

Parent Attachment as Achievement Predictor upon Adolescent Subjective Well-Being

Nur Azizah

Merdeka University of Malang

lez_zadream@yahoo.com

Abstract. Issues related to adolescent subjective well-being emerges as important issues to be concerned on, especially as being related to the fact that current environment has given significant pressures towards their development. A subjective well-being is a subjective feeling as well as individual evaluation upon himself/herself. Regarding to these numerous pressures, a parent attachment becomes very important to be developed. The attachment is an affection relationship that has been developed since an earlier birth (infant period). The aim of this paper is discovering how parent attachment becomes achievement predictor upon the adolescent subjective-well being. Based on several literatures, it has been found that there are significant differences between the types of attachment and adolescent subjective well-being. Those with secure attachment have higher subjective well-being compared to those with unsecured one. Meanwhile, those with avoidant attachment also have higher subjective well-being than those with ambivalent one. The results of this study have showed that adolescents with secure attachment will be attributed to the positive relationships including intimacy and happiness while those with avoidant attachment will be attributed to the lack of both intimacy and commitment. Furthermore, an individual with ambivalent attachment will be attributed to the lack of happiness.

Keywords: *Attachment, Subjective well-being, Adolescent*

Introduction

A subjective well-being is an important aspect that should be achieved throughout human's life due to the desire of happiness (Argyle, 2001), especially during adolescence. Santrock (2002) explains that adolescence is a transition period from childhood for developing, not only the physical development but also cognitive, social, and emotional ones. The adolescence boundary based on Hurlock (1999) ranges from 12 to 18 years old. Monk, et.al. (2004) provide boundary for adolescence from 12 to 21 years old. Meanwhile, Stanley Hall (in Santrock, 2002) refers that an adolescence ranges from 12 to 23 years old. Similar to the previous development period, the development in adolescence is also colored by various interactions such as: genetic, biologic, environment, and social (Santrock, 2011).

In regards to the development, an adolescent faces a rapid physical changes, experiences and fresh developmental duties. Havighurst (in Hurlock, 1999) explains that the acceptance of physical changes, mature relationship among peer groups, independence, and responsibility in social role are several duties that should be dealt with during adolescence. Moreover, in this period, the changes also cover the perspective change like being more abstract and idealistic. It also seems connected or not connected to previous development period, which is childhood. Stanley Hall (in Santrock, 2011) proposes a "storm and stress" perspective to convey that adolescence is a flame-up period colored by conflicts and mood changes.

In adolescence, an individual faces challenges to discover who s/he is, what s/he will become, and which direction he will be through in his life. Those are psycho-social phase according to Erik Erikson (in Santrock, 2011) which is called as "identity vs. role confusing". They are to face numerous roles as adults. If they are capable of exploring these roles in fair and positive ways, the positive identity therefore will be achieved. Otherwise, they will find the role confusing.

Related to subjective well-being, Diener (in Papalia, 2008) explains it as a subjective feeling as well as individual evaluation towards himself. Moreover, it also becomes basic construction conveying information related to how individual should evaluate himself/herself based on the quality and life experiences (Ryff & Marshall, 1999). Diener (in Snyder et. al., 2007) also adds that subjective well-being emerges as a combination of positive (without any negative influence) and general life satisfaction.

The adolescent subjective well-being becomes an interesting issue to be concerned on due to current adolescent condition which is having many serious problems and leading into intense desire to suicide (Eryilmaz, 2012). Psycho-social stress in adolescent and his/her fragile characteristics lead them into a suicide strain (Beautrais, in Eryilmaz, 2012). Most of suicides in adolescent are triggered from psychological causes such as: the failure in solving problems, impulsive, and depression (Kim & Kim in Eryilmaz, 2012). Several factors causing adolescent suicide include academic failure, communication issues, parents' divorce, emotional problems in family, the death of family member, low socio-economic status, physical or sexual abuse (Eskin, Thatcher in Eryilmaz, 2012).

The importance of adolescent subjective well-being has been found in several studies stating that the need of satisfaction and reason to live can be significantly used as model to increase the adolescent subjective well-being (Eryilmaz, 2012). The life satisfaction in early adolescence is also related to self satisfaction, optimistic stance, relationship with school, neighbors, family and friends (Eva, Kimberly, Schonert, 2011). Personalities (temperament and character) as well as strategies used also contribute to the increase of adolescent subjective well-being (Ali, Trevor, Danilo, 2012).

Bronfenbrenner & Morris (1998) state that the most influencing environmental factors to the development of adolescent subjective well-being include interactions with family and other people, and the surrounding micro system. The results of many studies also present that generally there are two closest micro systems influencing the development of adolescent subjective well-being directly. Those are family and peer group. Family relationship emerges as predictor to achieve the adolescent subjective well-being.

Adolescent relationship with his/her closest micro system, which is family, could not be apart from the attachment developed between children and parents. Berk (2000) says that the attachment is a strong emotional connection felt by individual towards particular figure leading into safety and pleasure in many depressing situations. Theoretically, the attachment is mainly attributed to the relationship quality between baby and babysitter, especially mother.

Based on the presented elaboration, this paper aims to understand the correspondence between parent attachment and adolescent subjective well-being. Can the attachment become a predictor of adolescent subjective well-being?

Review of Related Literatures

The Definition of Subjective Well-being

Term "subjective well-being" is often called as happiness (Argyle, 2001). Diener (2000) explains that *subjective well-being* is not different from happiness. The difference between these two terms lays on the use. The term "happiness" is a general practical term while the term "subjective well-being" is a scientific term for happiness. According to Diener (2004), *subjective well being* is an individual evaluation towards hisher life covering cognitive and emotional components.

Subjective well-being can be defined as a condition of life satisfaction. The life satisfaction defined here is a degree by which an individual measures overall satisfaction of life as good or beneficial. *Subjective well-being* refers to life quality felt by an individual consisting of three main components: positive affections (feeling and pleasant mood), negative affections (several emotional conditions i.e. feeling anger, sad, and disappointed), and general life satisfaction (Suldo et. al., 2009).

Aspects of Adolescent Subjective Well-being

Diener (2004) explains that there are two main aspects of adolescent subjective well-being, which are affective aspect and life-satisfaction aspect.

Affective aspect (happiness): affection is an individual's psychological response which emerges immediately after stimuli. Commonly, affection is triggered by stimuli (Synder & Lopez, 2007). This affection is divided into two types: positive and negative affections. A Positive affection is defined as a pleasant emotional depiction such as feeling pleasant. Meanwhile, a negative affection is unpleasant emotional depiction such as feeling disappointed, anger, frightened, and sad (Diener, 2004).

Cognitive component (life satisfaction): life satisfaction is an individual ability to enjoy their experiences pleasantly. Moreover, it is also regarded as overall cognitive assessment made by an individual while considering their happiness related to either overall or partial aspects such as family, environment, peer group, and himself/herself.

Factors Influencing Adolescent Subjective Well-being

Hurlock (1999) states that related concept of adolescent subjective well-being has several factors that might influence the adolescent subjective well-being. The factors are abbreviated into 3A, which are acceptance, affection, and achievement. Those three factors actually work on all development periods; however, they mostly influence an individual in both childhood and adolescence. An individual remains depending on his/her family and could not control his/her surroundings as what adults could.

Generally, the study conducted by Diener et. al. (2004) has shown that there are various factors influencing adolescent subjective well-being as follows:

Personality: Related to this factor, several studies have figured out that an individual with high extroversion, who seems friendly as well as to show a high sensitivity upon achievement, tends to have higher degree of positive emotions. Meanwhile, a neurotic one tends to get anxious, guilty, and depression.

Adaptation: Human has a valuable ability to adapt very easily to both positive and negative life condition.

Social interaction: closest and trusted social interaction can be used to achieve subjective well-being. The ratio between those with high pleasure and less pleasure shows that those with high pleasure tend to have higher degree of friendship, family support, and ability to build a romantic relationship.

Culture: Related to this factor, there are two major explained concerns, which are individualistic and collective. Individualistic culture is a group of people which culturally emphasizes personal freedom and tends to place it above the collective goal. Meanwhile, collective culture tend to concern on adapting and fulfilling responsibilities related to social role that might not be found in individualistic culture, which tends to provide personal pleasure and experience.

The Definition of Attachment

Attachment is an affective bond which permanently stays within an individual and is indicated by a tendency to look for and keep intimacy over attached figure, especially as s/he faces under-pressure situations. According to Santrock (2011) attachment is a strong emotional bond between two individuals and they are keen on doing anything to keep the bond. Berk (2000) explains that attachment is a strong emotional bond felt by an individual upon particular figure that leads into safety and pleasure. Theoretically, attachment is mainly attributed to the relationship quality between baby and babysitter, especially mother.

Santrock (2011) describes Freud's theory informing that a baby will be very close to parents or surrounding entities that provide an oral satisfaction. Meanwhile, Eric Erikson explains that physical pleasure is also important. It might be seen in one first year of life which is regarded as phase of trust vs. mistrust. Baby's trust in this phase is a basic attachment as well as lifetime hope. Last, Bowlby explains that baby and mother will naturally bond an attachment.

Several Phases of Attachment Development

Attachment process of individual could not be developed in all sudden. Instead, it should be developed gradually in various phases starting from general baby attachment to real parent attachment. Schaffer (in Hetherington & Parke, 2003) states that attachment exists through four phases:

Pre-attachment phase: This phase exists from birth to 2 months old. In this phase, a baby could not give response to known nor unknown people.

Attachment in the making phase: In this phase, a baby is undergoing an attachment to his closest figure. It happens from 2 months to 7 months old. A baby in this phase is learning to differentiate between known and unknown figures gradually. Furthermore, this phase generally shows baby's tendency to his babysitter. Despite this condition, baby in this phase still could not protest or resist as being apart from his parents though s/he has been able to differentiate between his parents and strangers.

Clear-cut attachment phase: an attachment in this phase happens from 7 months to 2 years old. This attachment seems exceptional since baby starts to find closest attachment towards particular figure.

Goal corrected partnership phase: In this last phase, it exists from 2 years old and so on. In a line with the cognitive development, a child has started to realize others' feelings, goals as well as plans used as consideration for determining his/her act. In this phase, moreover, s/he will become a peer in planning how his/her attachment towards his/her parents will come to an end.

Types of attachment

Basically, attachment is divided into two main types: *secure* and *insecure attachments*. Further, *insecure attachment* is divided into two types, which are: *avoidant* and *ambivalent* or *resistant ambivalent*. Papalia et. al. (2004) explains several types of attachment as follows:

Secure attachment: in an alien-situation trial, a baby with secure attachment shows that s/he will be crying and protesting while his/her mother is leaving him/her behind, and feeling happy while she is back. S/he makes his/her mother as secure base.

Avoidant attachment: a baby with this attachment rarely cries when his/her mother leaves, and s/he avoids his/her mother when she is back. S/he gets angry, shows flat affections, prefers playing with his toys, and continuously avoids his/her mother when she tries to give attention.

Ambivalent or resistant ambivalent: a baby with this attachment gets anxious by the time his/her mother leaves him/her and becomes so sad when his/her mother really leaves him/her. When his/her mother comes back, s/he tends to show ambivalence by looking for an attachment towards his/her mother yet in a mean time s/he also rejects it.

Correspondence between Parent Attachment and Adolescent Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being is an important entity that an individual should achieve throughout his/her life, especially during adolescence. It could lead into pleasant feelings and avoids the psychological problems (Suldo, 2008). Several studies have shown the influence of parent and peer-group attachment that might become a predictor of subjective well-being despite various influences as a result of different class level and life domain (Amanda, Richard, 2004). Parent attachment generally helps adolescent to adjust the life expectation, self-esteem, and depression (Tikc, Amanda, 2011).

Rice & Dolgin (2002) state that there are three major characteristics of attachment, namely: *secure attachment*, *anxious attachment*, and *avoidant attachment*. The differences among them can be known that an individual with *secure attachment*, having consistently kind parents, will tend to feel more confident and open to others. Meanwhile, an individual with *anxious attachment* shows the indication that s/he feel anxious, does not feel safe making friends. Instead, s/he needs being loved. The individual with this attachment is commonly resulted from inconsistent parents. Moreover, an individual with *avoidant attachment* tends to be reclusive and fear of being hurt due to cold and avoidant parents.

According to Bowlby (in Bayrami et. al., 2012), mother attachment will bond a particular attachment influencing an idea about himself/herself, others, and how to manage an interpersonal relationship. The effect of attachment quality throughout life periods will last forever. It explains the differences among individuals in solving internal problems and managing interpersonal relationship. Ainsworth (in Santrock, 2011) describes that a secure attachment during the first year life provides an important base for child psychological development in the future.

Related to the types of attachment, a study conducted by Bayrami et. al. (2012) has found that there is a significant difference between types of attachment and subjective well-being. A child with *secure attachment* achieved higher subjective well-being compared to a child with *insecure attachment*. The result of this study shows that an individual with secure attachment will be attributed to positive characteristics including intimacy and happiness while an individual with *avoidant attachment* will be attributed to lack of intimacy and commitment. Furthermore, an individual with *ambivalent attachment* will be attributed to lack of happiness in relationship with others.

Parent attachment in adolescence can develop social competence and social well-being among adolescents as reflected in particular characteristics like self-esteem, emotional adjustment, and physical health. An adolescent with secure attachment tends to have higher self-esteem and emotional well-being. Therefore, a strong attachment of parents during adolescence might play a role as adaptive function which avoids adolescent from anxiety, potency of depression, or even emotional pressures related to transition phase from childhood to adolescence (Allen et. al. in Santrock, 2002).

Conclusion

Based on the previously elaborated review of related literatures, it can be concluded that subjective well-being is an individual evaluation towards his/her life covering two main aspects, which are affective aspect (happiness) and cognitive aspect related to life satisfaction. Subjective well-being in adolescent is considerably important to be discussed due to current condition which disrupts adolescent's psychic. It is also due to the notion that subjective well-being is an important entity to be achieved throughout life periods, especially during adolescence. Subjective well-being in adolescent might be defined from family relationship, especially parent attachment. Parent attachment is an affective relationship lasting forever since early life. This attachment significantly influences subjective well-being based on several studies which figure out that an adolescent with secure attachment has positive relationship with others, especially in terms of intimacy and happiness compared to an adolescent with insecure attachment.

The correlation between parent attachment and subjective well-being in adolescent can be found through the findings depicting that an adolescent with secure attachment tends to have higher ability in developing his/her social competence including self-esteem development, emotional adjustment, physical health, etc. Therefore, the existence of parent attachment becomes a parameter for adolescent to achieve life satisfaction and happiness.

References

- Argyle, M. (2001). *The Psychology of Happiness*. New York: Routledge.
- Amanda, B. N., Richard, J. N., (2004). The Influence of Parent and Peer Attachments on Life Satisfaction in Middle Childhood and Early Adolescence. *Journal Social Indicators Research*. 66: 35-60
- Ali, A. N., Trevor, A. Danilo, G. (2012). Adolescents Happiness-Increasing Strategies, Temperament and Character: Mediation Models on Subjective Well Being. *Journal Health*. Vol.4, No.10, 802-810.
- Bayrami, M. Heshmati, R. Mohammadpour, V. Gholamzadeh, M. Hasanloo, O, H. Moslemifar, M. (2012). Happiness and Willingness to Communicate in Three Attachment Style: A Study on College Students. *Journals of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46: 294–298.
- Berk, L. E. (2000). *Child Development 5 th ed*. Boston: allyn and Bacon
- Bronfenbrenner, V. & Morris, P. (1998) *The Ecology of Developmental Process*, in Damon, W. and Lerner, R. (eds) *Handbook of Child Psychology* (Fifth Edition, Volume 1). *Theoretical models of human development*. New York: Wiley
- Diener, R. B., Diener, E., & Tamir, M. (2004) The Psychology of Subjective Well Being. *Daedalus*, 123,2. 18-25

- Eva, O. Kimberly, A. Schonert, R. Bruno, D. Z., (2011). Life Satisfaction in Early Adolescence: Personal, Neighborhood, School, Family, and Peer Influences. *Journal Youth Adolescence*. 40: 889-901
- Eryilmaz, A. (2012). A Model for Subjective Well-Being in Adolescence: Need Satisfaction and Reasons for Living. *Journals of Soc Indic Res* 107: 561–574.
- Hetherington, E. M. & Parke, R. D. (2003). *Child psychology: A contemporary viewpoint*. 5 th Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Hurlock, E. B. (1999). *Psikologi Perkembangan: Suatu Pendekatan Sepanjang Rentang Kehidupan Edisi Kelima*. Jakarta: Erlangga
- Mönks, F. J., Knoers, A. M. P., & Haditono, S. R. (2004). *Psikologi Perkembangan: Pengantar dalam Berbagai Bagainya*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Papalia, D. E, Old, S.W, & Feldman, R.D. (2008). *Human Development*. Boston: MC Graw Hill.
- Papalia, D. E., Olds, S. W. & Feldman, R. D. (2004). *Human development*. Ninth Edition. Boston: McGraw Hill
- Rice. F.P., & Dolgin, K. G. (2002). *The adolescent development: Relationship and culture* (10th ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Ryff, C.D & Marshall, V.W. (1999). *The self and society in aging process*. New York: Springer Company, Inc.
- Santrock, J. W. (2002). *Life - Span Development: Perkembangan Masa Hidup Edisi Kelima Jilid 1*. Jakarta: Erlangga
- Santrock, J. W. (2002). *Adolescence Perkembangan Remaja*. Edisi Keenam. Terjemahan. Jakarta: Erlangga
- Santrock, J. W. (2011). *Life - Span Development: Perkembangan Masa Hidup Edisi Ketigabelas Jilid 1*. Jakarta: Erlangga
- Suldo, S.M. (2009). Parent-child relationship in R. Gilam, E.S. Huebner & M.J. Furlong *handbook of positive psychology in school*. Taylor & Francis Routledge, Newyork.
- Synder, C. R., Shane, & Lopez, J. (2007). *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Exploration of Human Strenght*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Tick, N. S., Amanda, S. Y., (2011). God Attachment, Mother Attachment, and Father Attachment in Early and Middle Adolescence. *Journal Relig Health*. 50: 264-278.