

THE IMPACT OF ATTACHMENT, CAREGIVING, AND FAMILY DYNAMICS ON CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

The main theme of this project is the child's early emotional development. Within this context, the purposes of the present project are:

1. to assess the quality of the child's attachment to the caregiver with objective methods
2. to investigate mothers' caregiving behaviors
3. to investigate culture-specific caregiving practices and parenting styles
4. to examine the effects of family dynamics (parenting styles, quality of communication within the family, marital conflict, stress, relationship satisfaction, and differences in socioeconomic status) on child's attachment style and maternal caregiving behaviors
5. to predict the impact of attachment, caregiving, and family dynamics on the child's internalizing (e.g emotional distress, low self- esteem) and externalizing behaviors (e.g aggression, proclivity to violence, relationship discord, and anger), hence to identify the related protective and risk factors
6. to adapt two commonly used measurement tools, the Attachment Q- Sort (AQS; Waters, 1995; Waters & Dean, 1985) and Maternal Behavior Q- Sort (MBQS; Pederson & Moran, 1995), to the Turkish culture.

The sample of this study will consist of children from two age groups, 2-5 ($N= 360$) and 8-11 ($N= 1200$), and their parents. The part that will be conducted on 2-5 year-old children and their parents will include six hours of comprehensive observation, interview, and questionnaire application. For the second group, children from second to fifth grades and their parents will be randomly selected from four cities to be able to represent different socio-economic statuses.

Within the scope of this project, the AQS, one of the most frequently used measures of early attachment in Western countries, will be adapted to Turkish culture in order to test individual differences in attachment in early childhood. In addition, to examine individual differences in maternal sensitivity using standard measures, MBQS will be adapted to Turkish. Furthermore, considering the fact that the nature of caregiving behaviors is influenced by cultural factors culture-specific caregiving behaviors will be investigated employing semi-structured interviews.

Attachment and caregiving behaviors are associated with both family dynamics and temperamental factors. Temperament will be out of scope of this study. However, given that attachment and caregiving behaviors are the essential parts of the family dynamics, the quality of marital relationship and parenting styles will also be investigated in this study. Thus, this research aims at studying the relationship between attachment and caregiving behaviors within the context of family dynamics.

The most important contribution of this research, considering variables of interest, is to identify the protective and risk factors at early childhood for intervention purposes. To this end, the influence of attachment, caregiving behaviors, and family dynamics on the child's internalizing (especially psychological well-being) and externalizing behaviors (especially interpersonal problems and aggression) will be investigated. In addition, this study will also examine the anticipated protective role of caregiving behaviors specific to Turkish culture, such as the high value given to children and maternal unconditional positive regard.

Keywords: Attachment in Childhood, Caregiving, Parenting Styles, Family Dynamics