LINKS BETWEEN TEACHERS' ATTACHMENT STYLE AND SOCIAL INTEREST

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Abstract

Quality of teachers' and pupils' relationships is related to peculiarities of teachers' attachment and social interest. The dominating teachers' insecure attachment style was identified. Female teachers more often distinguish themselves by secure and disorientated attachment style, while male teachers more often distinguish themselves by preoccupied and dismissive attachment styles. Female teachers distinguish themselves by both high and medium social interest whilst male teachers, by medium and low social interest. The majority of teachers with secure attachment style distinguish themselves by high social interest. It is assumed that there are factors that can influence the interaction between social interest and attachment style.

Key words: *attachment style, social interest.*

Introduction

Efficiency of learning activities considerably depends on the developed relationships between teachers and pupils. One of the factors that can influence these relationships could be teachers' attachment peculiarities because learning activities partially repeat the situation of initial attachment: the attachment between the child and the mother (Geddes, 2006; Pokaka, 2006). Similarly to the situation of initial attachment, the pupil seeks new knowledge, skills, solution of learning tasks and at the same time he/she needs support, security; i.e., the teacher turns into an intermediary between solution of learning tasks and the pupil, like previously the mother used to be an intermediary between cognition of the outer environment and the child. In the learning activity pupils and teachers interact with each other and turn into persons that are important to each other. Pupils can perceive the teacher as another subject of attachment. It has been identified that the mother's attachment style influences activation of a certain attachment system of the child (Allen, Fonagy, 2006). The mother who is securely attached activates the child's secure attachment system, whilst the mother who is insecurely attached activates the child's insecure attachment system. It is likely that the teacher's attachment style could also influence the development of secure and insecure learning environment, which activate the pupils' corresponding attachment system.

According to the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), early experiences of attachment draw up internal working models, which later influence psychosocial functioning of the adult person. Researches into adult attachment style supplement the repertoire of early attachment styles and distinguish four main types of attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, disorientated and dismissive. Every of them is characterised by anxiety due to rejection in interpersonal relationships (attachment anxiety) and discomfort due to close relationships (attachment avoidance) (Collins, 2006). Secure attachment distinguishes itself by low anxiety and avoidance, preoccupied attachment, by high anxiety and low avoidance, disorientated attachment, by high anxiety and avoidance, and dismissive attachment, by high avoidance and low anxiety (Brenann, Clark, Shaver, 1998).

Based on the parallel of attachment style of authorities of an organisation with the analogous parents' attachment style (Keller, Cacioppe, 2001), similar combinations of teachers' and parents' attachment can be found. Similarly to parents with secure attachment who combine their needs with the needs of cared children, the secure teacher differentiates pupils' needs, takes care of them and provides necessary support. It is considered that securely attached teachers demonstrate trust in pupils, understanding, express warm feelings towards them (Kennedy, 2004). Parents with preoccupied attachment who hold back their children's independence and autonomy could correspond to teachers with preoccupied attachment who can distrust of children's abilities and get involved into their worries too emotionally. In interpersonal relationships with pupils such teachers implement the need of belonging, too sensitively react to pupils' behaviour even when situation does not require doing so (Kennedy, 2004). Similarly to parents with disorientated attachment who focus more on their big anxiety and lose contact with their children, teachers with such attachment style can alienate from their pupils too much. Parents with dismissive attachment are less sensitive to their children's needs and provide them with less care; they can be similar to teachers with dismissive attachment who are inattentive to pupils' needs and provide them with less emotional support in difficult learning situations. Teachers with this attachment style are inclined to maintain a larger distance from pupils, rely on them less, and show less warmth, sensitivity and understanding (Kennedy, 2004). Hence, teachers with various attachment styles also develop different types of relationships with pupils. Thus, identification of teachers' attachment style is also important and relevant solving issues of quality of learning as well as difficulties arising in interpersonal relationships with pupils.

The attachment theory, describing mechanisms of attachment style formation and their development, developed applied researches into the role of adult attachment style in the working domain and in the field of family relationships. However, the attachment theory characterises the person's functioning only in one aspect; besides, it does not have the system of psychotherapy, which would use phenomena of attachment theory (Weber, 2003). Such theory that is close to the attachment theory but that has a developed system of psychotherapy is Adler's individual psychology.

Both attachment theory and individual psychology emphasise the role of interpersonal relationships in personality development. Such phenomena of individual psychology as feeling of community and social interest directly indicate the social nature of a person. Adler (2003) uses the concepts of feeling of community and social interest as synonyms. Other developers of individual psychology maintain that the aspect of feeling of community – social interest – expresses active, socially useful interaction with people (Ansbacher, 1999). Adler (2003) states that the possibility of feeling of community and social interest is inborn but its spread depends on environmental impacts and relationships with parents in the early childhood. The importance of such relationships is emphasised in the attachment theory as well. Feeling of community is universal and manifests itself by a constant positive attitude towards other people, unconditional

favour to others, care of others and wishes of good for them. Feeling of community and social interest name the experienced link starting from the closest people and finishing with all animate and inanimate nature. Thus, developed feeling of community and social interest correspond to the description of secure attachment. Meanwhile poorly developed feeling of community and social interest mean the person's dissociation from social environment, focus on oneself. This corresponds to the general description of insecure attachment. It is thought that feeling of community is of several levels: affective, cognitive, and behavioural. At the affective level the individual survives, experiences link with the environment, at the cognitive level the person acknowledges the necessity and inevitability of such link with the environment, whilst at the behavioural level the person behaves according to his/her feelings and thoughts, cooperating with others to achieve universal welfare (Stein, Edwards, 1993). The same three levels in the phenomenon of attachment are distinguished by the representatives of the attachment theory as well. Theoretical links of phenomena of the attachment theory with the phenomenon of social interest are most often presented at the theoretical level (Weber, 2003) but there is a lack of empirical proofs of these links. Such empirical researches would supplement researches into adult attachment by ways of psychological impact, which are not lacking in the system of psychotherapy of individual psychology.

Researches on attachment in the context of the system of education focus more on the analysis of the role of pupils' attachment for learning efficiency and for adjustment to school requirements (Geddes, 2006; Reio, Marcus, Sanders-Reio, 2010). There is a lack of such researches which would analyse links between peculiarities of teachers' attachment and social interest. Meanwhile researches on peculiarities of teachers' attachment and social interest could help consulting teachers about difficulties in relationships with pupils and colleagues, in teacher training, teachers' in-service training, improving quality of interpersonal relationships, consultancies on career guidance, analysing motives of choosing the teacher's speciality.

Thus, considering the importance of attachment style and social interest in the teacher's professional activities, the **aim** of this research is to disclose links between teachers' attachment style and social interest.

Research objectives:
1. To disclose peculiarities of teachers' and prospective teachers' attachment style.
2. To disclose peculiarities of teachers' and prospective teachers' social interest.
3. To identify links between teachers' and prospective teachers' attachment style and social interest.

Research subject: links between teachers' and prospective teachers' attachment style and social interest.

Methodology

The target group. The research was attended by 192 teachers and prospective teachers; 146 (76%) of them were female and 46 (24%), male. The target group was distributed to age groups according to age limits indicated by Gučas (1990): 100 (52%) young mature adults (between 19 and 24 years old), which included 94 (94%) females and 6(6%) males; 63 (33 %) first maturity adults (between 24 and 34), which included 37 (59%) females and 26 (41%) males; 29 (15 %) second maturity adults (between 35 and 60), which included 15 (52%) females and 14 (48%) males. The group of young mature adults consisted of prospective teachers, who study education studies and are getting ready to become teachers.

Research methods. This research employed the adult attachment scale (Brennan, Clark, Shaver, 1998; Šinkariova, Balsevičienė, 2010) and the social interest scale (Crandall, 1996, Kepalaitė, 2004), adapted for usage by the psychologist.

The attachment scale consists of 36 statements, which the surveyed person has to evaluate using Likert-type scale from 1 (I completely disagree) to 5 (I completely agree).

Secure attachment style is identified if the surveyed person collects less than the mean in the avoidance scale (50,6) and in the anxiety scale (47,3). Dismissive attachment style is identified if the surveyed person collects less than the mean in the anxiety scale and more than the mean in the avoidance scale. Disorientated attachment style corresponds to more than the mean in avoidance and anxiety scales. Preoccupied attachment corresponds to more than the mean in the anxiety scale and less than the mean in the avoidance scale.

The Cronbach alfa coefficient of this scale 0,84 is sufficiently high; thus, this scale is suitable for group researches (Vaitkevičius, Saudargienė, 2006). The reliability coefficient corresponds to the Cronbach alfa coefficient 0,86 identified by the authors of the Lithuanian scale variant (Šinkariova, Balsevičienė, 2010).

The level of social interest was identified by the social interest scale (Crandal, 1991). The scale consists of 24 pairs of adjectives describing the personality. The respondent has to choose which trait out of two he/she prioritises. Cronbach alfa of this scale 0,56 is sufficient performing group researches.

Thus, key variables of this research are estimators of attachment and social interest.

Additional variables are gender, age.

Research data have been calculated employing 17.0 SPSS software. Attachment and social interest estimators and data of additional variables do not meet the requirements of normal distribution (deviation from normal distribution according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion $p<0,05$). Therefore, further statistical analysis was performed using the respondent-orientated strategy, applying K-means cluster analysis and nonparametric criteria – cross-tabulation. Cramer's V coefficient was applied because distribution in cross-tabulation columns is uneven.

Research Results and their Discussion
Results of Research on Attachment Style and Discussion

Estimators of the avoidance scale of surveyed persons of the whole sample (M=50,7) are statistically bigger ($p<0,05$) than the ones of the anxiety scale (M=47,62). The model of four clusters was chosen for cluster analysis. This corresponds to the theoretical grounding of the used attachment scale and to empiric surveys, carried out employing this scale. As it can be seen from Table 1, which presents centres of four clusters, four groups were drawn up according to combinations of estimators of anxiety and avoidance scales. The first group, characterised by the lowest estimators of anxiety and avoidance scales and scores that are lower than the means of these scales, can be referred to as the secure attachment group. The number of surveyed persons in this group is the smallest (n=13; 7%). The central value of estimators of the anxiety scale of the second group of clusters is slightly higher than the mean value of this scale, whilst of avoidance scale it is slightly lower than the mean of this scale. The preoccupied attachment style corresponds to the combination of estimators of these scales; this style is represented by the largest number of surveyed persons (n=71; 37%). The centres of the third group of clusters correspond to combinations of scales of disorientated attachment style, when estimators of both scales are higher than the means of these scales. This group is represented by one third of all surveyed persons (n=70; 36%). The fourth cluster is represented by combinations of estimators of dismissive attachment style. The central value of the dismissive scale exceeds the mean value of this scale, whilst the central value of the anxiety scale is significantly lower than the mean of this scale and than the value of cluster centre of the avoidance scale.

Table 1. Cluster Centres of Estimators of the Attachment Scale

Title of scales	Values of cluster centres			
	1 cluster	2 cluster	3 cluster	4 cluster
Anxiety scale X=50,7; SD=12,65)	18,31	48,14	60,71	37,61
Avoidance scale (X=47,62; SD=10,46)	19,85	50,51	57,09	51,82
Distribution of surveyed persons (n, %)	13 (7%)	71 (37%)	70 (36%)	38 (20%)
Attachment style	Secure	Preoccupied	Disorientated	Dismissive

Distribution of teachers according to attachment styles discloses more frequently occurring preoccupied and disorientated attachment styles. With regard to frequency, in this sample dismissive attachment style slightly lags behind. Representatives of secure attachment style occur most seldom. Such distribution of surveyed persons partially corresponds to distributions identified in researches on adult attachment styles. Surveying employees of operational enterprises, disorientated attachment style was more often identified whilst correspondingly dismissive, secure and preoccupied attachment styles occurred more seldom (Šinkariova, Balsevičienė, 2010). According to research data on attachment style, it has been identified that the majority of surveyed persons attribute themselves to securely attached (50%) and more seldom they attribute themselves to dismissive and disoriented attachment style (20% each) (Colin, 1996). Using other researches on adult attachment styles, most often secure attachment was identified and significantly more seldom, disoriented, preoccupied and dismissive attachment styles were identified (Surcinelli et al., 2010). The number of representatives of insecure attachment style in this sample is the highest (n=179, 93%), whilst the representatives of secure attachment style make up the minority (n=13, 7%). This corresponds to the above mentioned research, the results of which demonstrate more frequent insecure than secure attachment style among employees of operational enterprises (Šinkariova, Balsevičienė, 2010).

It can be assumed that teachers with insecure attachment style can also encounter difficulties creating safe learning environment for their learners. Meanwhile creation of such secure learning environment contributes not only to increasing learning motivation but also to improvement of academic achievements and maturity of learners' personalities (Geddes, 2006). Although the majority of teachers with preoccupied attachment style who positively evaluate others but negatively evaluate themselves could contribute to creation of favourable learning environment. It is more likely that they would focus on relationships with learners rather than on submission of learning tasks and creation of conditions for seeking them. This could create conditions for appearance of the burnout syndrome (Strodl, Noller, 2003; Zech, Berenschot, Stroebe, 2006). Meanwhile teachers with dismissive attachment style would concentrate more on submission of learning tasks, evaluation of their performance rather than on creation of learning atmosphere and contacts with learners. They would be more concerned about the development of learners' personalities and interpersonal relationships with them and their colleagues. Due to intensively experienced anxiety teachers with disorientated attachment style could be the creators of excessively controlled atmosphere in the class who use learning innovations and creative tasks for pupils less than other teachers. They would find it more difficult to start relationships with learners and maintain them due to worse trust in others and inflexibility.

Table 2. Distribution of Teachers according to Attachment Style and Gender (n, %)

Gender	Attachment style				In total	p (according to Cramer's V)
	Secure	Preoccupied	Disorientated	Dismissive		
Males	3 (7%)	23 (32%)	7 (15%)	13 (28%)	46 (24 %)	0,26 p<0,005
Females	10 (7%)	48 (33%)	63 (43%)	25 (17%)	146 (76%)	
In total	13 (6%)	71 (37%)	70 (37%)	38 (20%)	145 (100%)	

The results given in Table 2 demonstrate that there are significantly more females than males with disorientated and preoccupied attachment style. Meanwhile although among males the representatives of preoccupied attachment style dominate they lag behind with regard to dismissive and disorientated attachment style. The number of secure attachment style representatives among males is the least and disorientated attachment style occurs most seldom. Such regularity of distribution of attachment style representatives according to gender is statistically significant (p<0,05). This partially corresponds to researches which have identified that females are characterised by a more frequent preoccupied attachment than males (Foster, Kernis, Goldman, 2007) although Bowlby (1973) states that both males and females have equal possibilities to form secure and insecure attachment regardless of gender.

Table 3. Distribution of Teachers according to Attachment Style and Age (n, %)

Age	Attachment style				In total	p (according to Cramer's V)
	Secure	Preoccupied	Disorientated	Dismissive		
Young adults	10 (10%)	40 (40%)	37 (37%)	13 (13%)	100 (52%)	0,17 p>0,05
First maturity	3 (5%)	22 (35%)	23 (37%)	15 (24%)	63 (33%)	
Second maturity	0 (0%)	9 (30%)	10 (35%)	10 (35%)	29 (15%)	
In total	13 (6%)	71 (37%)	70 (37%)	38 (20%)	145 (100%)	

As it can be seen in Table 3, the biggest number of representatives of secure attachment style is among young adults and the number of such adults who can be attributed to dismissive attachment style is the least. Meanwhile the majority of first maturity representatives can be attributed to preoccupied and disorientated attachment style groups. Representatives of second maturity are equally distributed in insecure attachment style groups, none of them falls under the secure attachment group. With regard to this sample such distribution is not statistically significant (p>0,05) but partially it corresponds to researches which had identified that older people more often than younger are characterised by dismissive attachment style (Magai et al., 2000). These authors state that older people more rarely than younger people are characterised by secure attachment style. In other researches it has been identified that older people more often had dismissive attachment style than younger surveyed people (Diehl et al., 1998). Distribution of representatives of this sample partially corresponds to researches which disclose higher numbers of representatives of disorientated attachment style among younger people than among older people.

Thus, peculiarities of attachment styles with regard to age are quite contradictory and

only partially correspond or contradict to the distribution of attachment styles of this sample according to age.

Results of the Research on Social Interest and their Discussion

Cluster analysis of estimators of social interest disclosed three clusters (see Table 4). The scores of the cluster centre correspond to high, low and medium estimator of the social interest scale. According to clusters teachers distributed unevenly. The majority of them fell under the group of medium score of social interest (47%) and under the group with highly expressed social interest (38%). The least part of surveyed persons is characterised by low social interest (15%).

Table 4. Cluster Centres of Estimators of the Social Interest Scale

Title	Scores of the cluster centre		
	1 cluster	2 cluster	3 cluster
Social interest (M=7,2; SD=2,73)	10,12	6,18	3,03
Distribution of surveyed persons (n, %)	73 (38%)	90 (47%)	29 (15%)
Level of social interest	High	Medium	Low

Thus, manifestation of social interest of this sample of teachers is desirable to their professional activities. It discloses bigger orientation of these teachers and prospective teachers to interaction with others than concentration on themselves.

As it can be seen from Table 5, there are less representatives of high social interest among males than among females. Among males representatives of medium social interest dominate. Meanwhile females distinguish themselves by high social interest, the minority of them, like in male group, belong to manifestation of low social interest.

Table 5. Distribution of Teachers according to the Social Interest Group and Gender (n, %)

Gender	Social interest group			In total	P (according to Cramer's V)
	High	Medium	Low		
Males	6 (13%)	28 (61%)	12 (26 %)	46 (24%)	0,3 p < 0,001
Females	67 (46%)	62 (42%)	17 (12%)	146 (76%)	
In total	73 (38%)	90 (47%)	29 (15%)	192 (100%)	

Females are also characterised by moderately expressed social interest. This distribution is statistically significant (p<0,001). Certain researches on social interest confirm the assumption that females should distinguish themselves by higher social interest than males because they are more orientated to relationships, are more emotional, emphatic (Kaplan, 1991). The latter conclusions are confirmed by the results of this research. Other researches, on the contrary, state that the gender factor is not important for social interest (Crandall, 1991) because the basis is the statement about universality of social interest, its independence of gender and age.

Distribution of representatives of social interest with regard to age is not statistically significant (p>0,05). Although other researches had demonstrated links between teachers' social interest and age: with age the manifestation of social interest increases (Kepalaitė, 2004).

Links between Attachment Style and Social Interest

Analysing distribution of representatives of attachment style and social interest (see Table 6), it can be noticed that the bigger share of representatives of secure attachment style are characterised by high social interest, the remaining are evenly characterised by both medium and low social interest.

Table 6. Distribution of Teachers according to Attachment Style and the Social Interest Group (n, %)

Social interest	Attachment style				In total	p (according to Cramer's V)
	Secure	Preoccupied	Disorientated	Dismissive		
High	7 (54%)	21 (30%)	34 (49%)	11 (29%)	73 (38 %)	
Medium	3 (23%)	38 (54%)	30 (43%)	19 (50%)	90 (47%)	0,24 p = 0,073
Low	3 (23%)	12 (17%)	6 (9%)	8 (21%)	29 (15%)	
In total	13 (7%)	71 (37%)	70 (37%)	38 (20%)	145 (100%)	

Meanwhile only one third of both preoccupied and dismissive attachment style teachers are characterised by high social interest. Their medium social interest is more expressed. Medium social interest dominates among disorientated attachment style teachers. Such distribution is close to the limit of statistical significance (p = 0,073).

A very weak conversely proportional link between estimators of social interest and attachment avoidance was identified (r = -0, 11; p < 0,05) as well as absence of link between estimators of social interest and attachment anxiety (r = 0,02; p > 0,05).

Such peculiarities of links between social interest and attachment could be explained by the fact that social interest measures positive and active attitude towards people in general whilst attachment styles more characterise quality of relationships with important people. Therefore, the number of teachers with high social interest is significantly less than of representatives of secure attachment. Meanwhile not necessarily all teachers with secure attachment can transfer favourable attitude in close relationships to relationships with other people. Besides, high social interest can be also characteristic to teachers with other attachment styles, who implement general positive attitude with regard to other people not necessarily in relations with important people and vice versa. Based on that, an assumption can be made about the role of other factors influencing interaction of social interest and attachment style too. Search for such factors could be the subject of further researches.

Conclusions
1. Cluster analysis distinguished four groups of teachers according to estimators of attachment styles. This corresponds to the theoretical attachment model of the used scale and to empirical researches. The dominating insecure attachment teachers' group (preoccupied, disoriented and dismissive attachment) and significantly smaller secure attachment teachers' group were identified. It was disclosed that females dominate among secure attachment style teachers. Female teachers are also characterised by disorientated attachment style. Male teachers are characterised by preoccupied and dismissive attachment styles and make up a minority in the secure attachment group.
2. According to manifestation of social interest three teachers' groups were drawn up. The majority of teachers are characterised by medium manifestation of social interest.

The majority of female teachers distinguish themselves by high and medium, and the majority of males, by medium and low social interest. Manifestation of social interest by age groups did not disclose any substantial regularities.

3. No significant links between teachers' attachment style and social interest were identified but the tendency was disclosed: representatives of secure attachment more often distinguish themselves by high social interest than representatives of other attachment groups. Among representatives of other attachment groups moderately expressed social interest dominates.

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