



Investigating the Association Between Attachment Styles and Life Satisfaction Among Students at Kabul Education University

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Abstract: According to attachment theory, early attachment patterns play a crucial role in shaping psychological well-being and individuals' evaluations of life. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between attachment styles (anxious, secure, and avoidant) and life satisfaction among students at Kabul Education University. This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design and included 314 students selected through convenience sampling. Data were gathered using the Satisfaction with Life Scale designed by Diener et al. and the Attachment Styles Questionnaire by Collins and Read, and were analyzed using Spearman's correlation coefficient. The findings revealed that secure attachment was positively and statistically significantly associated with life satisfaction ($r = 0.195, p < 0.01$). In contrast, anxious attachment ($r = -0.166, p < 0.05$) and avoidant attachment ($r = -0.07, p = 0.03$) demonstrated significant negative relationships with life satisfaction. These findings suggest that attachment patterns play a meaningful role in explaining individual differences in life satisfaction. From an applied perspective, the findings highlight the importance of designing counseling and educational interventions to strengthen secure attachment and enhance students' psychological well-being. Furthermore, these results can inform the planning and development of psychosocial services within university settings to improve students' adjustment and overall quality of life.

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INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction is one of the most significant components of mental health, playing a significant role in predicting individuals' social and psychological functioning. This construct reflects an individual's cognitive and subjective evaluation of overall life quality. It serves as a key indicator for assessing adaptation to the environment, emotional regulation, and

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satisfaction with life experiences (Diener et al., 2018). During academic periods, when individuals encounter challenges such as academic pressures, environmental changes, and new socio-economic conditions, life satisfaction emerges as an important indicator of psychological adjustment, better academic performance, and healthier social relationships (Arslan, 2016). Research has also demonstrated that life satisfaction is associated with reduced psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and stress, and is recognized as a significant predictor of academic success and long-term well-being (Suldo et al., 2016; Sullanmaa et al., 2025).

One of the most important theoretical frameworks for explaining individual differences in life satisfaction is attachment theory. According to this theory, attachment styles (anxious, secure, and avoidant) represent relatively stable patterns of expectations, emotions, and behaviors in close relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). These patterns influence not only intimate relationships but also emotional regulation, stress coping, psychological security, and overall life evaluation. Studies have shown that secure attachment is associated with feelings of security, higher mental health, better emotional regulation, and greater life satisfaction, whereas anxious and avoidant attachment styles are linked to emotional regulation difficulties, negative self- and other-evaluations, and lower life satisfaction (Tepeli Temiz & Tarikanmert, 2018; Parpottas et al., 2023; Hao & Xu, 2024; Soby, 2024).

Various studies have indicated that secure attachment is related to positive psychological outcomes, including higher self-esteem, better mental health, greater resilience, healthier social relationships, and higher life satisfaction (Karimen & Wingerheit, 2012; Murdock & Gore, 2004; Blake et al., 2024). Cross-cultural research has also shown that individuals with secure attachment have a greater ability to manage emotions, maintain stable relationships, and preserve psychological balance, which can enhance life satisfaction over time (Parpottas et al., 2024; Tepeli Temiz & Kanmert, 2018). In contrast, insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) have been associated with negative psychosocial outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, interpersonal difficulties, and lower life satisfaction (Ilhan & Ozbay, 2010; Monin et al., 2019; Deniz & Yildirim, 2023).

Beyond direct effects, some studies have highlighted attachment styles' mediating and moderating roles in the relationship between stress and subjective well-being. For example, research suggests that secure attachment can buffer the negative effects of stress and enhance psychological resilience, whereas insecure attachment can reduce resilience and life satisfaction (Parpottas et al., 2024; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Blake et al., 2024). These findings indicate that attachment styles are important predictors of mental well-being and life satisfaction across different cultures and societies.

Despite extensive research in other countries, studies on this topic in Afghanistan are very limited. Some studies in Afghanistan have shown that parental support, emotional security within the family, and quality of interpersonal relationships are associated with higher mental well-being and lower psychological problems (Panter-Brick et al., 2011; Eggerman & Panter-

Brick, 2010). Additionally, local research indicates that weak family and social relationships, a lack of emotional support, and experiences of loss and separation are associated with reduced life satisfaction and increased emotional difficulties (Miller et al., 2018; Green et al., 2022; Alemi et al., 2023). These variables can be considered indicators of attachment styles within the framework of attachment theory.

Nevertheless, no direct research has yet examined the relationship between attachment styles (anxious, secure, and avoidant) and life satisfaction among Afghan students, indicating a notable gap in the literature. University students in Afghanistan face challenges such as academic pressures, economic difficulties, limited supportive resources, and social stressors, and their attachment styles may play a critical role in life satisfaction and mental health. Therefore, investigating this relationship can contribute to a better understanding of the factors affecting students' psychological well-being.

The findings of this research can theoretically expand the literature on attachment theory within the cultural context of Afghanistan and, from a practical perspective, provide a foundation for designing counseling interventions, mental health promotion programs, and psychosocial support services at universities. The main objective of the study are;

- To examine the relationship between secure attachment style and life satisfaction among university students.
- To assess the relationship between anxious attachment style and life satisfaction among university students.
- To evaluate the relationship between avoidant attachment style and life satisfaction among university students.

The main research hypotheses of the study included ;

H1: Secure attachment style is positively and significantly related to life satisfaction.

H2: Anxious attachment style is negatively and significantly associated with life satisfaction.

H3: Avoidant attachment style is negatively and significantly associated with life satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a correlational research design to investigate the association between attachment styles and life satisfaction among students at Kabul Education University. The sample size for this study was determined using Cochran's formula, assuming a population of 3,000 students at Kabul Education University, a 95% confidence level, and a 0.05 margin of error, yielding an estimated sample size of approximately 341 participants. In practice, 350 questionnaires were distributed, of which 314 complete and usable responses were collected and included in the final analysis. This sample size is considered statistically adequate and acceptable for conducting correlational analyses. The sampling method used in this study was convenience sampling. In this approach, questionnaires were distributed during students' break time among those who were readily available and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. This method was selected due to time constraints and the practical conditions of

the university setting. However, data collection during break times may introduce selection bias, as only students who were present and willing to participate were included. This limitation was acknowledged in the analysis of the results.

Before administration, the study purpose was explained to the participants, and informed consent was obtained. Inclusion criteria included willingness to participate, while exclusion criteria encompassed incomplete responses or refusal to cooperate.

Instruments

Collins and Read Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Collins & Read, 1990): This self-report questionnaire assesses adult attachment styles and measures relational skills and attachment patterns with close figures. The instrument comprises 18 items assessed on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Subscales

Dependence (D): The degree of trust and reliance on others in times of need.

Closeness (C): Feelings of comfort in intimate relationships and emotional proximity.

Anxiety (A): Fear of rejection and worry about losing a relationship.

Localization and Validation: The questionnaire was culturally adapted by the researcher and subsequently reviewed by a Dari literature professor and two psychology specialists before use. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged from 0.76 to 0.86, indicating acceptable reliability. Factor structure details are briefly noted to avoid overextending the methods section.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985): This five-item instrument measures individuals' overall cognitive evaluations of their lives. Responses are rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Total scores vary between 5 and 35, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of life satisfaction.

Localization and Validation: The scale was culturally adapted and linguistically adjusted for Afghan students in Dari. A pilot study confirmed its suitability. Previous studies have demonstrated adequate validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86; test-retest correlation = 0.82).

Data Analysis: The data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Spearman's correlation coefficient was applied to assess the relationships among the variables. All necessary statistical assumptions were checked prior to analysis. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the questionnaires ranged from 0.76 to 0.86, indicating acceptable reliability.

FINDINGS

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Participants by Marital Status, Faculty, Age, Academic Year, and Economic Status

Variable	Category/Group	N	%
Marital Status	Single	284	90.4
	Married	30	9.6
Faculty	Natural Sciences	36	11.5
	Literature	35	11.1
	Social Sciences	47	15.0
	Computer Science	16	5.1
	Islamic Studies	39	12.4
	Psychology	62	19.7
	Educational and Professional Sciences	35	11.1
	Sport Sciences (Physical Education)	25	8.0
	Specialized Sciences	18	5.7
Age	Other/Unspecified	1	0.3
	18-21 years	217	69.1
	22-25 years	91	29.0
	26-30 years	4	1.3
	No response	2	0.6
Family Economic Status	Low	123	39.2
	Moderate	177	56.4
	High	10	3.2
	No response	4	1.3
Academic Year	First year	119	37.9
	Second year	77	24.5
	Third year	29	9.2
	Fourth year	89	28.3
Parents' Education Level	Low	123	39.2
	Moderate	141	44.9
	High	47	15.0
	No response	3	1.0

To describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, descriptive statistics including frequency (N) and percentage (%) were used, as presented in Table 1. The results indicate that the majority of participants were single (284, 90.4%), while only 30 (9.6%) were married.

Analysis of faculty affiliation showed that the highest proportion of respondents were from the Faculty of Psychology (62 individuals, 19.7%), followed by the Faculty of Social Sciences (47 individuals, 15.0%) and the Faculty of Islamic Studies (39 individuals, 12.4%). The lowest frequencies were observed among students from the Faculty of Computer Science (16 individuals, 5.1%) and Specialized Sciences (18 individuals, 5.7%).

Regarding age, most participants were within the 18-21 age range (217 individuals, 69.1%), followed by those aged 22-25 years (91 individuals, 29.0%). Only four participants (1.3%) were between 26 and 30 years of age, and two participants (0.6%) did not respond to this item. Regarding family economic status, the majority of respondents reported a

moderate economic level (177 individuals, 56.4%), while 123 participants (39.2%) reported a low economic status and 10 participants (3.2%) reported a high economic status. 4 participants (1.3%) did not respond to this question.

Regarding academic year, the largest proportion of respondents were first-year students (119 individuals, 37.9%), followed by fourth-year students (89 individuals, 28.3%) and second-year students (77 individuals, 24.5%). The smallest proportion belonged to third-year students (29 individuals, 9.2%).

Finally, regarding parents' education level, the highest frequency was observed at the moderate level (141 individuals, 44.9%), while 123 participants (39.2%) reported a low level of parental education and 47 participants (15.0%) reported a high level. Three participants (1.0%) did not respond to this item.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Attachment Styles (Avoidant, Secure, and Anxious-Ambivalent) and Life Satisfaction Among Students

Variables	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Life Satisfaction	314	22.75	6.86	30	5	35
Total Attachment Styles Score	314	54.67	8.31	46	34	80
Secure Attachment Style	314	18.78	3.12	18	10	28
Avoidant Attachment Style	314	18.27	3.42	20	8	28
Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment Style	314	17.61	4.84	24	6	30

The descriptive data presented in Table 2 indicate that the mean total attachment styles score among students of Kabul Education University was 54.67 (SD = 8.31), with scores ranging from 34 to 80. The mean life satisfaction score among these students was 22.75 (SD = 6.86), with a possible range from 5 to 35.

Regarding the attachment style subscales, the results indicated that the mean score for secure attachment was 18.78 (SD = 3.12), with a range of 10 to 28. The mean score for avoidant attachment was 18.27 (SD = 3.42), with a range of 8 to 28, while the mean score for anxious-ambivalent attachment was 17.61 (SD = 4.84), with a range of 6 to 30. These findings suggest that students of Kabul Education University demonstrated a moderate level of life satisfaction, and that the levels of all three attachment styles (secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent) were within the moderate range. Notably, secure attachment had the highest mean score, whereas anxious-ambivalent attachment had the lowest.

Table 3: Association Between Life Satisfaction and Secure Attachment Style

	Life Satisfaction	Secure Attachment
Life Satisfaction	1.000	.195**
Significance (p)	-	.000
Secure Attachment	.195**	1.000
Significance (p)	.000	-

Note. $p < .01$ (one-tailed test).

The results of the Spearman's correlation analysis presented in Table 3 indicate a significant, positive relationship between life satisfaction and a secure attachment style. The correlation

coefficient was $r = 0.195$, with a p-value of 0.000. Accordingly, higher levels of secure attachment among students are associated with greater life satisfaction.

Table 4: Association Between Life Satisfaction and Avoidant Attachment Style

	Life Satisfaction	Avoidant Attachment
Life Satisfaction	1.000	-.070
Significance (p)	-	.03
Avoidant Attachment	-.070	1.000
Significance (p)	.03	-

The results of Spearman's correlation analysis presented in Table 4 indicate a weak but statistically significant negative relationship between life satisfaction and avoidant attachment style ($r = -0.07$, $p = 0.03$). This finding suggests that higher levels of avoidant attachment among students are associated with a slight decrease in life satisfaction.

Table 5: Association Between Life Satisfaction and Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment Style

	Life Satisfaction	Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment
Life Satisfaction	1.000	-.166**
Significance (p)	-	.002
Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment	-.166**	1.000
Significance (p)	.002	-

Note. $p < .01$ (one-tailed test).

Spearman's correlation analysis indicated a weak but statistically significant negative relationship between overall life satisfaction scores and the anxious-ambivalent attachment style ($r = -0.166$, $p = 0.002$). This indicates that as levels of anxious-ambivalent attachment increase, students' life satisfaction tends to decrease slightly.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that attachment styles are significantly related to life satisfaction among students at Kabul Education University. In particular, secure attachment was positively and significantly associated with life satisfaction, whereas both anxious and avoidant attachment styles were negatively and significantly associated with it. Moreover, the results revealed that students' overall level of life satisfaction was moderate, and all three attachment styles were also moderate, with secure attachment demonstrating the highest mean score and anxious attachment the lowest.

The positive relationship between secure attachment and life satisfaction can be understood within the framework of attachment theory. This theory posits that individuals with secure attachment develop positive internal working models of themselves and others, experience greater emotional security, and tend to form higher-quality interpersonal relationships.

These characteristics contribute to enhanced psychological well-being and greater life satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). In essence, secure attachment functions as a

psychological resource that facilitates more adaptive appraisal of stressful situations and promotes better psychological adjustment.

The results of the present study are in line with previous research. For example, Karreman and Vingerhoets (2012) found that secure attachment is linked to greater life satisfaction and more effective emotion regulation. Similarly, Monin et al. (2019) and Blake et al. (2024) found that securely attached individuals tend to evaluate their lives more positively when facing stress. In addition, Pidgeon et al. (2014) demonstrated that secure attachment indirectly enhances life satisfaction through increased psychological resilience, perceived social support, and academic self-efficacy. This consistency of findings indicates that secure attachment serves as an important protective factor for students' mental health and psychological adjustment.

However, some studies have reported inconsistent findings. For example, Civitci (2015) found that after controlling for variables such as self-esteem and social support, the direct relationship between secure attachment and life satisfaction became non-significant. Likewise, Goodall (2015) argued that in certain cultural contexts, variables such as collectivist values, socioeconomic status, and family support may play a more dominant role than attachment styles in predicting life satisfaction. These inconsistencies may be attributed to cultural, social, economic, methodological, measurement tool, and sample characteristics differences. In the Afghan context, due to the strong role of family relationships and limited formal support systems, attachment processes may have a more pronounced influence on well-being.

Regarding avoidant attachment, the results indicated a significant negative relationship with life satisfaction, though the association was weak. Individuals with avoidant attachment typically tend to avoid emotional intimacy, deny dependency on others, and suppress negative emotions. Over time, these patterns may lead to reduced interpersonal relationship quality, lower perceived social support, and ultimately decreased life satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). The weak magnitude of this relationship suggests that avoidant attachment may influence life satisfaction indirectly through mediating variables such as loneliness, perceived social support, and emotion regulation strategies. Although statistically significant ($r = -0.07$, $p = 0.03$), the very small effect size indicates that this relationship should be interpreted with caution.

These findings are consistent with Yıldırım & Körtülüs (2023), Deniz & Özbay (2010), and Maszkova (2023), who reported that avoidant attachment is associated with lower psychological well-being and reduced life satisfaction. However, some studies, such as Goodall (2015), have suggested that in certain cultural settings this relationship may be weak or non-significant, potentially due to differences in cultural norms and lifestyle patterns.

Furthermore, the results showed that anxious attachment is negatively and significantly associated with life satisfaction. Individuals with anxious attachment are typically characterized by fear of rejection, high emotional dependency, and persistent worry in

interpersonal relationships. These features may contribute to emotional instability, increased interpersonal stress, and a more negative evaluation of life, ultimately reducing life satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

This finding is consistent with Those of Ilhan and Özbay (2010), Monin et al. (2019), and Deniz and Yıldırım-Körtülüs (2023), who reported that anxious attachment is associated with higher psychological distress and lower subjective well-being. In the Afghan cultural context, where social relationships and family support play a central role in psychological functioning, even low levels of attachment anxiety may significantly reduce life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that attachment styles play a significant role in predicting life satisfaction among university students. Secure attachment was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, whereas anxious and avoidant attachment styles were associated with lower levels of life satisfaction. These findings confirm that attachment processes constitute significant psychological factors in shaping individuals' subjective well-being and, in interaction with environmental and interpersonal variables, may generate different pathways of psychological adjustment during the academic period.

Furthermore, the results revealed that although students' overall life satisfaction was moderate, the presence of insecure attachment patterns can be considered a psychological risk factor. Therefore, strengthening secure attachment through counseling interventions, communication skills training, enhancement of social support, and psycho-educational programs may play an effective role in improving students' psychological well-being and life satisfaction. These findings can be applied by university counselors, educational psychologists, and higher education policymakers in the design of mental health promotion programs. Finally, considering contextual factors such as socio-cultural conditions and early family experiences may play a complementary and essential role in developing more effective, targeted interventions to improve students' quality of life.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that questionnaires were distributed and collected during students' break periods, as classroom data collection was not permitted to avoid disrupting lessons. The limited time available during breaks may have led respondents to complete the questionnaires hastily, despite efforts to provide clear instructions to ensure accurate responses.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that universities implement attachment-based counseling interventions to strengthen secure attachment, interpersonal skills, and social support, thereby enhancing students' psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Furthermore, future research is suggested to examine the mediating roles of

variables such as social support and emotion regulation, and to conduct longitudinal and cross-cultural comparative studies.

Ethical Approval

This study received approval from the Research Committee of the Faculty of Psychology on June 5, 2025 (Protocol No. 1404-8) and was subsequently authorized by Kabul Education University. All collected data were treated as confidential, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any obligation.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1 contributed to the study's conceptualization and design, data collection, statistical analysis, manuscript preparation, and revision in response to reviewers' feedback. Author 2 participated in the data collection process. Authors 3 and 4 were involved in revising and editing the manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no personal or financial conflicts of interest related to this study.

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