DE GRUYTER OPEN

Research Article

The Relationship between Attachment, Stress and Academic Success in Albanian Students

Lorena Prifti

PhD Candidate, Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Tirana, Albania

Prof. Dr. Edmond Rapti

Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Tirana, Albania

Doi: 10.2478/jesr-2018-0016

Abstract

Stress is a serious obstacle for a good school performance. For this reason a considerable number of studies have been conducted. Meanwhile, attachment is considered as a basic borned biological system (Siegel, 2001). There is a correlation between stress and attachment according to the studies. When it comes to student academic success, the methods to measure it are varied. One of the most commonly used is the average. Likewise, even when the relationship between the average of results and stress was considered, a correlational relationship was found, between academic success and appeasement. These study researches, as will be discussed below, are carried out in different contexts. But results for this topic in the Albanian context do not yet exist. Therefore, the aims of this study are to shed light on a topic that is still unexplored in the Albanian context. It was extended to six public Albanian Universities, as follows: Tirana University, Aleksander Moisiu University Durres, University "Alkesander Xhuvani" Elbasan, University "Fan S.Noli" Korça, University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora, University "Luigj Gurakuqi" Shkodra.The number of students who underwent on this study, was 1502. The dispersed material was the questionnaire through which the students arithmetic average for the first semester of that academic year, the type of attachment (based on Attachment Style Questionnaire built by Feeney) and the level of stress (based in the Academic Stress Scale built by Rabani).

Keywords: *Attachment, Attachment Style Questionnaire, Stress, Academic success, Academic Stress Scale*

1. Introduction

1.1 Understanding the relationship between stress and academic success

Stress is a serious obstacle to a good school performance. For this reason, a considerable number of studies have been carried out, which tend to shed light on how stress affects student's academic activity (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Chemers, Hu & Garcia, 2001; Dusselier et al., 2005; Hudd et al., 2000; Misra & Castillo, 2004; Shields, 2001; Struthers et al., 2000; Vondras, Powless, Olson, Wheeler, & Snudden., 2005).

However, it should be noted that stress is not always a factor that affects negatively the school performance. In the study of (Rfidah, Azizah, Norzaidi, Chong, Salwani and Noraini, 2009) was found that experiencing a moderate stress level motivated students to achieve good results at school. This finding goes in line with the above-mentioned conclusion that the capacities to manage stressful factors play a very important role in the behavior of the individual and consequently the

performance of the school. Shields (2001) found an opposite relationship between stress and school success. As the stress level increased, the average was lowered and vice versa.

To predict the average level of stress level, was used a simple linear regression analysis. The result of the analysis showed be a statistically significant effect of stress on the average. (F 1, 1486) = 39.435, p .000, and R2.025. As can be seen in the following table, the stress level relationship with the average level is negative (B = -111). This means that the increase in the level of stress predicts a decrease in the average grade.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	97.239	.544		178.739	.000
	Stress level	-.111	.018	-.161	-6.280	.000

a. Variabel dependent: average

Fig. 1. The variabel dependent.

The general approach is defined as "the existence of a lasting and sustained caring relationship" (Applegate & Shapiro, 2005, p. 60 as cited in Benoid 2004). The attachment is considered as a basic biological system (Siegel, 2001). The fact that roots have on individual biology implies that attachment is one of the basic processes of functioning that are universally irrespective of cultural or genetic differences (Ainsworth, 1989, cited in Benoid 2004).

Bowlby describes three elements of affection for children with caregivers in particular with their mother. These elements, which are the preservation of physical proximity, the safe foundation, and the security paradise, clearly show the effects of the process of development of the attachment (Cortesi, 2014). The researchers have identified 4 parent-child approaches. Three "organized" styles that are; safe, avoidable (anxiety) and resistant. The fourth style of attachment has been considered by authors to be "organized".

2. Research Methods

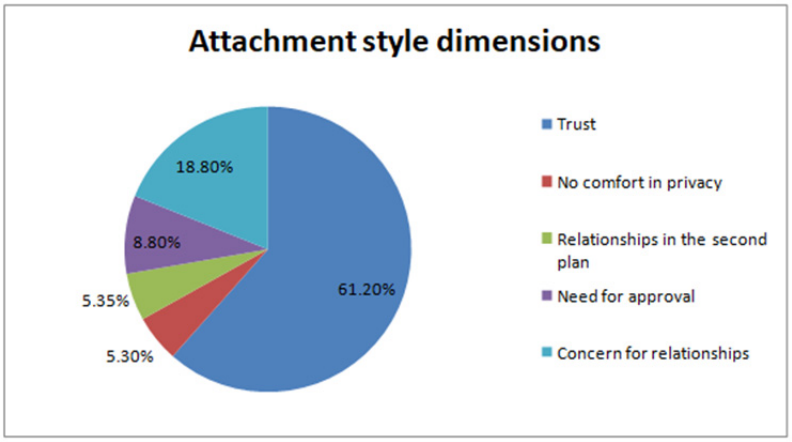

Fig. 2. The attachment style dimensions.

2.1 The dimensions of the attachment style

In relation to the style of approach 920 students (61.2%) found that they belong to the "confidence" dimension, 79 (5.3%) students belong to the dimension "discomfort in privacy", 80 (5.3%) students

belong to the dimension " second plan ", 133 (8.8%) students belong to the dimension" need for approval ", and 282 (18.8%) belong to the dimension" relationship concern ".

Long-term studies have also supported the fact that attachment is related to the school success. Larose and colleagues (2005) in another study utilized regression analysis and a long-term approach to examine the relationship between attachment, predisposition to learning and school performance during transition from high school to university. Positive learning predispositions were found to originate from a secure attachment style.

A study of Cutrona and his colleagues (1994) used the modeling of a structural equation to examine the attachment and school performance to students. Students completed a range of measuring instruments. The study showed that attachment to the parents was related to the average grade (Cutrona et al., 1994).

Another study of the subject, which is directly related to the subject of this research project, is performed by Tangney, Baumeister and Boone (2004 as quoted at Ford, 2014). Their study was based on the assumption that students who had high self-control would have better social skills, a high average grade, and a dependable style of approach. It should be asserted that the value of this study, the links with establishing a straight relationship between the style of attachment and the average mark (Ford, 2014).

At the end of the presentation of all these studies it can be asserted that there are sufficient data proving the existence of the relationship between adherence and the level of success of the academy to the students. The sure style of attachment seems to contribute to self-esteem, self-confidence, exploratory behavior, confidence, and ability to support the attachment figure in periods of stress. So, students with a secure style of attachment can easily fit into the university life and have better school outcomes.

3. Analysis Result

3.1 The approach style is associated with the level of average grade

Table 3. Chi-Square Test.

Testi Chi-Square

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	95.725[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	92.491	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	60.514	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1487		

Chi-Square method was used to understand whether the average student grade was related to the style of attachment. Based on the data of the analysis, the relationship between these variables is statistically significant. X^2 (8, N = 1487) = 95.725, p. This means that the average student grade level is related to the style of attachment. Phi & Chramer's V test showed that the relationship between these two variables is moderate / strong.

Attachment to adults leads the interpretation of life events and their reaction (Simpson & Rholes, 1998). During a stressful period, individuals with sure attachments see themselves closer to other people. They perceive stress as a state that provokes thoughts rather than frightening sensations. As mentioned above in the studies, secure attachment prepares individuals to cope with the various life stress difficulties that produces stress (Rabbani, Kasmaienezhadfard & Pourrajab, 2014).

Conversely, when individuals have experienced an insecure style of applause, their assessment of life events is different. The feelings of insecurity, mistrust, lack of self-confidence, which are typical for a person with insecure style of attachment, negatively affect their performance and increase stress vulnerability (Bernier et al., 2004). Consequently, it can be argued that uncertain attachment is clearly a matter of sensitivity or reaction (Rabbani et al., 2014).

Secure attachment was associated with lower levels of stress and fewer feelings of stimulant

stress compared to the style of unsecure attachment (McCarthy et al., 2006). For more in Petroff (2008) argues that while the level of safe attachment increases, the level of stress and feelings produce stress sits.

As mentioned above, 5 dimensions of the attachment style are included in this study. It is therefore interesting to analyze how each of these dimensions affects the average student grade. To understand this relationship was completed the One-Way ANOVA test. The result of the test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the effect of each dimension of attachment at the average grade level F (4, 1486) = 18,748 p = <.05. The following chart shows how each of the approach style dimensions affects each one of the average grade level.

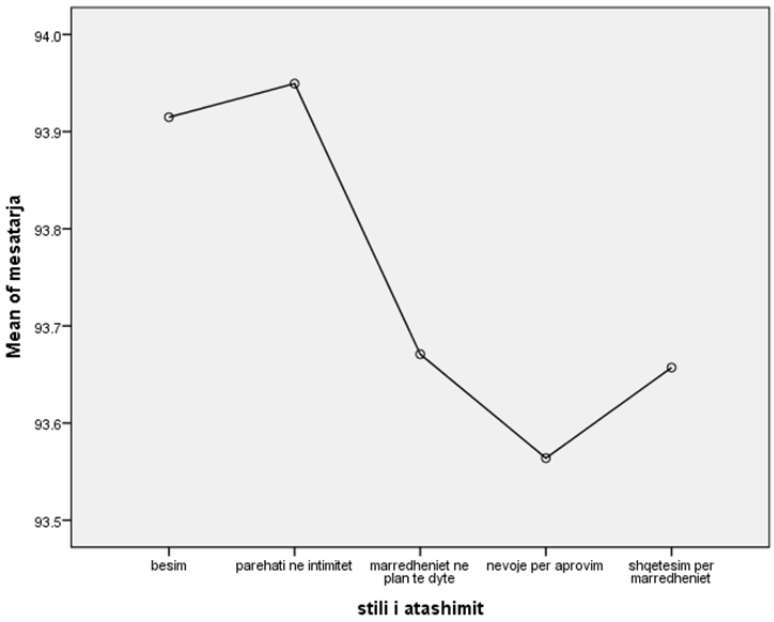

Fig. 4. The attachment style curve.

Based on the graph above, the dimension of "discomfort in privacy" appears to be associated with a higher average grade, followed by dimensions of "trust", "relationship on the second plan", "relationship concern" and "need for approval". It should be noted that the 3 dimensional styles of unsatisfied style of attachment seem to be associated with a lower middle grade level compared to the "confident" style of attachment style.

We will continue with the study of the connection between attachment and stress. Perrine (1998) examined the student's perceived stress and their persistence as an attribute of attachment. The results was that students with safe attachment perceived less stress than students with unreliable attachments. Also, students with safe affiliation were less likely to abandon studies than those with unreliable attachment. Another finding of this study was that the average grade may change depending on the style of attachment.

McCarthy and colleagues (2006) found that unsecure attachment to parents was in a positive correlation with stress levels in third year students. The secure attachment was related to the low level of stress and negative emotions produced by stress compared to the uncertain attachment. When the level of secure attachment increased, the level of stress and emotions produced by stress decreased.

3.2 The stress level is related to the attachment style

To prove the hypothesis that the stress level is related to the attachment style, was used the Chi-Square method. The data showed that the relationship between attachment style and stress level is statistically significant. X^2 (8, 1494) = 1579.453, p = .000. This result proves the hypothesis that the stress level is related to the style of attachment. Phi & Chramer's V test showed that the relationship between these two variables is weak / moderate.

Table 5. The Chi-Square Test.

Testi Chi-Square

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1579.453[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	1792.626	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1200.596	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1494		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.05.

Was given the fact that 5 of attachment style dimensions are included in this study, it is of interest to understand how each of these dimensions affects the level of stress. To understand this relationship was completed the One-Way ANOVA test. The result of the analysis showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the effect of each attachment dimension at stress level F (4, 1493) = 2134,068, p = .05. The chart below shows how each of the attachment style dimensions affects each level of stress.

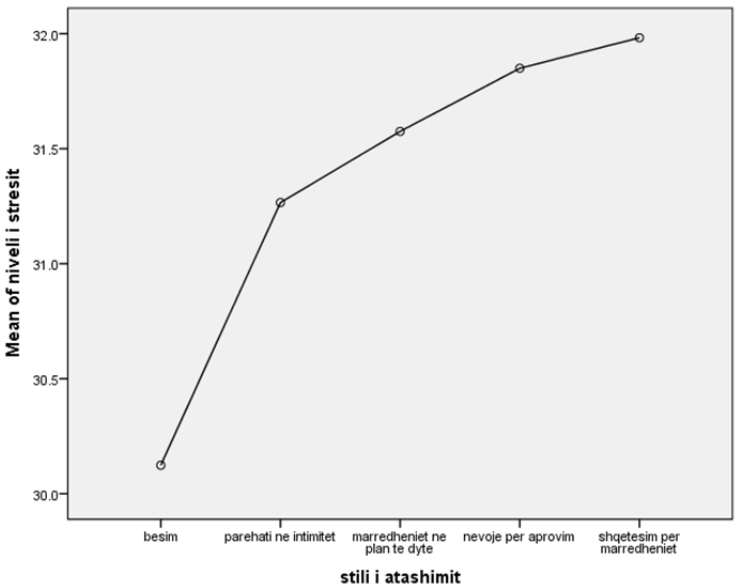

Fig. 6. The level of stress curve.

As can be seen in the graph, the dimension of "faith" attachment is associated with a lower level of stress, the dimension of "discomfort in intimacy," relationships in the second plan, "need for approval," and "concern for relationships" are associated with a growing trend of stress levels. The following table shows that the difference in the averages of each attachment dimensions is statistically significant.

Table 7. The difference between averages.

(I) attachment style	(J) attachment style	Difference between averages (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
faith	Discomfort in intimacy	-1.142*	.041	.000
	Relationships in the second plane	-1.451*	.040	.000
	Need for approval	-1.726*	.032	.000
	Concern for relationalship	-1.858*	.024	.000
Discomfort in intimacy	Faith	1.142*	.041	.000
	Relationships in the second plane	-.309*	.055	.000
	Need for approval	-.584*	.049	.000
	Concern for relationship	-.716*	.044	.000
Relationships in the second plane	Faith	1.451*	.040	.000
	Discomfort in intimacy	.309*	.055	.000
	Need for approval	-.275*	.049	.000
	Concern for relationship	-.407*	.044	.000
Need for approval	Faith	1.726*	.032	.000
	Discomfort in intimacy	.584*	.049	.000
	Relationships in the second plane	.275*	.049	.000
	Concern for relationship	-.133*	.036	.010
Concern for relationship	Faith	1.858*	.024	.000
	Discomfort in intimacy	.716*	.044	.000
	Relationships in the second plane	.407*	.044	.000
	Need for approval	.133*	.036	.010

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be argued that studies have consistently shown that there is a strong relationship between the style of the attachment and the stress level in the students. Unsecure attachment was associated with high levels of stress and the secure attachment was related to low stress level. Also, from the data obtained from the studies presented above, it can be said that unsecure attachment makes people more vulnerable to stress. By contrast, secure attachment makes individuals less vulnerable to the stress that may be caused by different life events.

As can be understood from the studies outlined above, lots of research have found a correlation relationship between attachment and academic success, level of stress and academic success, as well as between the style of attachment and the level of stress. Given these data, obedience is naturally created that there is a link between these three variables. Thus, the success of the academy is influenced by how the attachment style contributes to raising or lowering the level of stress. For the sake of truth, there are not many studies that prove the existence of a correlation of these factors. However, a serious effort to shed light on this process was carried out by Petroff (2008).

But the analysis conducted with students divided into male and female demonstrated that there was no statistically significant link between the effect of interaction between attachment and stress over the average grade of males. While in female students, a statistically significant relationship was found between the effect of attachment interaction and stress on the average grade. The same result was also observed in women in relation to the completion of the course.

We argue this hypothesis in our study. Consider the relationship between stress and attachment. To understand this relationship was completed the One-Way ANOVA test. The result of the analysis showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the effect of each approach dimension at stress level F (4, 1493) = 2134,068, p = .05.

To predict the average level based on the level of stress, was used a simple linear regression analysis. The result of the analysis was a statistically significant effect of stress on the average. (F

1, 1486) = 39.435, p .000, and R2.025. As can be seen in the following table, the stress level relationship with the average level is negative (B = -111). This means that the increase in the level of stress predicts a decrease in the average grade.

Chi-Square method was used to understand if the students average grade was related to the style of attachment. Based on the data of the analysis, the relationship between these variables is statistically significant. X^2 (8, N = 1487) = 95.725, p. This means that the average student grade level is related to the style of attachment. Phi & Chramer's V test showed that the relationship between these two variables is moderate / strong.

So, as a conclusion, it can be said that there is logically the connection between attachment, stress, and academic success.

References

Andrews, B., & Wilding, J. M. (2004). The relation of depression and anxiety to life-stress and achievement in students, *British Journal of Psychology, 95, 509-521.* DOI: 10.1348/0007126042369802

Benoid, D. (2004). Infant-parent attachment: Definition, types, antecedents, measurement and outcome, 9,8, 541-545.

Bernier, A., Larose, S., Boivon, M., & Soucy, N. (2004). Attachment state of mind: Implications for adjustment to college, *Journal of Adolescent Research, 19, 783-806.* Found on https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=Kw4zBNkAAAAJ&citation_for_view=Kw4zBNkAAAAJ:Y0pCki6q_DkC

Cortesi, C. (2014). Understanding the Impact of Adolescent Attachment on Academic Success, Dissertation, Loyola University Chicago.

Chemers, M. M., Hu, L., & Garcia, B. F. (2001). Academic self-efficacy and first-year college student performance and adjustment. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 93, 55-64*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.93.1.55

Cutrona, C. E., Cole, V., Colangelo, N., Assouline, S. G., & Russell, D. W. (1994). Perceived parental social support and academic achievement: An attachment theory perspective, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66, 369-378.* Found on http://psycnet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=buy.optionToBuy&id=2008-10478-001

Dusselier, L., Dunn, B., Wang, Y. Shelley, M. C., II, & Whalen, D. F. (2005). Personal, health, academic, and environmental predictors of stress for residence hall students. *Journal of American College Health, 54, 15-24.*Found on http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16050324

Ford, R. M. (2014). The Relationship Between Adult Attachment Style and Stress Coping Skills to College Graduation, *Dissertation,* Walden University.

Hudd, S. S., Dumlao, J., Erdmann-Sager, D., Murray, D., Phan, E., Soukas, N., & Yokozuka, N. (2000). Stress at college: Effects on health habits, health status, and self-esteem. *College Student Journal, 34, 217-227.*Found on http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2000-00307-006

Larose, S., Bernier, A., & Soucy, N. (2005). Attachment as a moderator of the effect of security in mentoring on subsequent perceptions of mentoring and relationship quality with college teachers, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 22(3), 399-415.* doi: 10.1177/0265407505052443

McCarthy, Ch. J., Lambert, G. G., & Moller, N. P. (2006). Preventive Resources and Emotion Regulation Expectancies as Mediators Between Attachment and College Students' Stress Outcomes, *International Journal of Stress Management, 13, 1, 1-22.* DOI 10.1037/1072-5245.13.1.1

Misra, R., & Castillo, L. G. (2004). Academic stress among college students comparison of American and international students, *International Journal of Stress Management, 11(2), 132-148.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.11.2.132

Petroff, L. L. (2008). Stress, Adult Attachment, and Academic Success Among Community College Students, (Doctoral Dissertation Thesis), no 27, The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska.

Rabbani, M., Kasmaienezhadfard, S., & Pourrajab, M. (2014). The Relationship between Parental Attachment and Stress: A Review of Literatures Related to Stress among Students, The Online Journal of Counseling and Education, 3,1, 42-50.

Rfidah, K., Azizah, A., Norzaidi, M., Chong, S, Ch., Salwani, M. I., & Noraini, I. (2009). The Impact of Perceived Stress and Stress Factors on Academic Performance of Pre-Diploma Science Students: A Malaysian Study, *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education, 2,1, 13-26.* Gjehet tek http://www.ijsre.com/Vol,%202_1_-Rafidah,%20et%20al.pdf

Simpson, J. A., & Rholes, W. S. (1998). Attachment in adulthood. In J. A. Simpson & W. S. Rholes (Eds.), Attachment theory and close relationships (pp. 3-21). New York: Guilford Press.

Shields, N. (2001). Stress, active coping, and academic performance among persisting and nonpersisting college students, *Journal of Applied Behavioural Research, 6, 65-81.* DOI: 10.1111/j.1751-9861.2001.tb00107

Struthers, C. W., Perry, R. P., & Menec, V. H. (2000). An examination of the relationship among academic stress, coping motivation, and performance in college, *Research in Higher Education, 41, 581-592.*Found on http://is.muni.cz/el/1421/jaro2008/PSB_01/um/Struthers.pdf

Vondras, D. D., Powless, M. R., Olson, A. K., Wheeler, D., & Snudden, A. L. (2005). Differential effects of everyday stress on the episodic memory test performances of young, mid-life, and older adults, *Aging & Mental Health, 9, 60-70.* Found on http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15841833