

## **The Influence of Psychosocial Factors on Life Satisfaction of Adolescents**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was intended to find out the relationships between personality traits, parent and peer attachment and life satisfaction of adolescents. A total of 348 adolescents from Dagon University students and Hnget Aw San Boys Training School, aged from 16 to 20 years, participated in this study. Personality traits were measured using the Myanmar version of the NEO-Five Factor Inventory developed by Yee War Myint (2015). Parent and peer attachment were measured using the Myanmar Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (MIPPA) developed by Yin Yin Lin (2012). Adolescents' life satisfaction was tapped by the Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Yin Yin Lin (2012). The results indicated that life satisfaction was found to have a significant positive relationship with parent attachment and peer attachment. Results showed that there were significant relationships between personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness with life satisfaction, and there was also a significant and negative correlation between neuroticism and life satisfaction. The findings also indicated the significant correlations between attachment styles and life satisfaction. In addition, results showed that there were significant relationships between most of the personality traits with attachment styles. In conclusion, adolescents who were satisfied with their lives were those who have personality traits of extraversion, openness and conscientiousness and attachment. These findings give important insights into understanding some dimensions of the well-being of Myanmar adolescents.

**Keywords:** personality traits, parent and peer attachment, life satisfaction

### **Introduction**

Adolescence is an important developmental stage for every individual as it is a transition period from childhood to adulthood. It is the one stage mostly marked by a rapid and tumultuous transition (Brockman, 2003; Cook & Furstenberg, 2002). While the transition is unavoidable, the speed and magnitude of these changes overtax the capacity of many young people to cope (Collins, 2001; Davis, 2003; Jessor, 1993).

In the course of these physical, cognitive and emotional developmental processes, these individual differences coupled with attachment styles may influence the psychological well-being of adolescents. Our behavior in adult relationships is based on our experiences in the early years of life with our parents or caregivers. According to the theory of attachment styles, the kinds of bonds we form early in life influence the kinds of relationships we form as adults. The theory was first formulated by John Bowlby (1973; 1980; 1982; 1988) who charted the process of close relationships in parent-infant interactions and disruptions, illuminated by three phases in the child's response – protest, despair, and detachment. Bowlby's (1973) work on affectional bonds stated that the quality of early relationships would exert long-term influence on personality and on the subsequent relationships through different styles. This style is called the attachment style.

Attachment is generally defined as an enduring affectional bond of substantial intensity. The central concern of attachment theory is the implication of optimal and non-optimal social attachments for psychological fitness (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978). Bowlby (1982) has concluded that human beings at any age are mostly well-adjusted

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when they have confidence in the accessibility and responsiveness of trusted others. During adolescence, attachment behavior is often directed toward non-parental (non-caretaking) figures (Weiss, 1982). While peers may not necessarily be considered stronger or wiser (as per Bowlby's definition of childhood attachment), they may be considered based on a situational or temporary basis, as in adult peer relationships. Thus, certain peer relationships, especially beginning in adolescence, can be considered as a type of attachment relationship. In Weiss's view, a particularly important aspect of adolescent peer attachment is the peer's ability to support and encourage the adolescent's assumption of growth-promoting challenges.

Armsden and Greenberg (1987) examined the general affective/cognitive dimensions of attachment to parental and peer figures in their report. They hypothesized that the "internal working model" of attachment figures may be tapped by assessing (1) the positive affective/cognitive experience of trust in the accessibility and responsiveness of attachment figures, and (2) the negative affective/cognitive experiences of anger and/or hopelessness resulting from unresponsive or inconsistently responsive attachment figures. To test their hypothesis, they developed as a more comprehensive and reliable measure of attachment that assesses adolescents' perceptions of the affective/cognitive dimension of attachment to parent and peer.

Psychological well-being refers to positive mental health (Edwards, 2005). Research has shown that psychological well-being is a diverse multidimensional concept (MacLeod & Moore, 2000) which develops through a combination of emotional regulation, personality characteristics, identity and life experience (Helson & Srivastava, 2001). Psychological well-being has undergone extensive empirical review and theoretical evaluation (Wissing & Van Eeden, 1998). There is currently no single consensual conceptual understanding of psychological well-being. Bradburn's (1969) initial understanding of psychological well-being provided a depiction of the difference between positive and negative affect. In the present study, adolescents' attachment to their parents and peers and life-satisfaction experienced by adolescents were assessed as a positive effect of psychological well-being.

Prior studies have documented robust relationships between global positive affect and the Big Five Trait Extraversion, as well as secure adult attachment style (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980; McCrae & John, 1992). One of the most robust findings in the literature on affect and personality is the strong correlation between dispositional global positive affect and the Big Five-factor Extraversion (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980; John, 1990). Extraversion scores predict the frequency and intensity of felt positive emotion, as well as reactivity to positive feedback (Larsen & Ketelaar, 1989).

An encouraging and cooperative parent is a source of support and can help foster the development of a secure parent-child attachment bond. This attachment bond, in turn, can provide the child with a secure base from which it explores the environment and develops personal and interpersonal competencies (Bretherton, 1992).

Attachment theorists have postulated that the origin of negative cognitive biases and expectations in relationships is found in a child's early relationship with his/her caregivers (Bowlby, 1969a). Insecure attachment relationships are believed to form in dyads in which the mothering response to the infant is inadequate to his or her needs (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The child internalizes beliefs about relationships and self-worth from the response of the mother to his/her signals (Bowlby, 1969a). Thus, negative experiences in early relationships can lead to internalized views of the self as bad or unworthy.

As we understand so little about adolescents' attachment in Myanmar, the present study should explore the nature of attachment in adolescents and draw upon theoretical models as

well as previous research to identify variables that are likely to be consequences of attachment style.

There is no systematic investigation of personality traits, parent and peer attachment and life satisfaction of adolescents in Myanmar. By applying these scales, we attempt to investigate whether there is a correlation between personality traits, parent and peer attachment and life satisfaction of adolescents. On the basis of the available literature, the following hypothesis was formulated as follows.

## **Objective**

The main objective of this research is to find out the relationships between personality traits, parent and peer attachment and life satisfaction of adolescents.

## **Hypotheses**

1. Personality traits will be related to parent and peer attachment of adolescents.
2. Personality traits will be related to the life satisfaction of adolescents.
3. There will be a positive relationship between parent and peer attachment and life satisfaction of adolescents.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants of this study were 348 adolescents from Dagon University Students and Hnget Aw San Boys Training School. This participant group consists of 204 male and 144 female. The age of participants is ranged from 16 to 20 years.

### **Procedure**

Survey questionnaires were distributed to the 348 participants. Before the participants filled in the questionnaire, the researchers gave a short announcement to the participants, stating that all data would be kept confidential and they informed the participants to feel free to answer the questionnaire. After collecting the data,

the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

### **Measures**

#### ***The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)***

The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) was measured using *the Myanmar version of the NEO-Five Factor*

*Inventory* developed by Yee War Myint (2015). It consists of five subscales, namely Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), and Openness to experience (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). This inventory consists of 57 items. Respondents answered the statements using a five-point Likert scale from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree. Reliability analysis showed for its dimensions ranging from alpha. 75, .57, .50, .45, and .78, respectively.

### ***Parent and Peer Attachment***

Parent and peer attachment were measured using the Myanmar Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (MIPPA) developed by Yin Yin Lin (2012). The instrument was used primarily with 16-to-20-year-old adolescents (Quintana & Lapsley, 1987) and had been proved applicable in studies with young adolescents (Armsden, McCauley, Greenberg, Burke, & Mitchell, 1991).

The MIPPA is a highly reliable and valid measure that consisted of 24-items parent attachment scale and the 24-items peer attachment scale respectively. The instrument is a self-report questionnaire and the participants are asked to rate each of the items on a five-point Likert-scale. The response “always true” was coded as 5, “often true” as 4, “sometimes true” as 3, “seldom true” as 2 and “never true” as 1. Cronbach alpha for parent attachment scale and peer attachment scale were .79 and .89, respectively.

### ***Life Satisfaction***

Life satisfaction was measured with a 5-item scale developed by Yin Yin Lin (2012). The participants were asked to respond to five general statements about their lives. Cronbach alpha of this scale was found to be .67.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Results**

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the variables in the study.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations among Studied Variables

	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Parent Attach (1)	84.13	14.03	—							
Peer Attach (2)	81.20	14.78	.28**	—						
LS (3)	15.12	3.78	.33**	.26**	—					
Neuro (4)	36.13	8.38	-.26**	-.12*	-.16**	—				
Extro (5)	38.99	5.83	.25**	.21**	.20**	-.25**	—			
Open (6)	33.47	4.86	.08	.03	-.11*	.17**	.11*	—		
Agree (7)	36.32	5.19	.30**	.25**	.20**	-.31**	.21**	.04	—	
Consci (8)	43.16	6.73	.33**	.25**	.25**	-.18**	.34**	-.01	.28**	—

(N = 348), \*p < .05, \*\* p < .01

Parent Attach= Parent Attachment; Parent Attach = Parent Attachment; LS = Life Satisfaction; Neuro = Neuroticism; Extro = Extraversion; Open = Openness to experience; Agree = Agreeableness; Consci = Conscientiousness

## ***Hypothesis Testing***

### **Testing Hypothesis 1**

The first hypothesis stated that there is a relationship between personality traits and attachment styles. Results in Table 2 showed that there was a significant and negative correlation between neuroticism and both parent and peer attachment style ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r = -.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Extraversion was significantly correlated with both parent and peer attachment style, ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ), respectively. Openness was not correlated with both parent and peer attachment style. Agreeableness was significantly related to both parent and peer attachment style ( $r = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and, ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ), respectively. Finally, conscientiousness was significantly correlated with both parent and peer attachment style ( $r = .33$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ), respectively.

Table 2. Results of correlation between personality traits and attachment styles

Personality dimensions	Parent Attach	Peer Attach
Neuro	-.26**	-.12*
Extro	.25**	.21**
Open	.08	.03
Agree	.30**	.25**
Consci	.33**	.25**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

### **Testing Hypothesis 2**

The first hypothesis stated that there will be relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction among adolescents. Results in Table 3 showed that there was a significant and negative correlation between neuroticism and life satisfaction ( $r = -.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). There was also a significant correlation between extraversion and life satisfaction ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A significant negative correlation was also observed between openness and life satisfaction. Findings revealed a significant positive association between conscientiousness and life satisfaction ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Results also showed a substantial relationship between agreeableness and life satisfaction, ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Table 3. Results of correlation between personality traits and life satisfaction

Personality dimensions	LS
Neuro	-.16**
Extro	.20**
Open	-.11*
Agree	.20**
Consci	.25**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

### Testing Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis stated that there is a relationship between attachment style and life satisfaction among adolescents. Results in Table 4 showed that there were significant correlations between life satisfaction and parent attachment. There was a significant positive correlation with ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), and peer attachment ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ).

Table 4. Results of correlation between attachment style and life satisfaction

Attachment	Life Satisfaction
Parent	.33**
Peer	.26**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

### Discussion

The finding from this study revealed significant relationships between personality traits and attachment of adolescents. It was found out that neuroticism was significantly related to both parent and peer attachment style. Extraversion was significantly correlated with both parent and peer attachment style. Openness was independent with both parent and peer attachment style. Agreeableness was significantly related to both parent and peer attachment style. Finally, conscientiousness was significantly correlated with both parent and peer attachment style. This finding which supported the literature and previous empirical evidence on neuroticism is one aspect of personality that encompasses the degree of emotional instability versus stability (Costa & McCrae, 1992). An individual scoring high on neuroticism experiences a particular proneness to negative affect, while individuals scoring low on neuroticism tend to be more mellow and calm in nature. Individuals who are higher in Neuroticism tend to experience feelings such as: “fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, and disgust”. This group of individuals also tends to lack the ability to cope with these emotions. This factor is found to be most related to the presence of psychopathology (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Kotov, Gamez, Schmidt, & Watson, 2010).

The findings from the present study suggested that personality variables play a crucial role in explaining individual differences in life satisfaction. Personality assessment based on the five-factor model (FFM) of personality, i.e., neuroticism. Hahn, Johnson and Spinath (2013) found that Extraversion (E), Conscientiousness (C) and Agreeableness (A) were positively related to LS. Neuroticism (N). On the other hand, it was negatively associated with LS and Openness to experiences (O) and was found to be no consistent correlation of it. Moreover, Steel, Schmidt and Shultz (2008) found that E, N and, to a lesser extent, C showed the highest relations to LS. In particular, among the big five personality dimensions, E and N are mostly related to LS (Diener & Lucas, 1999).

The finding of this study revealed that there was a relationship between life satisfaction and parent attachment and peer attachment of adolescents. The results of correlation analyses indicated that life satisfaction is a meaningful correlation between parent attachment and peer attachment. This result was similar to those of previous studies.

Research has provided evidence for positive associations between both parent and peer attachment relationships and adolescent life-satisfaction. The findings from the present study provided support to the results of a number of prior studies linking psychological adjustment to the quality of intimate relationships with parents and peers.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between life satisfaction and parent and peer attachment of adolescents. The results of this study lent support to the hypothesis that life satisfaction is positively associated with parent and peer attachment of adolescents.

Adolescents are in a transitional phase of their lives, one that connects childhood and young adulthood. Therefore, their psychological well-being is influenced by their relationships with both their parents and their peers. In conclusion, findings from this study suggested that adolescents who experienced life satisfaction were those who had emotional stability, were more extraverted, and more conscientious. In addition, the quality of parent and peer attachments was significantly related to adolescents' life satisfaction.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations of this study need to be addressed. First, this study is limited by the inclusion of only adolescents. This study only relied on self-report measures of participants, and parent and peer report measures were not available to the researcher. Especially, when examining the role of parental and peer attachment relationships on psychological well-being. Parent and peer perspectives would have provided much additional rich data.

Secondly, the generalizability of the findings to the late adolescent population is also limited. Thirdly, this study did not examine potential interactions between sex and quality of attachment relationships. Various theoretical positions (Bowlby, 1977; Meeus, et al., 2002) suggest possible interactions between gender of child and gender of the parent in terms of attachment and psychological well-being outcomes and these should be explored in future research.

Finally, this study used a self-report paper-pencil assessment to collect data. Self-report assessments are widely used in collecting data on close relationships. There are, however, common problems with the use of such measures including reporter bias and the problem of dishonest responses by the respondent (Gay, 1996).

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