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## Investigating a Relationship between Childhood Trauma, Emotional Intelligence, and Attachment Styles among Young Adults

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**Abstract:** Childhood trauma can have a profound impact on an individual's emotional intelligence and attachment styles, shaping their ability to regulate emotions and form relationships in adulthood. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and attachment styles among young adults. A total of 153 participants were surveyed using a Google Form questionnaire, and data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis with the assistance of SPSS software. The results of the descriptive analysis indicated that the mean scores for childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and attachment styles were 64.14, 119.03, and 50.69, respectively. Regression analysis revealed that childhood trauma did not significantly predict emotional intelligence ( $p = 0.220$ ), leading to the rejection of H1. However, childhood trauma was found to have a significant impact on attachment styles ( $p = 0.0002$ ), supporting H2. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a weak positive relationship between childhood trauma and emotional intelligence ( $r = 0.099$ ), while childhood trauma and attachment styles showed a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.335$ ), partially supporting H3. The findings align with previous research suggesting that childhood trauma influences attachment styles more strongly than emotional intelligence. This supports the need for targeted psychological interventions to enhance emotional regulation and foster secure attachments among trauma-affected individuals. The study's limitations include self-reported data, a cross-sectional design, and lack of gender-specific analysis. Future research should incorporate longitudinal studies and diverse participant samples to deepen the understanding of these relationships.

**Keywords:** *Childhood Trauma, Emotional Intelligence, Attachment Styles, Young Adults, Psychological Well-being, SPSS, Regression Analysis, Correlation Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, Mental Health*

## 1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, researchers in the field of psychology have increasingly sought to understand the interconnected nature of childhood experiences, cognitive development, and social interactions among adolescents. Investigating the intricate relationships among childhood trauma, emotional intelligence (EI), and bonding styles in this population is the main goal of this research. This study explores these connected areas to understand the impact of childhood experiences on young adults' social skills and bonding habits. Researchers such as Bowlby (1980) and Ainsworth et al. (1978) shown the significance of early parent bonds in shaping people's attachment patterns, which laid the groundwork for attachment theory. According to attachment theory, people internalise the norms and expectations placed on them by their primary carers throughout infancy and shape their views of relationships accordingly. Confident, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganised attachment styles all have an effect on people's self-perception, social-emotional regulation, and coping abilities. (Bowlby, 1980).

Stress in childhood significantly impacts mental health and development, according to research by Felitti et al. (1998) and van der Kolk (2005). It can be challenging to develop secure bonds and emotional regulation skills after experiencing childhood trauma, which encompasses abuse, neglect, and family issues. People who have experienced childhood trauma may struggle to comprehend, identify, and manage their emotions, and they may also exhibit harmful patterns of attachment (Goleman, 1995). The concept of emotional intelligence was first proposed by Salovey and Mayer in 1990 and further popularised by Daniel Goleman in 1995. Having emotional intelligence means you can identify, name, describe, and manage your own and other people's emotions. According to recent research (Mayer et al., 2016), emotional intelligence is crucial for social success, academic achievement, occupational fulfilment, and overall well-being. However, our understanding of the connection between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and bonding styles is limited, particularly in relation to young people.

Effective programs and support systems to improve mental health and resilience require knowledge of how emotional intelligence and attachment types are impacted by childhood stress in young people. The purpose of this dissertation is to shed light on these intricate relationships in an effort to advance our understanding of developmental psychology. People

who have experienced trauma as children will also benefit from this in terms of professional practice and prevention efforts. Emotional intelligence, attachment patterns, and the effects of childhood trauma on young people are the main areas that this dissertation will investigate. This will be accomplished by combining real-world research with theories from attachment, developmental psychology, and emotional intelligence. Through investigating all of these domains, this study intends to elucidate the mental mechanisms by which formative experiences impact subsequent psychological development and interpersonal dynamics throughout adolescence and early adulthood.

## 2. Review of Literature

This research looked at the ways in which traumatic experiences in childhood could affect attachment styles and how those styles in turn might be predicted by traumatic experiences in childhood. A total of 911 undergraduates from Turkey's Mugla Sitki Kocman University were included in the sample (492 female and 419 male). In order to gather data, researchers used the Relationship Scales Questionnaire and the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire—both in their brief screening versions. We utilised structural equation modelling to understand the predictive effect of childhood trauma on attachment types and Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to seek for a link between attachment types and childhood trauma. Researchers discovered that attachment styles characterised by fear, preoccupation, and dismissal were positively associated with physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect in childhood, whereas attachment styles characterised by security were negatively associated with these same variables. The results were examined in relation to prior research and within the framework of attachment types and childhood trauma. The link between attachment types and childhood trauma has to be further investigated in replications with bigger samples (Erozkan, 2016).

Mental illness and damaged relationships are more common among those who have experienced trauma. There is mounting evidence that people who experienced physical or emotional neglect as children are more likely to have a wide range of interpersonal difficulties as adults. Neglect in childhood increases the likelihood of attachment insecurity because it interferes with psychological development, namely the establishment of appropriate internal working models of oneself and others. This, in turn, worsens unhealthy concerns about one's health and attachment disorders. Despite the extensive research linking childhood maltreatment to a wide range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and insecure attachment styles, many important questions remain unanswered. Some of these gaps include studies that don't include diverse participants, studies that don't define attachment or emotional neglect

clearly, studies that don't involve community members, and studies that don't investigate empathy as a mediating factor between attachment style and emotional neglect in childhood. A more precarious bond to one's parents is associated with a history of severe emotional maltreatment in childhood, according to the study's results. The results showed that different types of relationships had different levels of attachment security, suggesting that measurements of romantic or global attachment might not be the best indicators of attachment style. If we want to help those who have suffered emotional neglect, these findings are important (Etes, 2022)

This mixed-methods thesis investigates the ways in which ACEs, or adverse childhood experiences, might lead to mental health issues and criminal behaviour in particular genders. High rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) were predictive of dysfunctional attitudes and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to quantitative research (N=153, N=43), whereas stable attachment was associated with less distress and more emotional intelligence (EI). Ex-offenders demonstrated unhealthy ways of dealing with their emotions. Emotion dysregulation therapies are necessary, according to qualitative interviews (N=5). The results show that women with histories of offending and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can benefit greatly from interventions that focus on emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional coping mechanisms. There are suggestions for potential areas of further study and methods of intervention (Hart, 2014).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Aim of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine Childhood trauma on Emotional Intelligence and Attachment styles among young adults.

#### **3.2 Variable Of The Study**

##### ***Independent Variable***

**Childhood Trauma:** Childhood trauma is the term used to describe negative occurrences that occur over childhood and having the ability to cause emotional or psychological distress that is really strong. Among the several tragedies are those of a loved one dying, neglect, domestic violence, parental drug usage, divorce, and physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Childhood trauma can long-negatively affect people's mental health, cognitive skills, and interpersonal relationships as well as their cognitive ability.

##### ***Dependent Variable***

**Emotional Intelligence:** This is the ability to appropriately identify, understand, control, and express emotions. It requires for skills in emotional awareness, empathy, conflict resolution, stress management, and interpersonal communication. An emotional intelligence determines a person's psychological adaptation, interpersonal contacts, and overall well-being really greatly. Childhood trauma can affect emotional intelligence as it can hinder a person's ability to regulate their emotions, understand the emotions of others, and control their stress.

**Attachment Styles:** Attachment styles are the patterns of emotional attachment and interpersonal interactions people develop in response to their early experiences with carers. Attachment theory suggests four main attachment styles: dismissive-avoidant, anxious-preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, and secure. These strategies for obtaining comfort and security in relationships mirror individuals' opinions about others and themselves. Trauma in childhood can shape a person's attachment style by impacting their views of relationships, trust, and intimacy. It can also influence a person's aptitude for developing and maintaining appropriate relationships.

### ***3.3 Research Objectives***

- a) To examine the impact of childhood trauma on Emotional Intelligence among young adults.
- b) To examine the impact of childhood trauma on Attachment styles among young adults.
- c) To examine the relationship between childhood trauma, Emotional Intelligence and Attachment styles among young adults.

### ***3.4 Hypothesis***

- 1) There will be significant impact of childhood trauma on emotional intelligence among young adults.
- 2) There will be significant impact of childhood trauma on attachment styles among young adults.
- 3) There will be significant relationship between childhood trauma, Emotional Intelligence and Attachment styles among young adults.

### ***3.5 Participants of the Study***

Comprising 153 people, the sample was carefully chosen using random and purposeful selection to encompass men and women. The majority of the individuals there were in the age bracket of 18–25.

### ***3.6 Data Collection Instruments***

The "Emotional intelligence self-assessment tool, Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, as well as Adult Attachment Scale," in addition to a demographic questionnaire, were used to collect the data for this research.

### ***3.7 Data Collection Procedure***

Using three questionnaires—the "Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment Tool, Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, & Adult Attachment Scale", the data was gathered. Participants were given a packet of questionnaires including information about the study, privacy issues, the researcher's contact details, and additional assessments following the goals of the study. Participants were then encouraged to engage in the study. Description of the instruments took ten minutes.

#### ***3.7.1 The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test***

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) is a battery of 33 items designed to gauge EQ. Built on top of Salovey and Mayer's Emotional Intelligence model (1990), it has strong ties to the Emotional Intelligence (EQ)-I paradigm. One indicates strong agreement and five indicates significant disagreement on the SSEIT. After totalling together the participant's graded scores from each subtest, we get their overall score.

#### **Reliability**

The reliability value of the SSEIT's emotional intelligence scale is 0.90. Furthermore, with Cronbach's scores ranging from .87 to .90, it has demonstrated good internal consistency.

#### ***3.7.2 Childhood Trauma Questionnaire***

The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form (CTQ-SF), a self-report instrument consisting of 28 items, has been utilised for the purpose of quantifying childhood trauma. This scale is a reduction from the 70+ questions that made up the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ). The CTQ-SF consists of 25 clinical items and 3 validity criteria. The CTQ-Short Form is a questionnaire that measures childhood trauma. It consists of five subscales, each of which has five questions using a 5-point Likert scale. There is a scale that ranges from one (meaning "never true" on the scale) to five (meaning "very often true").

#### **Reliability**

This test's full CTQ-SF has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.852. Over all five categories, we find 0.857 for emotional neglect, 0.755 for sexual abuse, 0.713 for physical abuse, 0.666 for emotional abuse, and 0.491 for physical abuse.

#### ***3.7.3 Adult Attachment Scale***

Attachment types in adults may be identified using the 18-item Adult Attachment Scale (AAS). These styles include secure, anxious, and avoidant attachments, among others. The

total score is calculated using a 5-point Likert scale, and there are six questions in each of the three subscales. We use a 5-point scale for all of our evaluations, with 1 meaning "not at all characteristics" and 5 meaning "very characteristic."

### Reliability

According to Cronbach's alpha, the AAS showed sufficient reliability in the control groups with values more than 0.7.

### 3.8 Statistical Analysis

The study employed a regression analysis approach using SPSS software to examine the impact of childhood trauma on emotional intelligence and attachment styles among young adults. Additionally, descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the key characteristics of the data, including mean, standard deviation, and sample size for each variable. These statistical methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among the studied variables and facilitated hypothesis testing.

## 4. Result and Discussion

In this section, the results of a survey conducted using standardized scales through Google Forms investigating "Investigating the Relationship between Childhood Trauma, Emotional Intelligence, and Attachment Styles among Young Adults" are presented. Data was collected through young adults to investigate how childhood trauma shapes emotional intelligence and attachment styles in adulthood. Different statistical techniques were used to spot trends and connections inside the dataset. The results of this study have shed light on the psychological effects of early negative events on emotional control and interpersonal interactions, therefore advancing a better knowledge of these conceptions in young adulthood.

**Table 1:** *Descriptive statistics of all variables*

|                           | <i>Childhood Trauma</i> | <i>Emotional Intelligence</i> | <i>Attachment Styles</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Mean</b>               | 64.14379                | 119.0327                      | 50.68627                 |
| <b>Standard Deviation</b> | 11.06109                | 16.1691                       | 9.362207                 |
| <b>N</b>                  | 153                     | 153                           | 153                      |

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the key variables in this study: Childhood Trauma, Emotional Intelligence, and Attachment Styles, based on responses from 153 young adults. The mean score for Childhood Trauma is 64.14 (SD = 11.06), indicating a moderate

level of adverse childhood experiences among participants. Emotional Intelligence has a higher mean score of 119.03 (SD = 16.17), suggesting that, on average, participants exhibit a relatively strong ability to understand and manage emotions. The mean score for Attachment Styles is 50.69 (SD = 9.36), reflecting variations in participants' attachment patterns. The standard deviations across the variables indicate a reasonable spread of scores, suggesting diversity in participants' experiences of childhood trauma, emotional intelligence levels, and attachment styles. This initial descriptive analysis provides a foundation for further statistical exploration to examine relationships among these psychological constructs.

**Table 2:** *Regression analysis of impact of childhood trauma on emotional intelligence among young adults.*

| <b>Regression Statistics</b> |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Multiple R</b>            | 0.0996614 |
| <b>R Square</b>              | 0.0099324 |
| <b>Adjusted R Square</b>     | 0.0033757 |
| <b>Standard Error</b>        | 16.141784 |
| <b>Observations</b>          | 153       |

| <b>ANOVA</b>      |           |           |            |          |                       |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------------------|
|                   | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i>  | <i>F</i> | <i>Significance F</i> |
| <b>Regression</b> | 1         | 394.70174 | 394.701741 | 1.514837 | 0.220316              |
| <b>Residual</b>   | 151       | 39344.135 | 260.557185 |          |                       |
| <b>Total</b>      | 152       | 39738.837 |            |          |                       |

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There will be significant impact of childhood trauma on emotional intelligence among young adults.

Table 2 presents the results of the regression analysis examining the impact of childhood trauma on emotional intelligence among young adults. The R Square value (0.0099) indicates that childhood trauma explains only 0.99% of the variance in emotional intelligence, suggesting a weak predictive relationship. The ANOVA results show an F-value of 1.51 with a Significance F of 0.2203, which is above the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is not statistically significant.

Since the p-value (0.2203) is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis (H1: There will be a significant impact of childhood trauma on emotional intelligence among young adults) is rejected. This suggests that, within this sample, childhood trauma does not have a statistically significant impact on emotional intelligence.

**Table 3:** *Regression analysis of impact of childhood trauma on attachment styles among young adults.*

| <b>Regression Statistics</b> |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Multiple R</b>            | 0.3359416 |
| <b>R Square</b>              | 0.1128568 |
| <b>Adjusted R Square</b>     | 0.1069816 |
| <b>Standard Error</b>        | 8.8472531 |
| <b>Observations</b>          | 153       |

| <b>ANOVA</b>      |                  |                  |                  |                 |                              |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
|                   | <b><i>df</i></b> | <b><i>SS</i></b> | <b><i>MS</i></b> | <b><i>F</i></b> | <b><i>Significance F</i></b> |
| <b>Regression</b> | 1                | 1503.5841        | 1503.58406       | 19.20927        | 0.0002                       |
| <b>Residual</b>   | 151              | 11819.357        | 78.2738882       |                 |                              |
| <b>Total</b>      | 152              | 13322.941        |                  |                 |                              |

**H<sub>2</sub>:** There will be significant impact of childhood trauma on attachment styles among young adults.

Table 3 presents the regression analysis examining the impact of childhood trauma on attachment styles among young adults. The R Square value (0.1129) indicates that childhood trauma accounts for 11.29% of the variance in attachment styles, suggesting a moderate relationship. The ANOVA results show a significant F-value of 19.21 with a Significance F of 0.0002, which is well below the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant.

Since the p-value (0.0002) is less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis (H2: There will be a significant impact of childhood trauma on attachment styles among young adults) is accepted. This suggests that childhood trauma has a significant impact on attachment styles, meaning individuals with higher levels of childhood trauma are more likely to exhibit distinct attachment patterns in adulthood.

**Table 4:** *Pearson correlation analysis of relationship between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence and attachment styles among young adults*

|                               | <i>Childhood Trauma</i> | <i>Emotional Intelligence</i> | <i>Attachment Styles</i> |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Childhood Trauma</b>       | 1                       |                               |                          |
| <b>Emotional Intelligence</b> | 0.0996614               | 1                             |                          |
| <b>Attachment Styles</b>      | 0.3359416               | 0.260004                      | 1                        |

**H<sub>3</sub>:** There will be significant relationship between childhood trauma, Emotional Intelligence and Attachment styles among young adults.

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationships between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and attachment styles among young adults. The correlation between childhood trauma and emotional intelligence is 0.0997, indicating a very weak positive relationship that is not statistically significant. In contrast, the correlation between childhood trauma and attachment styles is 0.3359, suggesting a moderate positive relationship. Additionally, the correlation between emotional intelligence and attachment styles is 0.2600, indicating a weak to moderate positive relationship. Since the correlation between childhood trauma and emotional intelligence is weak, while childhood trauma and attachment styles show a moderate relationship, the results partially support the hypothesis. Based on the weak association between childhood trauma and emotional intelligence, the hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>: There will be a significant relationship between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and attachment styles among young adults) is accepted. This suggests that childhood trauma is significantly related to attachment styles but does not show a strong relationship with emotional intelligence in this sample.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between childhood trauma, emotional intelligence, and attachment styles among young adults. The findings provide valuable insights into how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) influence emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships later in life. Through statistical analyses, it was found that childhood trauma significantly impacts attachment styles but does not have a strong or direct influence on emotional intelligence.

The descriptive statistics indicated moderate levels of childhood trauma among participants, with relatively high emotional intelligence scores and diverse attachment styles.

Regression analysis revealed that childhood trauma did not significantly predict emotional intelligence, suggesting that while trauma may influence emotional regulation, other factors such as resilience, support systems, and therapeutic interventions play a role in shaping emotional intelligence. However, childhood trauma was found to be a significant predictor of insecure attachment styles, reinforcing the notion that early adverse experiences disrupt the formation of secure relational bonds. Correlation analysis further demonstrated a moderate relationship between childhood trauma and attachment styles, while emotional intelligence showed a weaker correlation with attachment patterns.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that childhood trauma has a stronger association with attachment styles than with emotional intelligence. This aligns with attachment theory, which posits that early experiences with caregivers shape one's ability to form secure relationships in adulthood. Individuals who experience trauma during childhood may develop insecure attachment patterns, leading to difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. This finding underscores the importance of early intervention strategies, such as attachment-based therapies, to help individuals cultivate more secure relational bonds.

The lack of a significant relationship between childhood trauma and emotional intelligence challenges the common assumption that trauma directly impairs emotional intelligence. This suggests that emotional intelligence is a multifaceted construct influenced by several variables, including personality traits, education, therapy, and social experiences. While trauma may contribute to difficulties in emotional regulation, it does not necessarily determine emotional intelligence levels. This finding highlights the potential for interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence, such as emotion-focused therapy (EFT), cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and mindfulness-based practices, to help trauma survivors develop better emotional regulation skills.

The results of this study align with existing research, including Hart's (2014) mixed-methods thesis, which found that high rates of ACEs were linked to PTSD and dysfunctional attitudes, while stable attachment was associated with lower distress and higher emotional intelligence. This reinforces the conclusion that secure attachment plays a critical role in emotional well-being and that interventions aimed at fostering emotional intelligence and emotional coping mechanisms can benefit trauma-exposed individuals. Additionally, Hart's (2014) research highlighted the need for gender-specific interventions, particularly for women who have experienced trauma and exhibit difficulties in emotional regulation. While the present study did not examine gender differences, future research could explore how childhood

trauma affects emotional intelligence and attachment styles differently among men and women. Longitudinal studies could provide further insights into the long-term impact of childhood trauma on emotional and relational outcomes across different life stages.

The findings of this study have important implications for mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers. Given the significant impact of childhood trauma on attachment styles, early intervention programs should focus on promoting secure attachment relationships in children who have experienced trauma. Schools and community organizations can incorporate emotional intelligence training programs to help young adults develop better emotional regulation skills, which may mitigate the long-term effects of childhood trauma. Furthermore, mental health professionals should integrate attachment-based and emotion-focused interventions when working with individuals who have a history of trauma. Therapy approaches such as attachment-based family therapy (ABFT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), and trauma-informed cognitive-behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) can be beneficial in improving both emotional intelligence and relational functioning in trauma survivors.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable contributions to the understanding of how childhood trauma influences attachment styles and emotional intelligence. The findings emphasize that while childhood trauma significantly affects attachment styles, its direct impact on emotional intelligence is minimal. This suggests that attachment security plays a vital role in emotional well-being, and emotional intelligence can be developed through targeted interventions.

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