

An Examination of the Relationship between Attachment Styles and Social Skills among Intellectually Disabled Female Students of Special Schools

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ABSTRACT: Limitation in social skills is one of the most important causes of deficit in intellectually disabled children's adaptive behaviour. This study is aimed at examining the relationship between attachment styles and social skills among intellectually disabled female students of special schools in Bandar Abbas. The population of this correlational research includes 105 intellectually disabled female primary students of special schools in the city of Bandar Abbas. Due to the small research population, census was used rather than sampling. Thus, all members of the research population were selected as the research sample. The Attachment Styles Questionnaire by Van Oudenhoven and Hofstra and Social Skills Questionnaire by Gresham and Elliott were used to collect the research data. Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analysis were utilized to analyze the research data using SPSS 18. The results showed that the social skill of self-control has a significant correlation of 0.30 with secure attachment and 0.30 with insecure-resistant/ambivalent attachment within the whole research population. However, the correlation between self-control and insecure-avoidant attachment and insecure-disorganized attachment was not significant. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between attachment styles and the social skill of self-control and children who are more socially skilled in this regard have more secure attachment style compared with other children.

Keywords: Attachment style, self-control social skill, intellectually disabled children.

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INTRODUCTION

Human is a social creature and lives in the society from birth to death. He is in constant interaction with other people and usually meets his needs through these relationships. Thus he always learns how he should live in the society and meet his needs. The fact that how and with what quality human takes part in the society and shows appropriate and desirable social behaviors is considered important for his social life [1]. A prerequisite of social life is having social skills. Such social skills as cooperation, determination, self-control and responsibility are observable learned behaviors which enable one to be successful in interaction with others and avoid inappropriate social behavior [2, 3].

Intellectual disability refers to fundamental limitations in one's intellectual functioning. This is characterized by an intellectual functioning level which is significantly lower than the average and at the same time is accompanied by limitations in two or more areas of adaptive skills [4]. Studies indicate that those with intellectual disability have certain behavioral problems and lack appropriate skills in playing their social roles, interpersonal interactions and daily life skills when compared with normal people. This often considerably decreases their adaptation to their environment [5].

One of the adaptive skills these people, especially intellectually disabled children, have problems with is limitation in social skills. These children often have problems in having appropriate social interaction with adults and peers in different situations. They often lack the social skills required for positive and targeted interactions [6]. Researchers believe that social skills enable people to start and maintain positive social interactions with others and these skills include such skills as communication, problem solving, decision making, self-management, and relationship with peers. Social skills are beneficial for both sides of the interaction and cause one to be accepted by the society. Social skills are especially important for children to develop good relationships with others, to obey the social rules, to undertake responsibility, to share and cooperate, to help the others and to utilize their rights [7]. Researchers believe that those suffering from disability in intellectual functioning have certain weaknesses in terms of social skills and these disabilities lead to limitation in establishing relationship and interacting with others [4, 5]. Considering the fact that these children often develop social problems, their self-esteem, self-satisfaction and development are also affected and consequently, their peers' positive attitudes towards them turn negative [8]. Thus, it is crucially important to deal with the problems and variables related to social skills in such children.

Having social skills can lead to the formation of a stable attachment system in different people. This has been confirmed in many studies. Most of these studies were carried out among ordinary and normal members of the society whose attachment processes had been formed on a natural substrate; however, for intellectually disabled children whose attachments are formed under the influence of their intellectual state, we cannot clearly conclude

about the relationship between these two variables. In other words, the relationship between social skills and attachment in intellectually disabled children may have patterns different from those of normal children. Accordingly, considering the role of attachment and its effect on people's types of relationship as well as lack of research in this field, the researcher decided to dedicate his research to dealing with this question: Is there any relationship between attachment style and social skills of self-control among intellectually disabled female students?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a descriptive and correlational study whose population includes the primary female students of special schools in the city of Bandar Abbas (105 students). Due to the small research population, sampling was carried out in the form of census. Thus, all members of the research population were selected as the research sample.

The following questionnaire was used to collect the data: Attachment Styles Questionnaire by Van Oudenhoven and Hofstra: This questionnaire was designed by Van Oudenhoven and Hofstra [9] to evaluate children's attachment styles based on the framework of Bartholomew and Horowitz. This questionnaire includes four dimensions (1- secure, 2-insecure-avoidant, 3- insecure-resistant/ambivalent, 4- insecure-disorganized) and has 24 items for each of which, there is a scale from completely agree (5) to completely disagree (1). Using test-retest and Cronbach's alpha, Hofstra et al. [10] found the reliability of this questionnaire for each dimension – that is secure, avoidant secure, insecure-resistant/ambivalent, and insecure-disorganized – to be 68%, 92%, 88% and 80%, respectively. Its validity was also confirmed by three psychologists [10]. In the present study, its reliability was found to be 62% for the secure subscale, 68% for insecure-avoidant, 70% for insecure-resistant/ambivalent, and 65% for insecure-disorganized.

Social Skills Questionnaire by Gresham and Elliott: This scale examines students' social behavior which has a great effect on their educational performance, acceptance among peers and relationship with teachers. This scale measures the frequency of effective behaviors and growth of social competence in students and their adaptation at home and in school. It can also be used in student screening and classification and in planning for teaching social skills.

Based on the findings of Gresham and Elliott [2], Cronbach's alpha coefficients for social skills and behavioral problems were found to be 94% and 88%, respectively. In the present study, the reliability of each subscale was estimated using Cronbach's alpha and found to be 0.70 for the subscale self-control.

In order to analyze the research data, different descriptive and inferential methods were utilized. Descriptive statistical indicators, i.e. percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data. Then Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used to examine the research hypotheses. The research data were analyzed using SPSS 18.

RESULTS

Considering the main goal of the research, descriptive indicators of research variables were first estimated. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of these variables.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of research variables

Variable	F	M	SD	Max.	Min.
Self-control social skill	105	17.80	5.50	30	9
Secure attachment	105	26.29	3.19	31	21
Insecure-avoidant attachment	105	13.20	3.78	25	6
Resistant/ambivalent attachment	105	24.93	4.64	32	15
Insecure-disorganized attachment	105	14.01	4.55	22	5

Hypothesis 1: Secure attachment predicts self-control in intellectually disabled students.

Hypothesis 2: Insecure-avoidant attachment predicts self-control in intellectually disabled students.

Hypothesis 3: Resistant/ambivalent attachment predicts self-control in intellectually disabled students.

Hypothesis 4: Insecure-disorganized attachment predicts self-control in intellectually disabled students.

Standard regression analysis was used to test the abovementioned hypotheses. Table 2 includes the information related to regression analysis of the role of attachment styles in self-control.

Table 2: Results of regression analysis of the role of secure attachment in self-control

Criterion Variable	Self-Control							
	R	R ²	F	p	B	β	t	p
Predictive Variable								
Secure attachment	0.42	0.18	23.25	0.001	0.24	0.42	4.82	0.001
Insecure-avoidant attachment	-0.02	0.00	0.05	0.815	-0.01	-0.02	-2.23	0.815
Resistant/ambivalent attachment	0.24	0.06	6.80	0.01	-0.21	-0.24	-2.60	0.01
Insecure-disorganized attachment	0.11	0.01	1.29	0.25	-0.09	-0.11	-1.13	0.258

The results depicted above show that 0.18 of self-control variance is significantly explained by secure attachment in the whole research population. Thus, the first research hypothesis is confirmed. These results also show that the relationship between insecure-avoidant attachment and self-control is not statistically significant. Therefore, the second research hypothesis is not confirmed. The above table indicates that 0.06 of self-control variance is significantly explained by insecure-resistant/ambivalent attachment among the whole research population. As a result, the third research hypothesis is confirmed. In addition, according to these results, the relationship between insecure-disorganized attachment and self-control is not statistically significant, so the fourth research hypothesis is not confirmed.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained from these hypotheses indicated that secure and insecure-ambivalent attachment styles can predict the social skill of self-control; in a way that students with higher secure and lower insecure-ambivalent attachment styles, scored higher in the social skill scale. The results of this research also showed that insecure-avoidant and insecure-disorganized attachment styles cannot predict the social skill of self-control, because the correlation between these variables was not significant. Thus, we cannot predict self-control among intellectually disabled students by examining the scores of insecure-avoidant and insecure-disorganized attachment styles.

The results of this research are in line with those of Grunebaum et al. [11], Chen et al. [12], and Oldmeadow et al. [13].

It can be noted in explaining these findings that having close relationship with others is one of the important sources of social skill [14]. Considering the fact that having relationship with others is a basic characteristic of secure individuals, self-confidence in interaction with others causes secure individuals to interact more skillfully and calmly in establishing and maintaining close and intimate relationships with others. The characteristic of trusting others causes them to have positive attitude towards interactions with others and make use of their interactions with others as a means of appearing attractive and being approved. It seems obvious that a person who defines himself, others and his interactions in a positive way is more attracted and accepted by others and is positively approved and evaluated by others. As a result, this positive attitude towards himself and others, which is a characteristic of secure individuals, leads to an increase in social skill.

The present study was faced with certain limitations among which are the limitation of samples to intellectually disabled students of the city of Bandar Abbas and the unwillingness of some parents in replying to the questions of questionnaires. Since questionnaire was the tool used in this research, it is suggested that qualitative research methods (including observation and interview) and mixed methods be used in future research to understand the problems of intellectually disabled students more profoundly. Moreover, the gender of participants was not considered in this research and it is therefore suggested that this variable is taken into account in future studies.

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