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Relationships of Attachment Styles and Academic Resilience in Students: The Mediating Role of Identity Styles

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships of attachment styles and dimensions of academic resilience in students mediated by identity styles. The statistical population of this study was all high school students in Marvdasht, Iran in 2020. Multi-stage cluster random sampling method was used to select the sample. In this way, 3 girls 'schools and 3 boys' schools were selected from Marvdasht high schools and then 3 classes were randomly selected from each school. All students in the selected classes (356) completed the questionnaires. The Samuels Academic Resilience Inventory (ARI), Collins Revised Adult Attachment Scale and Berzonsky Identity Style Inventory were used to collect data. Structural equation modeling was used to test the research hypotheses. According to the results, the tested model had good fit indices. Also, results indicated that attachment styles are related to academic resilience both directly and through identity styles. In general, these findings confirm the role of attachment styles and identity styles in dealing with academic and emotional challenges in school and provide the insight needed to create academic resilience in learners for school counselors.

Keywords: Attachment styles, Academic resilience, Identity styles, High school students

Introduction

Students are an element of the educational system that the Ministry of Education presents and implements detailed and coherent plans to guide this group. But despite the improvement of educational and research conditions, there is a little aspiration for greater academic achievement and some of students are going to withdraw from difficult or relatively difficult academic situations. Some theorists consider this type of withdrawal and lack of perseverance to overcome obstacles to success as a result of low resilience (Caldera Montes, Aceves Lupercio, & Reynoso González, 2016). The origin of the concept of resilience was obtained from early psychological research on children who were invulnerable to unpleasant life situations. Over time, the word "invulnerable" was replaced by resilience, and a new field of theory and research emerged. The concept of resilience appeared in the 1980s and research continues on it as well. Seligman, Abramson, Semmel, and Von Baeyer (1979) with research on "learned helplessness" showed that people can be conditioned to be passive and despair of solving problems when their activities do not go as expected and do not lead to rewards. Seligman found that when people believe that their efforts can be associated with success, optimism is also learned and this concept is close to the resilience (Sanchis, Canetta, & Poler, 2020).

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Resilience is defined as the process, capacity, or outcome of successfully adapting to challenges or threatening conditions. A situation that is stressful for one person may not be considered stressful for another. The ability to cope depends on the amount of stress, experience, and finally the amount of support and help a person receives from his environment (Edwards, Catling, & Parry, 2016). Also, in the academic field, resilience refers to the high levels of motivation to progress and perform, despite the stressful events and conditions that students face in school (Osee, Azeez, & Akindele-Oscar, 2019).

Students with low academic resilience are vulnerable, lack motivation, encouragement and necessary strategies to turn stressful situations into opportunities. These students are always engaged in mental preoccupations and exaggerate their problems and consider themselves victims of accidents. They are proud of the current situation, exhibit themselves as weak, avoid trying to solve stressful situations, their coping way is rigid and inflexible, feel worried about the future, and most of times worry about future (Doğulu, Karanci, & Ikizer, 2016).

According to studies, several factors have an effect on students' academic resilience that one of which is attachment style. Attachment style is one of the most important factors in interpersonal interactions, which is formed in childhood and continues in later ages according to the environment in which person has evolved. Different methods of interaction between the child and his caregivers lead to the formation of three attachment styles: secure, insecure avoidant, and insecure anxious. Secure attached people have trust in the world and others and have a desire to create warm and positive relationships with others. Children's attachment styles, which affect their later psychological states, have been categorized into three types, secure attachment, anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment. Children with secure attachment are described as follow: if they are in a place like a store, they can distance themselves a little from their parents (as long as they are in sight) without anxiety and discomfort, and look for them when the distance becomes too much. But children with an anxious attachment style may never leave their parents even when they are visiting them, due to a lack of trust in the environment and feeling threatened and hostile by it. Children with avoidant attachment style may also become so far away that it is difficult to find them regardless of the amount of distance (Rastgar Faraj Zadeh & Mohammadian, 2019).

Several studies have confirmed the possible relationship between attachment styles and academic resilience. For example, Craparo et al. (2018) shows that secure attachment has a significant relationship with resilience in adult. This study emphasizes that the type of attachment style (secure or insecure) is related to the ability to regulate emotions.

Simpson and Rholes (1998) also showed that attachment and resilience are related, so that a secure attachment makes a person have optimistic expectations, control and high self-confidence and seek help when needed. These feelings can be considered as a source of resilience in educational situations and in the public life.

Mehmannavazan, Aliakbaridehkordi, and Kakojoybari (2015) revealed that there is a significant relationship between resilience and avoidant attachment style, and students' resilience can be predicted

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according to their avoidant attachment style. Alborzi, Khoshbakht, Golzar, and Sabri (2015) also indicated a positive relationship between secure attachment style and emotional intelligence and resilience, and a negative association between ambivalent insecure attachment and emotional intelligence and resilience.

Besides, identity style is also an important developmental issue that was related to resilience. According to Erikson (1994), identity is the distinction that a person makes between himself and others. From his point of view, identity is a psychological and social structure that includes the way of thinking, beliefs and opinions of a person and the way of communicating with other people. Personal identity, in turn, is an aspect of identity that gives a person the ability to distinguish himself from others. Identity includes a set of values, beliefs and goals that a person has and it is not hidden from the eyes of others (Chen, 2019). The sense of identity has various aspects that psychological aspect of which leads to formation of the adolescent's "inner self". In this period, he should be able to create a proper connection between his past life and personality of his previous periods with his current and new situation. Also, in these efforts, he should answer important questions about himself, such as who am I? Where is my place in the universe? What do I want from my life? (Erat, Kitapçı, & Akçin, 2020).

The most recent theory in the field of identity is Berzonsky's theory of identity styles, which has a social cognitive model. Identity styles are the relative preference of people to use specific ways of solving identity problems and processing information. Berzonsky (1988) developed a social-cognitive model that distinguishes three styles by which adolescents involve the tasks associated with identity formation: informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant.

According to studies, people have different levels of resilience according to their different identity styles; therefore, resilience and identity styles of people are two important influential factors in improving people's mental health. On the other hand, it seems failures that humans face can also affect the resilience of people (Mohsentabar Fioozjaee, Farahbakhsh, Salmabadi, & Mohsentabarfiroozjaie, 2017). For example, de la Fuente et al. (2017) showed that resilience has a significant relationship with deep learning approach and identity styles. Bumpus (2014) has also exposed that identity styles can predict resilience.

Considering the possible relationship that identity styles can have with academic resilience, the importance and necessity of conducting the present research is felt more. Knowing this relationship will not only provide a deeper understanding of the spaces in schools and classrooms for educational coaches, but also help them to improve its quality. In addition, educators in the can plan educational environments in such a way that positive interactions and friendly and sincere relationships are recognized as values and take steps to strengthen academic resilience. On the other hand, families should also be aware of the importance of forming a suitable attachment style in their children. In addition, since the high school period is one of the important, sensitive and effective periods in the personal and social life of adolescents, the study of adolescent’s development is of high research importance. Based on this, according to the findings of previous studies and the theoretical literature of

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resilience, attachment styles and identity styles, the present research has investigated the mediating role of identity processing styles in the relationship between attachment styles and academic resilience among high school students. The conceptual model of the research is presented in Figure 1.

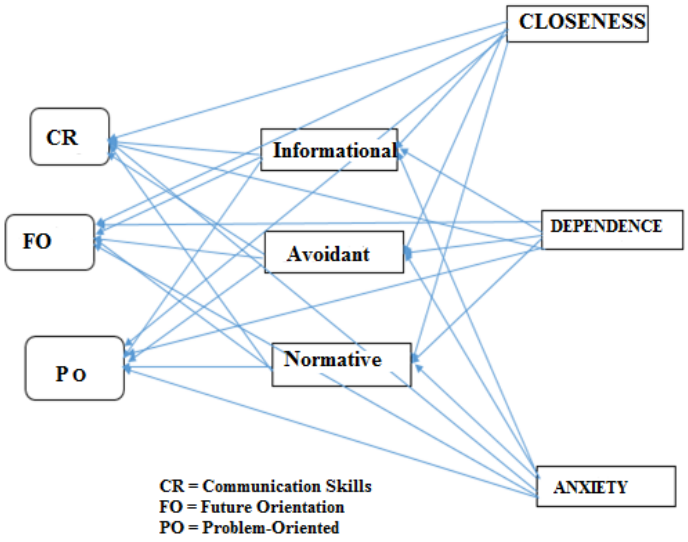

Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the relationship between the components of attachment style and dimensions of academic resilience mediated by identity processing styles

According to the presented model, the research hypothesis states that there is a significant relationship between the components of attachment style and the dimensions of academic resilience through the identity processing styles in students.

Material and Methods

The current research is correlational. The research variables are: academic resilience as an endogenous variable, attachment styles as exogenous variables and identity processing style as the mediator variables. The statistical population of this study included all male and female high school students of Maroodasht city (Iran) in 2020, which comprised 1166 female students and 1114 male students. A multi-stage cluster random sampling method was used to select the sample. In this way, 3 girls' schools and 3 boys' schools were randomly selected from the high schools of Maroodasht city, and then 3 classes were randomly selected from each school. Then, all the students of the selected classes (356) completed the questionnaires (girls = 179, boys = 177). All participants completed the informed consent form before participating in the study.

Instruments

Academic Resilience Questionnaire (ARI): This questionnaire was created by Samuels (2004) and validated in Iran by Soltaninejad, Asiabi, Ahmdi, and Tavanaiee yosefian (2014). This questionnaire has 29 questions and three components of communication skills, future orientation, and problem-

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oriented/positive orientation. The scoring of this questionnaire is on a five-point Likert scale from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). The validity of this questionnaire was confirmed in the research of (Samuels, 2004). In the research of Soltaninejad et al. (2014) the factor structure of the questionnaire was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis. These researchers investigated the reliability of the questionnaire in two samples of high school students and college students, the reliability of the communication skills component among the high school students was 0.77 and for college students was 0.76, and the reliability of the future orientation component among the high school students was 0.68 and for college students was 0.65 and the reliability of the problem-oriented and positivity component among the high school students was 0.63 and for college students was 0.62. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was equal to 0.76.

Attachment styles questionnaire: This questionnaire was created by Collins and Read (1990) and was revised in 1996. The questionnaire used in this research is its revised form. This questionnaire has 18 items that the respondents express their agreement or disagreement with each of the items in a 5-point Likert scale. In, Collins and Read (1990)study, factor analyses revealed 3 dimensions underlying this measure: the extent to which an individual (1) is comfortable with closeness, (2) feels he or she can depend on others, and (3) is anxious or fearful about such things as being abandoned or unloved. Collins and Read (1990) have reported the test-retest coefficient of this scale for each of the three subscales of closeness, dependence and anxiety, respectively 0.67, 0.71 and 0.52. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.74.

Berzonsky's Identity Styles Questionnaire: This questionnaire was prepared by Berzonsky (1992), which has 30 questions. Participants responded to the items on a 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me) Likert scale. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed in Berzonsky (1992) study. Berzonsky (1992) has also reported the reliability of the Informational scale as 0.62, the normative scale as 0.66, and the diffuse-avoidant scale as 0.73. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.77.

In order to analyze the data, in the descriptive part mean and standard deviation were used and to test the hypotheses of the research, path analysis was used. Data analysis was done with SPSS-22 and AMOS-16 software.

Results

In Table 1, the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the research variables are presented. According to Table 1, the data are normal and path analysis can be used to test the proposed model.

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Table 1. Descriptive indices of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Communication skills	37.56	2.45	1.355	.142	1.594	.284
Future orientation	29.44	3.41	.871	.146	.139	.284
Problem-oriented	19.23	2.87	.974	.152	.430	.284
Closeness	17.34	3.12	1.907	.171	1.480	.284
Dependence	16.75	2.56	1.161	.162	1.158	.284
Anxiety	18.65	1.89	1.016	.149	.421	.284
Informational style	32.56	1.78	.695	.189	-.021	.284
Normative style	28.98	2.54	.897	.147	.263	.285
Diffuse-avoidant	31.43	3.15	.579	.173	-.054	.285

In Table 2, the fit indices of the proposed model and the modified model are presented. Before the modification of the model, some indicators were not desirable, and based on the proposed correction indicators and the removal of non-significant paths, the model fit was re-examined. So that in the modified model, the model benefits from a good fit.

Table 2. The fit indices of the proposed model and the modified model

Model	X^2/df	p	RMSEA	GFI	IFI	CFI
Proposed model	2.83	0.001	0.07	0.89	0.82	0.82
Modified model	2.08	0..001	0.05	0.92	0.90	0.90

In Table 3, the findings related to the standard coefficients of direct paths in the proposed model are presented. According to Table 3, all direct paths are significant in the proposed model. Based on this, attachment styles significantly predict identity styles and resilience components. Also, identity styles significantly predict resilience components.

Table 3. Findings related to the standard coefficients of direct paths in the proposed model

Path	Standard coefficient	p
Dependent style to avoidant style	.352	0.01
Closeness style to the normative style	.565	0.01
Closeness style to the informative style	.571	0.01
Closeness style to avoidance style	-.669	0.01
Anxious style to normative style	-.786	0.01
Dependence style to informative style	.457	0.01
Dependence style to normative style	.259	0.01
Anxious style to informative style	-.215	0.01
Anxious style to avoidant style	.579	0.01
Normative style to communication skills	.499	0.01
Informative style to communication skills	.505	0.01
informative style to Future-oriented	.248	0.01
Informative style to problem-oriented style	.476	0.01
Avoidance style to the future-oriented	-.554	0.01
Avoidant style to communication skills	-.692	0.01
Avoidant style to problem-oriented	-.862	0.01
Dependence style to communication skills	.337	0.01
Anxiety style to problem-oriented	-.425	0.01
Anxious style to the future-oriented	-.350	0.01
Closeness style to the future-oriented	.569	0.01
future-oriented to communication skills	.616	0.01

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Anxiety style to communication skills	-.407	0.01
Dependent style to future-oriented	-.598	0.01
Dependence style to the problem-oriented	-.879	0.01
Closeness style to the problem-oriented	.677	0.01

In Table 4, the results of indirect relationship mediation test using Preacher and Hayes bootstrap method are presented. According to Table 4, the mediating effects of five indirect paths are significant. Based on this, anxious attachment style is related to some components of resilience through some identity styles. Also, dependence style significantly predicts some components of resilience through some identity styles. As can be seen in Table 4, the upper and lower limits of indirect relationships do not include zero, which means that these indirect paths are significant.

Table 4. Mediation test of indirect relationships using Preacher and Hayes bootstrap method

Path	Index					
	Data	**Boot**	**Bias**	**SE**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Dependency attachment to communication skills through informative style`	0.55	.551	0.012	0.167	0.241	0.886
Dependency attachment" to communication skill through normative style	0.51	0.52	0.012	0.155	0.23	0.83
Anxious attachment to future orientation through normative style	0.54	0.56	0.017	0.185	0.44	0.98
Anxious attachment to problem-oriented component through normative style	0.61	0.66	0.021	0.175	0.51	0.83
Anxious attachment to communication skills through informative style	0.23	0.34	0.011	0.141	0.41	0.73

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to test the mediating role of identity processing styles in the relationship between attachment style components and dimensions of academic resilience in high school students. The findings indicated that identity processing styles significantly mediate the relationship between attachment styles and academic resilience components. These findings are in line with the results of researches by Craparo et al. (2018), Mehmannavazan et al. (2015) and Bumpus (2014).

People with an anxious attachment style have a compulsion to be close to others and are extremely sensitive to the signs of rejection and abandonment. These people have negative images of themselves and positive images of others. People with anxious attachment experience more tension due to ineffective interpersonal relationships and lack of empowerment (Smith & Hollinger-Smith, 2015).

The findings showed that anxious attachment predicts communication skills through informational identity style. In explaining these findings, it should be said that anxious people have distorted thoughts such as the possibility of physical and psychological danger and vulnerability (Beck, 1979). When these thoughts are accompanied by a lack of trust in themselves and others in anxiety situations, these people face problems in communicating. Also, when a person has low confidence in himself and others, this characteristic can hinder communication between them.

According to the findings, dependency attachment is related to communication skills through informational style. Students with dependency attachment try to minimize the distance with the

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attachment symbol and in this way they apply hidden hostility. So that they try to get the love of others through clinging, intense caring response and controlling responses. According to Feeney and Noller (1990), ambivalent adults are exclusive and dependent in their emotional relationships with others, constantly worry about rejection and abandonment by others and try to reduce their separation anxiety by being strongly dependent on others. A person with a dependent style, despite avoiding intimate relationships, has a lot of emotional dependence on the source of his attachment. These people are usually dependent on others in adulthood and like to become completely engaged with some of the people around them.

The findings showed that anxious attachment is related to the problem-oriented component through normative style. State anxiety occurs as a result of a stressful situation in a person whose emotional control has decreased. In each of these stages, a person shows changes in his behavior and cognitive and emotional ability. People who have an insecure attachment style experience inner anxiety and doubt and ambivalence towards the source of attachment. This ambivalence and anxiety causes them to be unable to agree when faced with the decisions, expectations and orders of important people and reference groups. On the other hand, the negative emotions of people with an anxious style limit their thinking, action and creativity.

According to the findings, "dependency attachment" is related to the communication skill component through normative style. Dependent attachment style is characterized by the need to feel intimacy with others, unwillingness to seek independence and lack of tendency to focus on positive traits. This characteristic has caused the formation of a normative identity style in them, which can increase their communication skills. Using a normative identity style, people try to fulfill the expectations and legal guidelines of the groups they are a member of it.

The findings showed that anxious attachment is related to future orientation through normative style. In explaining this result, it can be said that people's attachment styles determine emotional and cognitive characteristics and strategies that guide emotional reactions in people and their interpersonal relationships. Experiencing a safe and supportive relationship with the mother in childhood enables a secure person to be a source of trust and confidence of others in addition to having trust and confidence in their relationships, and in fact, a high personal and social responsibility that undertakes and provides appropriate solutions. People with anxious style are not successful in acquiring identity and this factor will affect their future orientation.

In general, the research findings support the role of attachment styles and identity styles in promoting resilience in high school students. Researchers are suggested to study the effectiveness of interventions based on secure attachment styles and constructive identity styles on students' resilience in future studies. Caution should be taken in generalizing the findings of this study to students of other regions. Also, the use of self-report questionnaires and possible bias in the answers of the participants is an important limitation. It is suggested to use other data collection methods such as interviews in future studies.

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