-100 is based on four scales, respectively, excellent, good, average and poor, which were categorized in the form of a score of (76-100) excellent religious attitude, (51-75) good, (26-50) average and (25 to low) poor religious attitudes. The validity of this test was obtained by correlation coefficient with Allport, Vernon & Lyndzy test (1960, quoting 29) which is equal to 0.80. This questionnaire has been re-evaluated in recent years and its reliability has been obtained by Spearman Brown method equal to 0.63 and its validity is equal to 0.248 (29). This questionnaire was also used in a study on students (30).

In the present study, in order to analyze the data, first descriptive statistical methods including mean and standard deviation were used and to determine the relationship between research variables and students' adjustment, Pearson correlation coefficient was used and then stepwise regression was used to determine their predictive role in predicting adjustment. SPSS software version 20 was used to analyze the data.

## **Result**

The mean and standard deviation of the scores of religious attitude, attachment styles and adjustment are shown in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of students in the variables of adjustment were 37.05 (8.15), religious attitude were 63.49 (8.14), secure attachment

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Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of religious attitude, attachment styles and adjustment in students

Variable	M	SD
Adjustment	37.05	8.15
Religious attitude	63.49	8.14
Secure attachment style	2.43	0.89
Avoidant attachment style	1.68	0.87
Ambivalent attachment style	0.46	0.23

style were 2.43 (0.89), avoidant attachment style were 1.68 (0.87) and ambivalent attachment style were 0.46 (0.23). Before using the correlation coefficient and stepwise regression tests, the observance of its presuppositions was checked. One of the presuppositions was the test for checking the normality of score distribution of test variables by not having significant skewness and also checking the normal Q-Q diagram was confirmed. The assumption that the variables are linear has also been observed. Also, the value of Durbin-Watson statistic was between 1.5 and 2.5, which the assumption of error independence was observed.

As can be seen in Table 2, there was a significant positive relationship between religious attitude and secure attachment style and there was a significant negative relationship between avoidant and ambivalent

Table 2. Correlation coefficient of religious attitude and attachment styles with students' adjustment

Variable	Adjustment	Significance Level
Religious attitude	0.28	0.004
Secure attachment style	0.20	0.009
Avoidant style	-0.33	0.003
Ambivalent style	-0.65	0.002

attachment style with adjustment at 99% confidence level. Then, stepwise regression was used to predict adjustment based on religious attitude and attachment styles, the results of which are shown in Table 3.

The results of Table 3 stepwise regression for predicting adjustment show that in the first step, the ambivalent attachment style alone predicts adjustment of 0.43 and in the second step, the ambivalent attachment style and religious attitude together predict adjustment of 0.48 and in the third step, ambivalent attachment style and religious attitude and avoidant attachment style together predict adjustment of 0.51. Also ambivalent attachment style ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $\beta = -0.60$ ) and religious attitude ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $\beta = 0.20$ ) and avoidant attachment style ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $\beta = -0.18$ ) had a significant relationship with students' adjustment and were predictors of adjustment.

Table 3. The results of stepwise regression to predict adjustment

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE	$\beta$	t	Significance Level
Ambivalent attachment style	0.65	0.43	-22.51	2.07	-0.65	-10.87	<0.001
Ambivalent attachment style Religious attitude	0.69	0.48	-21.82 0.14	1.99 0.03	-0.63 0.23	-10.98 4.00	<0.001 <0.001
Ambivalent attachment style Religious attitude Avoidant attachment style	0.71	0.51	-20.79 0.12 -1.72	1.97 0.03 0.54	-0.60 0.20 -0.18	-10.56 3.48 -3.01	<0.001 <0.001 <0.001

## Discussion

The assumption that there is a significant relationship between different levels of attachment styles and adjustment in students was confirmed. In other words, in the present study, there was a significant positive relationship between secure attachment style and adjustment in students and a significant negative relationship between avoidant and ambivalent attachment style with adjustment in students.

This result is consistent with some of the findings of other studies (8, 10, 11). The results of these studies have shown that the

development of secure attachment in the first 2 years of life is closely related to the child's socialization, parental acceptance and effective regulation of emotions. On the other hand, patterns of insecure attachment before the age of 2 are associated with difficulty in socializing and poor interaction with peers in childhood and adulthood. It is also consistent with the findings of several studies (12, 13) which showed that there is a relationship between adolescent attachment and psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, antisocial personality disorder, loneliness and adjustment disorder. Explaining the above results, according to the

theoretical foundations of Bowlby attachment, secure attachment provides the basis of safety for individuals through which they can discover their world and give more adjusted responses to their environment. The existence of such a basis of security encourages individuals to explore and be cognitively open to new information (31). This secure foundation provides necessary confidence to risk, learn, and continually update our, others, and the world models. Self-confidence and trust to others are the two basic characteristics of secure people (32). Since self-confidence is one of the intrapsychic foundations of a secure attached individual, it gives him the ability to interact more skillfully, confidently and calmly in interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, a secure person's trust in others, which is a complement to self-confidence, helps him to attract the help of others, thus facilitates the person's adjustment to new contexts.

The results also showed that religious attitude has a significant positive relationship with adjustment in students. This research is in line with the results of some other researches (19-23). These studies showed that adherence to religion is associated with individual's mental health and social adjustment. Religious people by religious dealing are more resilient to anxiety and depression caused by illness, and even when suffering from incurable diseases, they maintain a higher level of hope and show greater adjustment. Therefore, teaching religious issues to adolescents is essential for a healthy life. According to the results of this study, religious attitudes affect students' adjustment and these people have better and more successful mental health due to their higher adjustment, so parents are advised to help their children to cultivate religious characteristics and abilities in their children.

This research has been done cross-sectionally, making it difficult to draw conclusions about causality. Although the tools used in this study are validated in terms of psychometric indices, the use of scales that have different cultural foundations to some extent affects the internal validity of the research. Due to the fact that in the present study, only first grade high school male students have been studied, caution is

required in generalizing the results to other groups. It is recommended that in future studies, using structural equation modeling, the role of mediating variables in adjustment should be considered and since this study was conducted only on first grade high school male students, it is recommended to examine and compare these variables in adjustment between boys and girls.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the present study, it can be concluded that factors such as religious attitude directly and ambivalent and avoidant attachment style play a negative role in predicting student adjustment. That is, well-formed religion and attachment style, by creating a psychological and social protective umbrella against the negative factors affecting the adolescent, create a state of control and mastery on the environment, and in general, help to improve a person's performance and mental health and adjustment.

## **Recommendations**

The findings of this study are significant in both theoretical and practical applications. Theoretically, considering that religion and religious attitude in our country is considered as one of the basic foundations in comprehensive planning, the results of this study can help to the scientific body of these studies. From practical point of view, the present study can play important effects in the field of psychology, teaching and learning. Since a significant part of adjustment is acquired and teachable, the findings of this study can help education officials to improve student adjustment.

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This research was conducted without any financial support.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The authors declare that in this research, all relevant ethical principles, including the confidentiality of the questionnaires, the informed consent of the participants in the research, and the authority to withdraw from the

research have been observed.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests in this study.

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## نقش سبک‌های دلبستگی و نگرش مذهبی در سازگاری دانش‌آموزان

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### چکیده

**سابقه و هدف:** نوجوانی یکی از مراحل مهم زندگی است. در این دوران با توجه به تغییرات جسمانی، روان‌شناختی و رفتاری، لزوم سازگاری با خانواده و جامعه بیشتر احساس می‌شود. هدف پژوهش حاضر ارزیابی نقش سبک‌های دلبستگی و نگرش مذهبی در سازگاری دانش‌آموزان بود.

**روش کار:** پژوهش حاضر توصیفی از نوع همبستگی بود. آزمودنی‌های پژوهش شامل ۱۶۲ دانش‌آموز بودند که از میان دبیرستان‌های متوسطه اول شهرستان نجف‌آباد به شیوه نمونه‌گیری خوشه‌ای چند مرحله‌ای انتخاب شدند. برای جمع‌آوری داده‌ها از مقیاس سازگاری سینه‌ها و سینگ (۱۹۹۳)، پرسش‌نامه سبک‌های دلبستگی هازن و شیور (۱۹۸۷) و پرسش‌نامه نگرش مذهبی براهنی و گلریز (۱۳۵۳) استفاده شد. به‌منظور تجزیه و تحلیل رابطه بین متغیرها و پیش‌بینی تغییرات سازگاری از روش‌های ضریب همبستگی پیرسون و تحلیل رگرسیون گام‌به‌گام استفاده شد.

**یافته‌ها:** نتایج پژوهش نشان داد انواع سبک‌های دلبستگی و نگرش مذهبی با سازگاری در دانش‌آموزان رابطه معناداری دارد (۰/۰۰۱).

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