



Research paper

The Relationship between Perception of Attachment Quality and Social Anxiety in Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Spiritual Well-being

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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to investigate the relationship between the perception of the quality of attachment and social anxiety of adolescents with the mediating role of spiritual well-being. The current research method was a correlational of structural equation modelling. The statistical population of the present study included all teenagers studying in secondary schools of Mazandaran province of Iran in the academic year of 2022-2023, A sample of 300 students who were selected as available method and completed questionnaires of attachment to parents and peers, spiritual well-being and adolescent social anxiety. The results showed a significant relationship between adolescent social anxiety and the quality of attachment perception with the mediation of spiritual well-being. According to the results, it is suggested that psychologists, in therapeutic interventions for social anxiety disorder in adolescents, pay special attention to the role of influencing variables.

Keywords: Adolescents, perception of attachment quality, social anxiety, spiritual well-being

Introduction

Social anxiety is a common issue in the context of relationships, particularly prevalent during adolescence when it first emerges. Untreated social anxiety disorder does not improve and is associated with significant functional impairment (Khan, et al., 2021). Recent research has indicated that spiritual well-being can be a helpful tool in managing anxiety and social anxiety. Enhancing spiritual well-being can lead to better relationships and reduced negative behaviors (Rosmarin & Leidl, 2020). An essential component of spiritual well-being involves how individuals cope with and handle stressful situations. Engaging in spiritual coping involves cognitive and behavioral strategies aimed at discovering or preserving meaning and connection during challenging circumstances (Coppola, et al., 2021). An important aspect that impacts individuals' spirituality is their attachment pattern. Attachment plays a significant role in shaping individuals' spiritual beliefs (Granqvist, 2020). Studies have indicated that individuals with strong spiritual well-being tend to experience lower rates of depression and anxiety (Fitzgerald and Bertheum, 2022). Studies have indicated that increased interpersonal issues and poorer levels of secure attachment are predictive factors of increased social anxiety. Furthermore, based on the research by Granqvist (2020) and Li, et al. (2021), it has been discovered that there is an association between attachment and spirituality, with attachment

being a predictor of spirituality in both adolescence and adulthood. Based on these findings, the primary focus of the study was to explore how the perception of attachment quality correlates with social anxiety in adolescents, with spiritual well-being playing a mediating role. Also, the other hypotheses were:

- There is a relationship between the perception of attachment quality and spiritual well-being in adolescents.
- There is a relationship between the perception of attachment quality and social anxiety in adolescents.
- There is a relationship between spiritual well-being and social anxiety in adolescents.

Method

The study was a descriptive correlational investigation conducted using structural equation modeling. The research's statistical population comprised all male and female students aged 12 to 17 attending public middle and high schools in Mazandaran province during the 2022-2023 academic year. A sample of 300 students were chosen, using convenience sampling from the middle and high schools in this province. Questionnaires were transformed into links using the Porsline website to collect research data. With the collaboration of middle school and high school teachers, the questionnaires were distributed to public school students using an Internet survey. The data were then analyzed using structural equation modeling in the AMOS software.

Tools

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA): The questionnaire consists of 25 items, with three subscales: attachment to mother, attachment to father, and attachment to peers, rated on a 5-point Likert scale. It's internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha for three attachments are 0.87, 0.89, and 0.92 respectively (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for subscales were 0.76 to 0.82.

Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS): The instrument consists of 20 items and includes two subscales: religious well-being and existential well-being, rated on a 6-point Likert scale. It's internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha for two subscales are 0.91 and 0.91 respectively (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). The obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficients for these subscales were 0.88, 0.75, in this study.

Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SASA): The instrument consists of 28 items that are evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale. It encompasses two dimensions related to cognition and behavior. It's internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha for two subscales are 0.68, 0.83 respectively (Puklek, 2004). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for subscales were 0.76 to 0.84.

Results

The Mardia coefficient for the data in this study is 3.41, indicating that the assumption of multivariate normality is valid. The variables had a tolerance index close to 1 and a Variance inflation factor below 2, indicating no collinearity among the predictor variables. Once the assumptions were confirmed, structural equation modeling was employed, revealing that the

research model fits well. The Sobel test was utilized to examine the impact of the mediating variable of spiritual well-being on the association between the perception of attachment quality and social anxiety in adolescents, and the findings are detailed in the table below.

Table 1. Coefficients and significance level of indirect effects of spiritual well-being on adolescent social anxiety

Criterion variable	Mediator variable	Predictor variable	Effect type	Standardized β	Sobel statistic	sig
Social anxiety	Spiritual well-being	indirect	Attachment quality	-0.33	3.36	0.001

The table shows that the perception of attachment quality indirectly influences adolescents' social anxiety through spiritual well-being ($p < 0.05$).

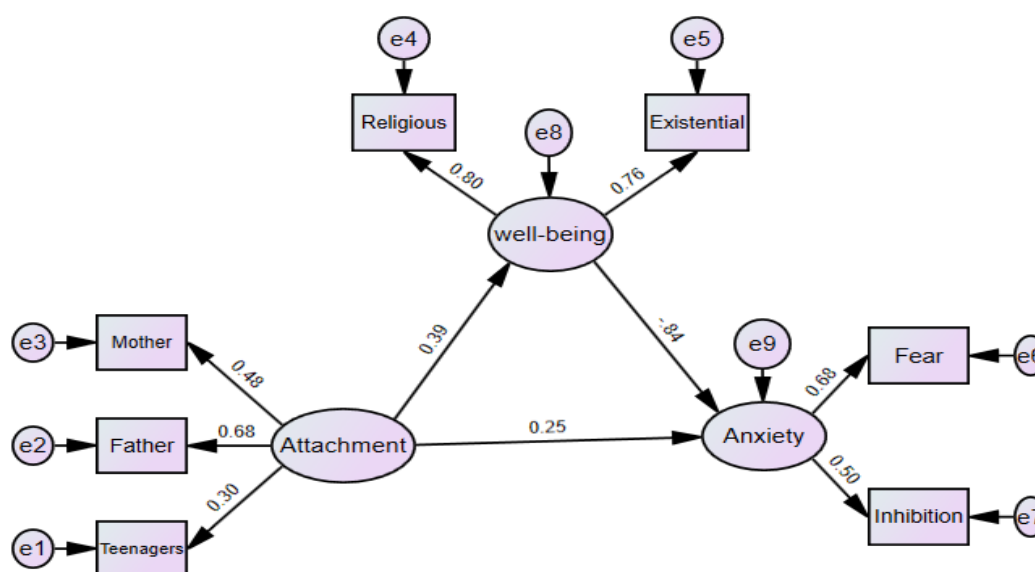


Figure 1. The research model in the case of standardized coefficients

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the attachment styles and spiritual well-being of adolescents have an impact on their level of anxiety. Individuals who exhibit anxiety and avoidance in their relationships demonstrate a lower level of spiritual well-being. This may be attributed to the lack of security they encountered in their attachment to caregivers. Due to a lack of empathy and respect within their family, individuals experience a decreased level of enjoyment in their interactions with family members. Additionally, the absence of a solid base from which to explore their environment leads to reduced motivation in pursuing personal goals. Furthermore, they become more preoccupied with the opinions of others and experience a decrease in spiritual well-being. Given that social anxiety is a condition that can impact and

restrict the interpersonal relationships of adolescents, it is important to focus on the influential factors of spiritual well-being and the quality of teenagers' attachment when developing therapeutic interventions for this disorder. An important limitation of this study was the sampling method used, and in addition to other limitations, the sample group was limited to Mazandaran province. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to adolescents from other regions.

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Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest for the authors of the article.



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