

# Review of the Relationship Between High School Students' Career Adaptability Levels and Their Attachment Styles

Eser Yayvan<sup>1</sup>, Oğuzhan Kırdök<sup>2</sup> & Oğuzhan Çolakkadıoğlu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of National Education, Niğde, Türkiye

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Education, Çukurova University, Adana, Türkiye

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Health Sciences, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Osmaniye, Türkiye

Correspondence: Oğuzhan Çolakkadıoğlu, Faculty of Health Sciences, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Osmaniye, Türkiye.

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## Abstract

This research is a descriptive study in the relational screening model that aims to examine the relationship between the career adaptability levels and attachment styles of high school students. The study group consists of a total of 582 students, 362 girls and 220 boys, who are attending the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades in 4 high schools in the central districts of Adana. The age range of the participants is between 14 and 19 years old. In the study, data on the career adaptability of adolescent students were obtained by using the 'Career Adaptability Skills Scale,' the data on attachment styles were obtained by using the 'Relationship Scales Questionnaire,' and the data on personal information were obtained by using the 'Personal Information Form' prepared by the researcher. In the analysis of the data of the study, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, t-test, analysis of variance and standard multiple regression analysis techniques were used. According to the results of the research, while there was a significant relationship between career adaptability abilities and secure, fearful and obsessive attachment, it was seen that there was no relationship with indifferent attachment. When the results of multiple regression analysis are examined, it is seen that attachment scale sub-dimensions are a significant predictor of career adapt-abilities. The only predictor of high school students' career adapt-abilities is secure attachment. Other variables were found to be meaningless.

**Keywords:** career adaptability, attachment styles, high school students

## 1. Introduction

People adapt to working life while living their lives and the meaning of career behaviors begins to develop with the effect of the life themes they use. Career accompanies us throughout life by weaving the individual's patterns in working life into the theme of life, influencing them to give a personal meaning to their memories, current lives and future hopes. At the same time, the career provides a psycho-socially satisfying direction to the individual. Individuals who make progress in their career process see that a different need is met at the stage they progress and thus feel feelings of appreciation and happiness (Uğur, 2008). Herr and Crammer (1996) acknowledge that it is an incomplete definition to treat a career only as work done, and states that a career as a multidimensional structure continues to develop throughout life, not only the current profession but also allows the person to integrate into the profession before or after the profession, including family, community and leisure roles. Savickas (2008) also explains career as the unique development and adaptation of the individual while all these roles are performed. In short, a career is a process that continues from the childhood of the individual to the end of his life (Ginzberg, 1984; Super, 1990).

Professional life, especially considering the living conditions of the current era and the perspectives on the world, has become very important with the increase in awareness about the level of education and the importance of education. For the person who spends a large part of his time in business life, the profession he/she pursues and the work he/she does affects the satisfaction and expectations he/she receives from life, family and social relations and areas such as self-perception. These factors are important for the individual to lead a healthy life in all biological-psychological-sociological fields (Rottinghaus et al., 2005).

Adolescence is the transition period to adulthood in which there is significant and rapid psychological,

physiological and social development (Polvan, 2000). In this period, some physical and psychological changes and developments are experienced with the effect of the hormones secreted in the individual's body. As a result of these changes, the individual moves out of childhood and into adulthood. However, this change of identity brings with it many responsibilities and problems that need to be gained (Selçuk, 2009). The adolescent individual in the process of forming his/her identity faces many problems such as interest in the opposite sex and self-image, as well as a problem such as choosing a profession. Towards the age of 16–17, adolescents face important decisions about their future due to their age and the classes they are educated in (Kulaksızoğlu, 2012). Career planning, which helps to improve the personal development, social cohesion and future comfort of the individual, is one of the basic developmental tasks for adolescents (Super, 1990).

Super (1980) explains the transition of people from one step to another as they progress in career development with the concept of career transition. Career transitions are successive career situations. An important concept in career transitions during adolescence is the concept of transition from school to work. This concept emphasizes the transition from education to business life in the 15–24 age range. This period is the period when adolescents step into adulthood and at the same time transition from school life to work life. Savickas (1999, 2020) explains that during this transition period, young people are trying to adapt to the social roles and areas of responsibility they have acquired in society and the adaptation processes of young people to these new situations with the concept of career adaptability. Savickas states that career adaptability has a very important place in the career preparation and career development of adolescents for the future (Savickas, 1997). In this context, the importance of the person's career adaptability abilities stands out for the career life, which is an important support for the individual to lead a productive life, and to progress in a positive direction.

The concept of career adaptability is the ability of the individual to make inferences about the future and to develop skills to effectively cope with the obstacles he/she may encounter. Career adaptability is a psychosocial structure that expresses the resources of individuals that are considered necessary for the individual to fulfill the duties foreseen in the career field, to make professional transitions and to cope with the professional difficulties he/she encounters (Savickas, 1997). This concept makes use of a series of psycho-social resources that shape the behavior of the individual to adapt to the environment, and thus the individual achieves the desired goals throughout his career path (Savickas, 2020; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career adaptability is a coping skill that can be acquired through experience. Individuals with high adaptability are also expected to make more planned and realistic decisions than other individuals (Ebberwein et al., 2004). In this context, career adaptability is a valuable strategic resource for career development in an ever-changing business world (Bocciardi et al., 2017).

Studies have shown that adolescents with high levels of career adapt-abilities are more successful in adolescence and are better able to manage the developmental and professional tasks and professional transitions that they will encounter throughout their career (Creed et al., 2003; Creed et al., 2009; Ginevra et al., 2016; Hirschi, 2009; Kracke, 2002; Patton & Creed, 2007; Savickas, 1997; Skorikov, 2007; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2007). For people with such skills, these features are very useful in changing jobs or ending their education and transitioning to the sector (Yeşiltaş et al., 2014). The concept of career adapt-abilities is thought to be of great importance in achieving success in the private and professional lives of individuals cognitively and emotionally.

According to studies conducted when the field literature was examined to determine the variables associated with career adaptability, career adaptability was found to be related to academic achievement (Negru-Subtirica & Pop, 2016; Zachker, 2014), self-esteem and proactive personality (Cai et al., 2015; Premise, 2014; Tolentino et al., 2014), social support (Hirschi, 2009; Wang & Fu, 2015), emotional intelligence (Coetzee & Harry, 2014), learning (Brown et al., 2012), goal orientation and career optimism (Tolentino et al., 2014), social cohesion (Ingusci et al., 2016), job satisfaction (Fiori et al., 2015), hope and life satisfaction (Santilli et al., 2014), sense of control (Duffy, 2010), work will and well-being (Büyükgöze-Kavas et al., 2015) subjective well-being (Celen-Demirtaş et al., 2015; Konstam et al., 2015), future orientation (Ginerva et al., 2016).

Although there are no studies examining the relationship between career adaptability and attachment styles, it is thought that attachment styles may be related to career adaptability. This is because studies are showing that attachment styles predict career issues. For example, in various studies that examine the relationship between attachment styles and emotional intelligence (Invisible, 2006; Kafetsios, 2004; Kim, 2005; Peck, 2003; Zimmerman, 1999), it was found that emotional intelligence has positive correlations with secure attachment. Similarly, in Aslan's (2015) study examining the relationship between career satisfaction and attachment styles, a significant correlation was found between career satisfaction and secure attachment. Again, in Sulu's (2018) study examining the relationship between attachment styles and the professional satisfaction of classroom teachers, it was observed that there were significant relationships between attachment styles and professional satisfaction. Since these studies and the factors affecting career adaptability mentioned earlier are related to

attachment styles, it is thought that the effect of attachment styles that develop during the relationship of the baby with the caregiver in the first years of life may be closely related to the development of career adapt-abilities, and it is necessary to examine the effect of these attachment styles on career adaptability. This study aims to examine how the characteristics of the relationships between the baby and the caregiver in the first years of life affect the career adaptability process and how they affect the level of career adapt-abilities. As a result of the research findings, it will be determined which attachment styles have a high impact and will be useful in drawing attention to and guiding parental attitudes in infancy and at the same time will guide the finding of effective methods in the career adaptability development processes of high school students.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Model

This study is a descriptive study of the relational screening model type that was carried out to determine the relationship between career adaptability and attachment styles of high school students. The relational screening model is a research model that aims to determine the degree as well as the presence of change between two or more variables together (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013; Karasar, 2004).

### 2.2 Study Group

This study was carried out in 4 different high schools in Adana. The study group of the study consisted of 582 students who continued their education in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades of high school, and who were selected voluntarily. Of the students, 362 (62.2%) were girls, and 220 (37.8%) were boys, the average age of the participants was 16.49.

### 2.3 Data Collection Tools

#### 2.3.1 Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ)

This questionnaire was developed by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) and adapted into Turkish by Sümer and Güngör (1999). The scale consists of a total of 30 items, but 17 of these items measure the four attachment styles (safe, apathetic, fearful, obsessive). Scale items are of the Seven-Item Likert Type, they are scored in the range of “It does not define me at all (1)”, “It completely defines me (7)”, and secure and indifferent attachment styles are measured by five items, while obsessive and fearful attachment styles are measured by four items. Item 6 is used for both obsessive and apathetic attachment styles.

According to the score obtained from the subscales, the participants are evaluated in whichever group they received the highest score in the attachment styles. The adaptation of the scale to Turkish was carried out by Sümer and Güngör (1999). In the validity and reliability studies, it was observed that the Relationship Scales Questionnaire consisted of four-factor structures as safe, apathetic, fearful and obsessive, and the reliability coefficients of the scale were between .54 and .61 in all dimensions with the test-retest method (Sümer & Güngör, 1999).

#### 2.3.2 Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)

Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) is a scale developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012) that aims to measure the career adapt-abilities of individuals. The scale consists of a total of 24 items, the items are scored in the range of “not strong (1)”, and “very strong (5)” in the five-item Likert type, and there are four subscales consisting of six items. These subscales, which aim to measure the sources of adaptation, consist of interest, control, curiosity and confidence. It is possible to obtain total points from all items belonging to the scale. The high score on the scale in the lower dimensions is an indication that the individual considers himself/herself as stronger in that sub-dimension.

The adaptation of the scale into Turkish was carried out by Büyükgöze-Kavas (2014). As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, it was seen that the concordance values consisting of four factors were within acceptable limits ( $\chi^2 = 833.063$ ,  $df = 248$ ,  $p < .00$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 3.36$ ,  $RMSEA = .060$ ,  $SRMR = .049$ ;  $CFI = .90$ ). Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients were found to be .91 for the total scale, and this value was found as .78 for the interest sub-dimension, as .74 for control sub-dimension, as .81 for curiosity sub-dimension, and .81 for confidence sub-dimension.

### 2.4 Evaluation of Data

In the study, the data was examined in terms of extreme values and normality assumptions before the regression analysis. Frequency analysis was performed for the variables in the data set. Z scores were calculated to examine the extreme values, so there was no data excluded from the evaluation. The analyses were performed in 582 datasets. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to reveal the correlations between career adapt-abilities and

attachment styles of high school students, and multiple regression analysis was performed to reveal whether attachment styles predicted career adapt-abilities. SPSS.20 statistical program was used to analyze the research data.

### 3. Results

The relationships between the variables were examined before the multiple regression analysis to determine the variables that predict the career adapt-abilities of high school students. Table 1 shows the arithmetic mean, standard deviation values and correlation values between the variables. When the relationships between the variables were examined, there were no correlations at a level that could lead to the problem of multiple co-linearity.

Table 1. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation and correlation values of the variables used in the study

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Secure Attachment	-	-	-	-	-
2. Fearful Attachment	-.158**	-	-	-	-
3. Obsessive Attachment	-.074	-.048	-	-	-
4. Unconditional Attachment	.042	.444**	-.246**	-	-
5. Career Adaptability	.287**	-.087*	-.109**	.054	-
X	3.84	4.33	3.70	4.78	83.4
Ss	.90	1.20	1.13	1.06	13.3

Note. n: 582, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01.

When Table 1 was examined, it was seen that the secure attachment sub-scale score of the Relationship Scales Questionnaire was  $X_{avg} = 3.84$  ( $Ss = 0.90$ ), the fearful attachment sub-scale score was  $X_{avg} = 4.33$  ( $Ss = 1.20$ ), the obsessive attachment sub-scale score was  $X_{avg} = 3.70$  ( $Ss = 1.13$ ), the unconditional attachment sub-scale score was  $X_{avg} = 4.78$  ( $Ss = 1.06$ ), and the career adaptability scale score was  $X_{avg} = 83.4$  ( $Ss = 13.3$ ). While a low level of positive-oriented significant correlation was observed between students' career adapt-abilities and secure attachment sub-scale ( $r = .287$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and low level of negative-oriented significant correlation was found between students' career adapt-abilities and fearful attachment ( $r = -.087$ ,  $p < .05$ ), obsessive attachment ( $r = -.109$ ,  $p < .05$ ) sub-scales; there were significant correlations between career adaptability and unconditional attachment ( $r = .054$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

In the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine the variables predicting the career adapt-abilities of the students in the study; safe, fearful, obsessive and unconditional attachment variables were taken into equality. Table 2 shows the results of multiple regression analysis of the prediction of career adapt-abilities.

Table 2. Results of multiple regression analysis on the prediction of career adapt-ability total scores of high school students as per attachment sub-dimensions

Predictive Variable	B	Standard Error	$\beta$	t	p
Standard	71.82	4.31		16.67	.000
1. Safe (B)	3.95	.600	.267	6.60	.000
2. Fearful (B)	-.812	.500	-.073	-1.63	.105
3. Obsessive (B)	-.936	.485	-.079	-1.93	.054
4. Unconditional (B)	.697	.576	.056	1.21	.227

Note.  $R^2 = .10$ ,  $R = .31$ ,  $F = 15.065$ ;  $p < .01$ .

When the results of multiple regression analysis related to the prediction of the total scores of career adapt-abilities of high school students as per attachment sub-dimensions were examined, it was seen that the attachment scale sub-dimensions were a significant predictor of career adaptation ( $R^2 = .10$ ,  $F = 15.065$ ;  $p < .01$ ). According to this result, it can be said that attachment subscales explain the career adaptation scores of high school students at the level of 10%. It was found that, while the only predictor of high school students' career adapt-abilities was secure attachment ( $\beta = .267$ ,  $t = 6.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ), other variables failed to predict career adapt-abilities significantly.

### 4. Discussion

The main objective of this research is to examine the relationship between career adaptability and attachment

styles. For the study, the correlation between career adaptability level and attachment styles was examined. While a positive-oriented correlation was found between the career adapt-abilities of high school students and their secure attachment levels and a significant negative relationship was found with fearful and obsessive attachment levels; it was found that there were no significant correlations with unconditional attachment. In addition, in the regression analysis applied, it was found that only secure attachment predicted career adaptabilities.

Career adaptability refers to the readiness of individuals to overcome the unpredictable changes they face in business life by preparing for predictable professional tasks and taking an active role in business life (Savickas, 1997). Secure attachment, on the other hand, consists of a combination of models in which the person evaluates himself/herself and other people positively. Securely attached individuals are comfortable in their close relationships and have internalized a sense of self-worth (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). Studies have shown that the children of parents who have a warm, supportive relationship with their children have a better development of skills such as responsibility and maturity during adolescence and have a high level of research on career-related issues (Grotevant & Cooper, 1987; Kracke & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001; Vondracek, 1993). The secure attachment style is also regulated by constructive rules, which include accepting the uncomfortable situation and seeking social support to get out of this situation (Kobak & Sceery, 1988). In the research conducted by Güngör (2000), it was found that adolescents who are securely attached constitute the most advantageous group in terms of self-assessments, psychological symptoms, problem behaviors and academic achievement compared to adolescents with fearful, unconditional and obsessive attachment. In addition, when the characteristics of the individual with a secure attachment style are examined, it is thought that there may be a positive relationship between interest, control, curiosity and trust factors, which are the sub-dimensions of career adaptabilities.

In addition, the fact that secure attachment is a significant predictor of the sub-dimensions of career adaptability also shows that there is a relationship. The control sub-dimension of career adaptability is knowing that one is responsible for one's career. It also encompasses decision-making, locus of control, self-esteem and autonomy (Savickas, 2005). The fact that individuals with a secure attachment style have high self-esteem and good logical decision-making and problem-solving skills suggests that they will also show competence in the control sub-dimension. The curiosity sub-dimension refers to assertiveness and discovery aimed at gathering information (Savickas, 1997). In the research conducted by Onur (2006), when the relationship between the attachment styles and assertiveness levels of high school students was examined, it was found that there was a positive relationship between secure attachment and assertiveness. If the attachment figure is close and accessible to the child, the child can act safely and focus on exploring his/her environment, providing the security that is felt. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the dimensions of the career curiosity of the individuals who are securely attached will be high.

The last of the career adaptation skills sub-dimensions is the trust sub-dimension. The trust sub-dimension refers to the self-efficacy that the individual perceives in career activities (Savickas, 2005). Considering the broad definition of the concept of self-esteem concerning this dimension, self-esteem is a whole of the most important perceptions, feelings and thoughts for the individual, which is called self-confidence in daily life, which is the basis of the person's personality (Öner, 1996). The level of self-esteem affects everything individuals think, say and do, the way they look at the world, the way other people look at them, the choices they make with life, the ability to give and receive love, and the power to take action to change what needs to be changed (Aydın & Güloğlu, 2001). Bowlby (1973, 1982) argued that the attachment relationship in early life was the basis for the formation of self-esteem and the development of low and high self-esteem in later life. Individuals who are securely attached feel worthy of being loved by others and develop positive models toward others as well. Individuals who develop insecure attachment styles believe that they are bad and not worthy of being loved, and they generalize these thoughts. Thus, the foundations of self-esteem are laid. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), Feeney and Noller (1990) found that individuals with secure and apathetic attachment styles had higher overall self-esteem than those with obsessive and fearful attachment styles. For this reason, it is expected that individuals with a secure attachment style will have high self-esteem or in other words, self-confidence will increase their ability to adapt to a career. Studies have also found a positive correlation between self-esteem and career adaptability (Bradley & Corwyn, 2004; Cai et al., 2015; Johnson, 2018; Proctor et al., 2009).

A low level of negative relationship was found between career adaptability, and fearful and obsessive attachment styles which are among negative attachment styles; no relationship was found with unconditional attachment style, and it was observed that negative attachment styles did not predict career adaptability.

Fearful attachment is a combination of models of evaluating oneself and other people negatively. Although they

resemble obsessive individuals in their desire for acceptance and approval, they avoid close relationships to protect themselves from the pain of rejection and loss (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). When the characteristics of individuals with fearful attachment styles are examined, it is expected that their career adapt-abilities will be at a lower level than the secure attachment style. The fact that fearful attachment individuals see themselves and other people as unreliable and worthless, avoid establishing relationships, and have low self-esteem and insufficient assertiveness skills confirm that they cannot meet the dimensions of self-confidence, curiosity, control and interest required in career adapt-ability. Rice's (1990) study shows that a secure attachment relationship will support exploration and identity development, as well as that adolescents' social skills, overall life satisfaction and self-esteem levels are higher than other styles. In addition, other studies have concluded that high self-esteem improves the career adaptabilities of individuals better (Cai et al., 2015; Hui et al., 2017; Rossier, 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017; Van Vianen et al., 2012).

Obsessive attachment is the internalization of models of evaluating oneself negatively and evaluating other people positively. Obsessive individuals are anxious to gain the acceptance and trust of other people, striving to find personal worthiness and competence (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). It is thought that individuals with obsessive attachment see themselves as worthless and inadequate as in fearful attachment, develop unhealthy relationships with other people, have high anxiety levels, low levels of self-efficacy important for career adaptability, self-esteem, confidence, the tendency to discover, assertiveness, social skills and resilience skills necessary for career adaptability will bring them to fall behind. The findings of the studies on negative associations between high anxiety and career adaptability (McIlveen et al., 2013; Morcienetti & Rossier, 2021; Zikic & Klehe, 2006) and positive associations between self-efficacy and career adaptability (Hirschi et al., 2015; Savickas, 2005; Rossier, 2015) also support the negative relationship between obsessive attachment and career adaptability. Kobak and Sceery (1988), who considered attachment as a theory of emotion regulation, found in their study with college first graders that securely attached adolescents were seen by their peers as less aggressive, less anxious, and having more self-resilience than obsessively attached adolescents. For this reason, it can be interpreted that obsessive individuals do not have the potential to effectively cope with the obstacles they will encounter in their career processes and will fail in this regard.

Indifferent attachment, on the other hand, consists of a combination of models that evaluate oneself positively and evaluate other people negatively. These individuals deny the need for close relationships and stay away from close relationships and continue to maintain a valuable sense of self (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). Indifferently attached individuals protect themselves against disappointment by avoiding close relationships and developing feelings of invulnerability and autonomy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). It can be expected that the personality traits of indifferently attached individuals will be oriented towards the valuable self, which will cause the development of feelings of confidence, and this will increase the career adaptability scores. However, it is thought that they may not be in a relationship with the career interest, career curiosity and control sub-dimensions, which are career adaptability sub-dimensions, because they do not receive social support in the problems they encounter due to their poor social relations, and because they are indifferent to the elements other than themselves, and therefore there may be no relationship between attachment style characteristics and career adaptabilities.

Consequently, in this study, while there was a positive-oriented significant relationship was found between general career adaptability and secure attachment levels, and negative-oriented significant relationship was found between the level of general career adaptability and obsessive attachment levels; there was no relationship found with unconditional attachment level, and it was seen that secure attachment style predicted each of the four sub-dimensions that determine the level of career adaptability, so it was concluded that secure attachment was a predictor of career adaptability.

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