

INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLES ON THE WELL-BEING OF MALDIVIAN UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS, BEING MEDIATED BY PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR, SOCIAL SKILLS, SELF-ESTEEM, AND TRUST IN OTHERS

Aishath Jinanee Ibrahim¹

Natalie Chantagul²

Jayamala Madathil³

Abstract: The present investigation attempted to examine the direct and indirect influences of attachment style on well-being being mediated by prosocial behavior, social skills, self-esteem, and trust in others, and also to determine if the hypothesized paths would vary as a function of gender. A total of 1,110 Maldivian university and college students aged between 18 and 30 years consented to fill in a set of questionnaires. In the study two hierarchical models were posited, evaluated, and compared as to their efficacy in explaining the influence of the exogenous variable attachment style on the criterion variable of well-being, via the four cited mediating variables. Evaluation and comparison of the fit of these two nested models pointed to the direct path model as being more parsimonious and better fitting than the full indirect path model. Additionally, it was hypothesized that there are significant differences in the relationships proposed in the model, based on gender. The results confirmed that the patterns of structural relationships posited between attachment style and well-being operated similarly for the male and female Maldivian participants. In effect, no significant gender differences in the hypothesized relationships were found.

Keywords: Attachment Style, Well-Being, Prosocial Behaviour, Social Skills, Self-Esteem, and Trust in Others.

Introduction

Human beings, being social beings, are often intrigued by interpersonal relationships. The curiosity about interpersonal relationships (attachments) and the impact they have on an individual's life has led psychologists to pay much attention to the concept. One of the main theories of interpersonal relationships, the attachment theory was put forward by John Bowlby in the late 1950's. According to the theory, children form either a secure attachment or an insecure attachment with their caregiver or primary

¹ Ph.D. Candidate in Counselling Psychology, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.
jinanee@gmail.com

² Ph.D., Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.
nataliebm@hotmail.com

³ Ph.D., Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.

caretaker (e.g., mother, father, relative, guardian, nanny, etc.), based on the relationship they have with the caregiver during early childhood which, in turn, has an immense impact on the child later in life (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bowlby, 1982).

Prior research has linked attachment theory to well-being (Sable, 1997). Within the context of attachment theory, research has shown that people with secure attachment have higher level of well-being than those with insecure attachment (Sable, 1997; Zilberstein, 2014). Furthermore, past research (Dereli & Karakus, 2011; Fraley, 2010; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Newton, Laible, Carlo, Steele, & McGinley, 2014; Tamaki & Takahashi, 2013) suggest that prosocial behavior, social skills, self-esteem and trust in others could have a considerable impact on the relationship between attachment style and well-being. No known study has explored the direct and indirect relationship between attachment style and well-being, mediated by prosocial behavior, social skills, self-esteem, and trust in others. Most related studies were Western-based and used Western perspectives to explain the outcomes of the investigation. The current research attempted to take a fresh approach in examining the selected variables using a rarely used sample group, a Maldivian sample. In addition, as the present study was conducted in the Maldives, a country with strong cultural values, strict religious beliefs, and known to be a male-dominated society, it was important to investigate whether gender differences existed in the key variables under the study. The literature suggests that in cultures which holds traditional values highly stereotypical traits assigned to gender is emphasised more (Abdi, 2010). Hence, it becomes important to investigate whether gender in fact has an influence on the relationship between attachment style and well-being in the sample being used.

Objectives

The main purpose of the study was to evaluate the direct and indirect relationship between attachment styles and well-being, where prosocial behavior, social skills, self-esteem and trust in others were hypothesized to mediate the effects between attachment style and well-being. In addition, the study investigated whether the structure of the relationship between attachment style and well-being would vary as a function of gender.

Literature Review

Attachment Theory and Attachment Styles

In simple terms, attachment theory states that children form either a secure or insecure attachment with their caregiver, based on the experiences they had with their caregiver in early life (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Fraley, 2010). Secure attachment refers to the ability to form a positive relationship with the caregiver where the child is able to trust and feel comfortable being close to the caregiver, whereas insecure attachment refers to the inability to form a strong positive relationship or forming of an unhealthy relationship with the caregiver, where the child has issues with trust and being close to the caregiver (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Literature shows that there are four types of attachments (one secure and three insecure; dismissive, preoccupied and

unresolved/fearful) and these four attachment styles have been identified across cultures (Fraley, 2010; Levy, 2005). However, literature shows that while majority of European and western samples tend to form secure attachments, Asian samples tend to form insecure attachments (van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988; You & Malley-Morrison, 2000).

The theory also states that the experiences children have with their caregiver creates a mental representation of the self and others (i.e., a mental template) that shapes how they perceive themselves as well as others which, in turn, is believed to have an immense impact later on in life (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Fraley, 2010). Based on this, Bowlby hypothesized that children with secure attachment would see themselves in a positive light, others as being friendly and trustworthy, with the world being a safe place. On the other hand, children with insecure attachment would have a distorted sense of self, feel ambiguous about others, and see the world as a dangerous place (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Fraley, 2010; Mikulincer, Shaver & Pereg, 2003).

Attachment Style and Factors Improving Well-Being (Prosocial Behavior and Social Skills)

There are a number of factors which could influence well-being; however, for the purpose of the study ‘factors influencing well-being’ consist of prosocial behavior and social skills. Past research has shown that prosocial behavior and social skills significantly influence well-being, such that engaging in prosocial behavior or having good social skills lead to increased life satisfaction and better physical and mental health (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008; Kassin, Fein & Markus, 2011; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2000; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Wilson & Musick, 1999). Furthermore, literature shows that these two factors (i.e., prosocial behavior and social skills) are often used in therapeutic interventions due to its effectiveness in improving client's wellbeing (Frazier et al., 2013; Marder, Lebell, Zimmerman & Liberman, 1996). Hence, in the current study, prosocial behavior and social skills were included as ‘factors improving well-being’ as these factors have been found to increase the level of well-being.

Literature indicates that individuals with secure attachment style are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior and have better social skills than those with insecure attachment style (e.g., Dereli & Karakus, 2011; La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000; Tamaki & Takahashi, 2013; Van Lange, Otten, Bruin, & Joireman, 1997; Westmass & Silver, 2001). It can be stated that, based on attachment theory, individuals with secure attachment style tend to engage in prosocial behavior more and have better social skills than individuals with insecure attachment style (dismissing, preoccupied, and unresolved/fearful) as factors which may lead to the development of secure attachment style (i.e., being supportive, attentive) may facilitate the development of prosocial behavior and social skill (Newton et al., 2014; Tamaki & Takahashi, 2013). That is, parents who are supportive and attentive to their child's needs (i.e., parental actions that lead to the development of secure attachment) are more likely to foster in their children the value of helping those in need (Hastings, Utendale, & Sullivan, 2007; Newton et al., 2014). Similarly, parents who provide a safe and secure environment (i.e., which is often done by parents who has securely

attached children) to practice social skills are more likely to foster children with better social skills (Tamaki & Takahashi, 2013).

Factors Improving Well-Being (Prosocial Behavior and Social Skills) and Mental Representation of Self and Others (Self-Esteem and Trust in Others)

Mental representation of self and others is one of the main concepts of attachment theory. According to the theory, childhood interaction with caregiver creates a template of how individuals see themselves and others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). For the purpose of the study, mental representation of self refers to self-esteem as literature defines self-esteem as an individual's self-worth, which is similar to how attachment theory defines mental representation of self (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). For the purpose of the study, mental representation of others refer to an individual's trust in others as literature suggests that trust measures an individual's ability to have faith in others, which is again similar to how attachment theory defines mental representation of others (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994).

Past studies suggest that engaging prosocial behaviour is associated with positive feelings about oneself (Morrow-Howell, Kinnevy & Mann, 1999; Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario & Tang, 2003). Research done by the latter authors with volunteers demonstrated that engaging in voluntary work (prosocial behavior) makes volunteers feel good about themselves as they feel that they have done something rewarding. By the same token, there have been studies that showed a link between feeling good or positive about oneself and self-esteem, with increased positive feelings being associated with increased self-esteem (Brown & Mankowski, 1993; Kassin et al., 2011). Social skill is another factor deemed to have a significant impact on self-esteem. It had been found that people who have good social skills are more likely to have higher self-esteem than individuals with poor social skills (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). A meta-analysis conducted by Haney and Durlak (1998) involving 116 studies explored treatments that influenced self-esteem. It was found that treatments that focused on building social skills resulted in higher improvements in self-esteem than treatments that did not.

There is a lack of studies that show the link between factors improving well-being (prosocial behavior and social skills) and trust in others. However, research on both prosocial behavior and social skills show that having a high level of prosocial behavior and/or having good social skills leads to increased social contact, which in turn had been reported to foster trust in others (Oliver & Wong, 2003; Stolle, Soroka & Johnston, 2008; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner & Christ, 2011).

Mental Representation Self and Others (Self-Esteem and Trust in Others) and Well-Being

According to attachment theory, mental representation of self and others governs an individual's future interactions, thoughts, behaviors, and emotions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Since this mental representation is believed to influence many of the individual's functioning, an assumption could be made that mental representation would have considerable impact on the individual's state of well-being. For the purpose of the study, well-being is referred to psychological well-being, which is composed of "affective well-being" (how an individual feels) and "cognitive well-being" (individual's thoughts and judgements). Past research has established that both

affective and cognitive well-being are key factors that contribute towards an individual's overall well-being (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Laukka, 2007; Siddall, Huebner & Jiang, 2013).

There is ample literature on the association between self-esteem and well-being, as the concept of self-esteem has become a popular topic since research showed that self-esteem influences various aspects of life, including well-being (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008; Orth, Maes, & Schmitt, 2015). Self-esteem research provided evidence that people with high self-esteem are generally healthier, happier, and more satisfied with life than people with low self-esteem (Kassin et al., 2011). Research on the factor of trust, both at institutional and individual level, indicate that having a high level of trust improves well-being (Helliwell, 2003; Helliwell & Wang, 2010; Hudson, 2006; Kramer, 1999). For instance, studies conducted in organizational settings have established that having a high level of trust in others in the workplace is associated with higher level of well-being and better performance (Helliwell & Huang, 2011; Mayer & Davis, 1999). Similarly, studies have shown that having a high level of social trust is linked to higher levels of happiness in Taiwanese samples (Chang, 2009) and to high level of life satisfaction in Chinese samples (Yip et al., 2007).

Taking attachment theory into consideration, it can be assumed that individuals with secure attachment style are able to display higher levels of prosocial behavior and have better social skills, leading to seeing oneself and others more positively, resulting in higher levels of well-being. Thus, it can be inferred that there is a link among attachment styles, factors improving well-being (prosocial behavior and social skills), mental representation of self and others, and state of well-being.

Conceptual Framework

Gender Difference and the Key Variables

Gender difference refers to how society perceives male and female sexes; that is, how society defines characteristics associated with males and females (Archer & Lloyd, 2002). Male and female genders are often perceived in a different light; for instance, males are repeatedly stereotyped as competitive, outspoken, dominant, aggressive, tough, and ambitious, while females are generally stereotyped as gentle, emotional, considerate, kind, understanding, and devoted to others (Archer & Lloyd, 2002; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 1991). These stereotypic beliefs about males and females are also seen in cross-cultural research (Archer & Lloyd, 2002).

As previously stated, according to attachment theory, mental representations (internal working model) influence an individual's thoughts, behaviors, and emotions, all of which contribute to a higher level of well-being (Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Attachment theory also states that some types of attachment styles have better mental representations than others, suggesting that certain styles lead to higher well-being than others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer, 1998). Past research had shown that males, in general, tend to have higher levels of well-being than females (e.g., Feingold, 1994; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2006). In addition, males have been found to adopt the dismissing attachment style which is linked with elevated self-

esteem (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). With the Maldives being a male-dominated society, it would be interesting and important to investigate gender differences in the key variables of the study, using a Maldivian sample.

Additionally, past research had demonstrated that females have higher levels of prosocial behavior (e.g., Barry & Wentzel, 2006; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010) and better social skills than males (Abdi, 2010; Walker, 2005; Walker, Irving, & Berthelsen, 2002), whereas males have higher levels of self-esteem than females (Feingold, 1994; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2001; Twenge & Campbell, 2001), while research findings on trust in others remain inconsistent (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002; Bohnet & Zeckhauser, 2004; Croson & Buchan, 1999; Feingold, 1994; Hooghe, Reesken, Stolle, & Trappers, 2009). Thus, given the present study's hypothesized model (Figure 1), it becomes relevant and interesting to investigate whether gender has an impact on the indirect model, as these variables affect gender in different ways when considered individually.

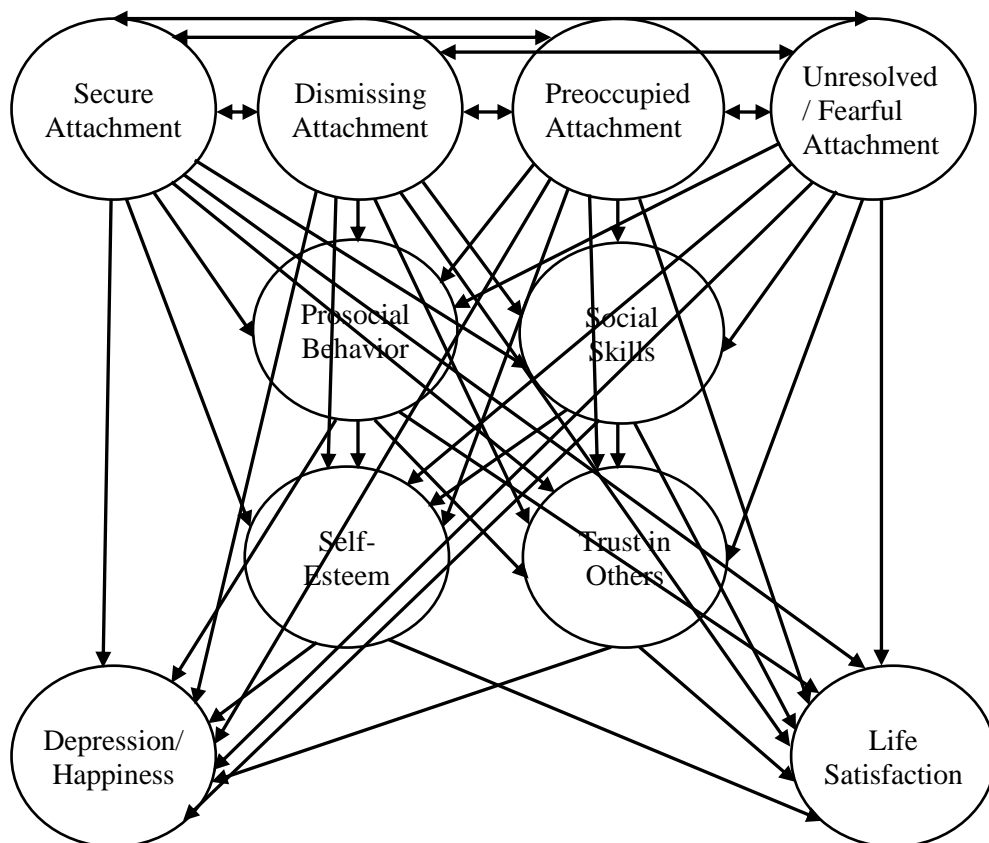


Figure 1: Full Indirect Mediation Model in Which the Four Attachment Styles (I.E., Secure, Dismissing, Preoccupied, and Unresolved/Fearful) Were Hypothesized to Indirectly Influence Well-Being (Depression-Happiness and Life Satisfaction), Being Mediated by Factors Improving Well-Being (Prosocial Behavior and Social Skills) As Well As by Mental Representation of the Self (Self-Esteem) and Mental Representation of Others (Trust in Others)

Method

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 1,110 Maldivian university and college students (male: $n=326$, 29.4%; females: $n=784$, 70.6%) whose age ranged from 18 to 30 years and above, with a mean age within the range of 18 to 25. The participants were obtained by convenience sampling.

Materials

The study employed a five-part self-administered survey questionnaire. Part one consisted of a researcher-constructed questionnaire designed to assess respondents' demographic characteristics. Part two consisted of 30-item Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ) developed by D. W. Griffin and K. Bartholomew in 1994 measuring participants attachment style. Part three consisted of 14-item Adapted Self-Reported Altruism Scale (ASRS) developed by Rushton (Rushton, Christjohn, & Fekken, 1981) measuring prosocial behavior and 35-item Problem Solving Inventory (PSI) developed by P. P. Heppner and C. H. Petersen in 1982 measuring social skills. Part four consisted of 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by M. Rosenberg in 1965 measuring self-esteem and six-item General Trust Scale (GTS) developed by T. Yamagishi and M. Yamagishi in 1994 measuring participants' level of trust. Part five consisted of six-item Short Depression-Happiness Scale (SDHD) developed by S. Joseph, P. Linley, J. Harwood, C. A. Lewis and P. McCollam in 2004 measuring individual's depression and happiness level and five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by E. Diener, R. Emmons, J. Larsen and S. Griffin in 1985 measuring life satisfaction.

Procedure

The current study used multi-model path analysis via Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to investigate the direct and indirect relationship between attachment styles and wellbeing. This included conducting a confirmatory factor analysis to develop a measurement model with an acceptable fit to the data and, then, conducting the path analysis of the achieved model. This analysis allowed for direct comparison of the direct and indirect model's goodness-of fit, to see which model provided the best explanation of the hypothesized structural relationship. The study also used multi-group path analysis via SEM to investigate whether or not the pattern of structural relationships presented on the hypothesized path model followed the same dynamics for the two groups (male *vs.* female).

Results/Findings

The results of the study showed that attachment style had a direct as well as an indirect effect on well-being. Table 1 showed that the two models provided a very good fit relative to their null or independence models (i.e., the posited models represented between 93.8% to 98.1% improvement in fit over their null or independence models), and support the hypothesized structure of the posited direct and full path models. The RMSEA value of 0.046 for the direct model is also within the range suggested by Browne and Cudeck (1993) and indicates that the model fits the population co-

variance matrix well. The RMSEA value of 0.192 for the full path model indicates some errors of approximation when compared to the population co-variance matrix. The analysis also yielded Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) values of 117.335 and 691.210 for the direct and full path models, respectively. Comparing the AIC measure for the two hierarchical models, it is evident that the direct model provided a lower AIC value (117.335) than the full path model (691.210). These parsimony fit indices indicate that the direct model is both more parsimonious and better fitting than the full path model.

Table 1: Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Values, Incremental Fit Indices (NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI), Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI), and Model Comparison

Model	χ^2 (<i>N</i> =1110)	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	AIC	RMSEA
<i>Model 1</i>									
Direct Model	67.335	<.001	20	0.973	0.981	0.966	0.981	117.335	0.046
<i>Model 2</i>									
Full Path Model	547.210	<.001	159	0.938	0.955	0.940	0.955	691.210	0.192
<i>Model Comparison</i>									
Model 1 vs. Model 2	479.875	<.001	139						

Results of the direct model revealed that dismissing attachment is significantly and positively related to the criterion variables of happiness (Beta=0.10) and life satisfaction (Beta=0.076). The findings also indicate that the attachment styles of preoccupied attachment and unresolved/fearful attachment are significantly and negatively related to the criterion variables of happiness (Beta=-0.221 and Beta=-0.072) and life satisfaction (Beta=0.251 and Beta=-0.166).

Results of the indirect model revealed that, of the three attachment styles, only the preoccupied attachment style has both direct and indirect relationships with the criterion variables of depression/happiness and life satisfaction. Thus, for the direct relationship, the higher the participants rated their attachment style as preoccupied, the higher their reported level of life satisfaction (Beta=0.060). For the indirect relationships, the higher the participants rated their attachment style as preoccupied, the lower their reported level of problem-solving/social skills (Beta=-0.144); the lower their reported level of problem-solving/social skills, the lower their reported levels of self-esteem (Beta=0.556) and trust in others (Beta=0.166) and, subsequently, the lower their reported levels of happiness (Beta=0.217 and Beta=0.116, respectively) and life satisfaction (Beta=0.690 and Beta=0.328, respectively). The dismissing attachment style was found to be indirectly related to the two criterion variables of depression/happiness and life satisfaction. Thus, the higher the participants rated their attachment style as dismissing, the higher their reported levels of prosocial behavior and problem-solving/social skills (Beta=0.078 and Beta=0.126, respectively); the higher their reported levels of prosocial behavior and problem-solving/social skills, the higher their reported levels of self-esteem (Beta=0.081 and Beta=0.556, respectively) and trust in others (Beta=0.181 and Beta=0.166, respectively) and, subsequently, the higher their reported levels of

happiness (Beta=0.217 and Beta=0.116, respectively) and life satisfaction (Beta=0.690 and Beta=0.328, respectively). The unresolved/fearful attachment style was also found to be indirectly related to the two criterion variables of depression/happiness and life satisfaction. Thus, the higher the participants rated their attachment style as unresolved/fearful, the lower their reported level of problem-solving/social skills (Beta=-0.132); the lower their reported level of problem-solving/social skills, the lower their reported levels of self-esteem and trust in others (Beta=0.556 and Beta=0.166, respectively) and, subsequently, the lower their reported levels of happiness (Beta=0.217 and Beta=0.116, respectively) and life satisfaction (Beta=0.690 and Beta=0.328, respectively).

It should be noted, secure attachment style which was measured by RSQ was excluded from the path model as the five items measuring the construct failed to achieve acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of -.516).

The study also showed that there were no significant differences between males and females. This suggests that the hypothesized pattern of structural relationships (between the exogenous, mediator, and criterion variables) posited on the basis of the theoretical assumptions underlying the influences of the three attachment styles (dismissing, preoccupied, and unresolved/fearful), prosocial behavior, social or problem-solving skills, self-esteem, and trust in others (mediator variables) on the participants' levels of depression/happiness and life satisfaction (criterion variables), operated similarly for the male and female participants.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that attachment style had a direct as well as an indirect effect on well-being. Two hierarchical models were posited, evaluated, and compared as to their efficacy in explaining the influence of the exogenous variable attachment style on the criterion variable of well-being, via the four cited mediating variables. After a series of statistical procedures, it became evident that the direct path model was more parsimonious and better fitting than the full (indirect) path model. The reason behind this could be that while the mediating variables had a mediating effect, it is possible that other factor(s) (beyond the scope of the study) may have had an influence on the relationship between attachment styles and wellbeing. These factors may have had a stronger impact on the relationship between attachment styles and wellbeing leading the indirect path model to be as strong as the direct path model.

Direct Relationship Between Attachment Styles and Well-being

Results of data analysis indicated that the attachment style of dismissing attachment is significantly and positively related to the criterion variables while preoccupied attachment and unresolved/fearful attachment are significantly and negatively related to the criterion variables.

The above results are consistent with past research. Literature shows that individuals with dismissing attachment style has a higher level of happiness and a lower depression level than the other two insecure attachment styles (Murphy & Bates 1997; Webster, 1997, 1998). According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), since people who adopt a dismissing attachment style are believed to have a positive view of the self due to them having high self-esteem as a way of coping with their

insecurities, it makes sense for individuals with a dismissing attachment style to have higher level of happiness, lower depression level, and high level of life satisfaction. Past research has also shown that individuals with preoccupied and unresolved/fearful attachment styles tend to report lower positive emotions and higher negative emotions (Ciechanowski, Sullivan, Jensen, Romano, & Summers, 2003; Shiota, Keltner, & John, 2006). Attachment theory posits that individuals with preoccupied and unresolved / fearful attachment style have a negative view of the self; thus, it could be argued that one reason why individuals with these two insecure attachment styles report higher levels of negative emotion is lack of confidence in themselves.

Indirect Relationship between Attachment Styles and Well-Being

The current findings indicate that dismissing attachment style has a significant indirect influence on well-being, being influenced by the four mediator variables, such that the higher the participants' dismissing attachment style, the higher their prosocial behavior and social skills; the higher their prosocial behavior and social skills, the higher their self-esteem and the more they trusted others, leading them to have a higher level of well-being (i.e., higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction). The results also showed that both preoccupied and unresolved/fearful attachment styles have a significant indirect relationship with well-being via three mediator variables (social skills, self-esteem and trust). Thus, a high level of preoccupied and unresolved/fearful attachment style leads to poorer social skills, lower self-esteem, and lower trust in others, consequently resulting in a lower level of well-being (lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction). Additionally, the study showed that individuals with preoccupied attachment style have a significant direct positive relationship with life satisfaction as well.

The present study focused on specific attachment styles and showed that individuals with dismissing attachment style have a high level of prosocial behavior and social skills. This particular result deviates from the literature which indicates that individuals with an insecure attachment style engage in far less prosocial behavior and tend to project poor social skills. However, this finding is not peculiar if considered from a theoretical point. As previously highlighted, attachment theory pays specific attention to how individuals perceive themselves as well as others. In this context, it can be said that individuals with dismissing attachment style have an overly positive view of oneself (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). This over-confidence in oneself could lead individuals with a dismissing attachment style to have the confidence to help others more (i.e., have a high level of prosocial behavior), without worrying about what people might say. Additionally, it is not surprising if this increase in confidence also results in people developing better social skills as they gain more opportunities to mingle with others. The current finding that participants with a preoccupied or unresolved/fearful attachment style have poor social skills is supported by past research (Dereli & Karakus, 2011; Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005; Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007; Tamaki & Takahashi, 2013). This situation may be due to individuals with a preoccupied or unresolved/fearful attachment style having a negative view of the self and not having the confidence to interact with others which, in turn, hinder the development of social skills. Interestingly, the present study revealed that individuals

with preoccupied attachment style have a significant positive relationship with life satisfaction. This finding deviates from past research which claims that individuals with an insecure attachment style has low life satisfaction (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2011; Man, 1991). A reason behind this could be that participants from a small island nation which values group cohesion and group harmony and sees others positively might enhance these values. Individuals with preoccupied attachment style have a positive view of others and this may lead them to have high level of life satisfaction which allows them to build stronger group cohesion.

Hypothesized Model and Gender

The finding suggests that there are no significant differences in the patterns of structural relationships posited for the male and female participants' attachment style models. A possible explanation of this current finding may have to do with the possibility that the research sample group being composed of college and university students, both male and female participants may have likely displayed a similar state of mind, in spite of the fact that the Maldivian community has gender bias norms favouring male dominance characteristics. Since both groups are enrolled in higher education, and to survive in a male-dominated community, the females in the group may have learned to develop a masculine state of mind. This is not an unusual situation; there have been studies on the issue of leadership (often associated with males) which showed that females in leadership roles often have to take on masculine traits (i.e., stereotypical male characteristics) in order to survive in the workplace (Denmark, 1993; Kawakami, White, & Langer, 2000). Similarly, studies on females in traditional male occupations also show that in order to succeed, females often have to take on masculine characteristics (Sasson-Levy, 2003; Scandura & Ragins, 1993). Thus, in order to survive and succeed in Maldives' male dominated society, the female participants in the current study may have had to develop traits which are considered masculine, resulting in these females showing a similar pattern as males.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the relationship between attachment style and well-being as well as the factors which may impact on this relationship (prosocial behavior, social skills, self-esteem, and trust in others) among Maldivian university and college students. The study showed that attachment style influences well-being even in small island nation sample groups. The current study demonstrated that individuals with a dismissing attachment style (an insecure attachment pattern) have high level of well-being while those with preoccupied and unresolved/fearful attachment style have low level of well-being. Furthermore, this study revealed that prosocial behavior, social skills, self-esteem, and trust in others effectively mediate the relationship between attachment style and well-being which, in itself, is a novel finding. In conclusion, the current findings contributed to the existing literature on attachment style and well-being by providing data from a sample which researchers generally neglect in scientific endeavours.

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