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This is an author's accepted manuscript of a chapter published in Demir, M. and Sümer, N. (eds.) Close Relationships and Happiness Across Cultures Switzerland Springer, pp. 165-184 in 2018.

The final authenticated publication is available at Springer via:

https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89663-2_10

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Cultural Aspects of Attachment Anxiety, Avoidance, and Life Satisfaction: Comparing the US and Turkey

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Abstract

Attachment insecurity can interfere with the experience, expression, and benefits of positive emotions, including happiness and life satisfaction (LS). However, both the pattern and effects of insecure attachment orientations on LS vary across cultures. Considering that attachment anxiety is higher in collectivist cultures and attachment avoidance is relatively high in individualistic cultures, the present chapter elaborates on the idea that anxious and avoidant attachment would have varying effects on LS in individualistic and collectivistic cultural contexts. Study 1 (N = 2456) involved a community sample of married couples in Turkey and demonstrated that attachment avoidance was a stronger predictor of LS than attachment anxiety in Turkish collectivist context. Study 2 tested the hypothesis that the roles of attachment anxiety and avoidance in predicting LS would vary between collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Mothers' adult attachment dimensions and LS in Turkey (N = 89) and the United States (N = 91) were measured. As expected, results indicated that LS was predicted only by attachment avoidance in Turkey and by attachment anxiety in the United States. These findings are in line with the cultural fit hypothesis, suggesting that culturally incongruent attachment orientations have a stronger negative impact on individuals' LS.

Key Words: Attachment Anxiety, Attachment Avoidance, Culture, Life Satisfaction, Happiness.

Satisfying close relationships are some of the most potent sources of happiness and well-being across cultures (Berscheid, 1985; Diener & Oishi, 2004, Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). This is believed to be due to the survival quality of social bonds and the need to belong to valued collectives and a meaningful universe (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Individuals' physical and psychological health is dependent on the presence of close relationships characterized by reciprocal social support (see Cohen, 2004; Holt-Lunstad, Smith & Layton, 2010; Loving & Slatcher, 2013) with their intimate partners (Selçuk, Günaydın, Ong, & Almeida, 2016). Accumulated work has confirmed that not only the presence but also the quality of close relationships, derived from attachment security, determine how much individuals enjoy and benefit from enduring long-term happiness in their relationships, (see for reviews, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013). Across different cultural domains, securely attached individuals tend to experience enhanced positive affect (PA), satisfaction, and happiness in their relationships, whereas those with anxious or avoidant attachment orientations show patterns of dissatisfaction in life, relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013) and health problems (see Stanton & Campbell, 2014).

The value of 'closeness' in defining relationship quality and happiness has sparked mixed results from research conducted within Western cultural domains (Myers, 1999). On one hand, studies highlight how individuals from these cultural domains cherish love and the presence of significant others in their lives (Berscheid, 1985). On the other hand, as separation and individuation are perceived as the "sole normative" process in optimal human development, the studies prioritize self-fulfillment and autonomy in close relationships over extreme closeness (see Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005; Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, & Uchida, 2002). Whereas extreme

closeness is perceived as a normative pattern in Japan, particularly between mothers and children, the same level of closeness is identified as symbiotic or "enmeshed" in the United States (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). These cultural differences in levels of closeness are associated with patterns of insecure attachment. Extreme closeness, extending to the desire to merge with the loved one, is culturally adaptive in collectivistic Eastern cultures where attachment anxiety is common and can be relatively tolerated. However, attachment avoidance and valuing extreme independence and self-reliance is more prevalent in individualistic Western cultures (Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; Schmitt, 2010).

Considering these cultural differences in relationship patterns, we claim that the strength of the association between the two fundamental dimensions of attachment (i.e., attachment anxiety and avoidance) and life dissatisfaction or unhappiness varies between collectivist and individualist cultures. More specifically, considering cultural variation in attachment insecurity, we expect that attachment anxiety in individualistic and attachment avoidance in collectivistic cultures predominantly predict happiness. Therefore, in this chapter, we aim to examine whether the power of fundamental attachment dimensions to predict happiness differs between Turkey and the United States. These two countries were selected to represent relatively collectivist and individualist cultural contexts, respectively.

In this section, we first present an overview of attachment theory and its link with happiness and well-being. We then discuss cultural differences in both attachment and well-being while investigating the predictive power of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance over happiness in different cultures. Then, we present data from two empirical studies conducted in Turkey and United States in order to elaborate on the cultural fit hypothesis, suggesting that culturally incongruent

attachment orientations have a stronger negative impact on individuals' wellbeing. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how to enhance life satisfaction through attachment security.

Attachment Theory: Basic Concepts

Attachment theory is built on the idea that human behavior is organized by innate behavioral systems, including attachment, exploration, and caregiving (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). According to Bowlby (1982), the biological function of the attachment system is to protect the individual from danger by assuring that he or she maintains proximity to a caring and supportive attachment figure. Using evolutionary reasoning, Bowlby argued that infants who maintain closeness to a supportive caregiver have a greater chance to survive and eventually reproduce.

Although the attachment behavioral system is most evident early in life, Bowlby (1988) assumed that it is active over the entire life span. In other words, people continue to show thoughts and behavioral patterns related to proximity seeking with attachment figures in times of need. He understood that even when autonomous adults are threatened or demoralized, they benefit from seeking and receiving other people's care. He also argued that mature autonomy is partly achieved by being comforted by caring attachment figures earlier in life (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004).

Bowlby (1982) viewed proximity to and contact with supportive attachment figures as a functional human phenomenon and maintained that losing such closeness and contact is the main source of distress and psychological dysfunction. In support of this argument, successful attempts of proximity and the attainment of felt security in adulthood have been shown to be the crucial aspects of maintaining and promoting

mental health, satisfying close relationships, happiness, and psychological growth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015)

Attachment theorists have identified major individual differences in attachment security and various forms of insecurity, which arise as a result of particular caregiving environments (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978). Interactions with attachment figures who are available in times of need facilitate the optimal functioning of the attachment system and promote a sense of security across the life span. However, when a person's attachment figures are not reliably available, a sense of security is difficult to attain. As a result, secondary attachment strategies of affect regulation rather than proximity seeking are developed (Main, Kaplan, Cassidy, 1985; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). These secondary attachment strategies are conceptualized and assessed as attachment-related avoidance and anxiety (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

The first dimension, attachment-related avoidance, reflects the extent to which a person distrusts relationship partners' goodwill and strives to maintain behavioral, psychological and emotional distance from their partners (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Avoidant adults tend to exhibit limited closeness and intimacy, as well as substantial relationship disharmony and relationship dissatisfaction. They are reluctant to seek emotional support from their partners when they are upset, and are also less likely to provide care for their partners (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). As a result, this behavioral pattern limits the opportunity to build intimate relationships (Friedman, Rholes, Simpson, Bond, Diaz-Loving & Chan, 2010). Highly avoidant people also appear to be less empathic and less altruistic (Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, & Nitzberg, 2005).

Attachment-related anxiety on the other hand, reflects the degree to which a

person worries that their attachment figures may abandon them, either physically or emotionally. As a result, they cling to their partners in order to avoid abandonment. Highly anxious individuals view their partners as being unsupportive (Rholes, Simpson, Campbell, & Grich, 2001). They also tend to be less altruistic (Mikulincer et al., 2005), focusing on meeting their own emotional needs in relationships rather than those of their partners (Rholes, Peatzold, & Friedman, 2008).

Highly anxious individuals differ from avoidant persons in terms of their desire to form close, intimate relationships, and their sensitivity toward being abandoned by their partners (Friedman, Rholes, Simpson, Bond, Diaz-Loving & Chan, 2010). Four attachment styles are produced from the interaction of the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance. These include secure (both low anxiety and avoidance), fearful avoidant (both high anxiety and avoidance), dismissing avoidant (low anxiety but high avoidance), and anxious-ambivalent (high anxiety but low avoidance) (Bartolomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998).

These two fundamental dimensions of attachment are regulated in relationships by the three-phase model of attachment-system activation and dynamics, especially when partners perceive a threat or feel stressed (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). The first phase is responsible for the activation of the attachment system through the monitoring and appraisal of threatening events. The second phase involves the monitoring and appraisal of the availability and responsiveness of attachment figures. Finally, the third phase involves an evaluation of the viability of social proximity seeking as a means of coping with attachment insecurity. This stage is responsible for variations in the use of anxious (hyperactivating) or avoidant (deactivating) coping strategies. If an attachment figure is unavailable or unresponsive, the individual will either intensify efforts to achieve proximity through

hyperactivation of the attachment system or deactivate the attachment system by suppressing thoughts of vulnerability and relying firmly on oneself (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). We believe that culture-based relationship mind-sets such as collectivistic relational, communal orientation vs. individualistic, exchange orientation (e.g., Sorensen & Oyserman, 2010), and emotional differences such as engaging and disengaging emotions (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000) are influential in the attachment activation process by giving priority to hyperactivation strategies in collectivistic/interdependent contexts and to the deactivation strategies in individualist/independent relational contexts. In other words, when an attachment figure is perceived as unresponsive and unavailable, members of collectivist relational cultures are more likely to employ a hyperactivating clingy emotional regulation strategy, whereas members of individualistic cultures are more likely to employ a deactivating strategy leading to self-reliance and counter dependence.

Happiness and Cultural Emotions

Veenhoven (2012) defines happiness as a subjective state of mind, which represents the overall appreciation of one's life as a whole. This definition fits Bentham's (1789) classic notion of happiness as 'the sum of pleasures and pains'. Happiness in this sense is used synonymously with terms such as 'life satisfaction', which is interchangeably used with the term 'subjective well-being', or SWB (Diener, 1984, 2000). Accordingly, happiness consists of affective and cognitive evaluations of life. The affective dimension pertains to predominance of positive over negative affect, while the cognitive dimension focuses on life satisfaction.

To move beyond the basic definition of "happiness" as the psychological component of SWB, Morris (2012) argues that there are various conditions that a

definition of happiness should meet in order to be suitable for the purpose of scientific investigation. First of all, happiness should be something that is desirable. Even though there is cultural variability in the meaning of happiness, people consistently use the term to refer to a state that is, in some sense, desirable. Research has shown happiness to be positively valued in all nations (Diener & Oishi, 2004). Secondly, the notion of happiness should align with the commonsense usage of the term in the culture being studied. Finally, the notion of happiness should address a specific cognitive state that can be identified and quantified with scientific precision (Morris, 2012).

In his hierarchical multi-determinant model of well-being, Sheldon (2004) specifically focuses on the personality-based, social, and cultural determinants of SWB as the top three levels of the hierarchy. Supporting this model, Sheldon and Hoon (2004) have demonstrated that cultural differences explain significant variance in SWB above and beyond its critical determinants such as personality, goal progress, self-esteem, social support, and so on. In their comparison of happiness in the east and the west, Uchida and her associates (2004) discuss how those in individualist western cultures tend to pursue happiness through individual accomplishments, whereas people in collectivist cultures tend to seek happiness by fostering personal relationships and maintaining social harmony. Overall, members of individualist cultures are relatively happier than their collectivistic counterparts

Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007) family change theory addresses this issue by explaining why certain aspects of parental control may be adaptive in collectivist cultures while being maladaptive in individualistic cultures. According to this theory, the model of independence is prototypical of the individualistic Western culture, which involves self-reliance and autonomy in child rearing to aid the child in developing an

autonomous and separate self. In the family model of interdependence, which is prototypical of the collectivist Eastern culture, children provide for their parents' material and economic needs when they grow up. Therefore, intergenerational interdependence is adaptive for family well-being in collectivist social contexts (Sümer & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010).

It is believed that there is a global modernization towards the Western model of independence through global socioeconomic development and urbanization. However, a growing number of empirical studies show that even though there is a decline in material interdependencies between generations, psychological interdependencies characterized by closely knit interpersonal ties continue to exist in collectivist cultures (see Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005, 2007). In this family model of psychological and emotional interdependence, although complete obedience and loyalty of the child are no longer needed (i.e. material interdependencies diminish), there is still a need for firm parental control to avoid separation from the child. In these cultural contexts, emotional interdependence and connectedness continue to be treasured. Therefore, parents are motivated to apply overprotective child management strategies such as guilt induction to ensure the psychological interdependence of the child. Consistent with these cultural arguments, Sümer and Kağıtçıbaşı (2010) found that mothers' attachment avoidance, rather than attachment anxiety, negatively predicts children's secure attachment to both parents in Turkey. Moreover, recent studies in Turkey have demonstrated that attachment related avoidance, but not attachment anxiety, predicts various outcome variables, including maternal sensitivity (Selçuk et al., 2010), marital satisfaction (Harma & Sümer, 2016), friendship quality in middle childhood (Sümer, 2015), and academic self-efficacy (Sümer & Harma, 2015). Given the stronger predictive power of attachment avoidance compared to

attachment anxiety in the Turkish cultural context, we aim to investigate whether attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety have different implications for an individual's life satisfaction across cultures.

Attachment Patterns, Cultural Emotions and Life Satisfaction Across Cultures

Life satisfaction as the cognitive component of happiness is believed to be an integral part of well-being (Diener 1984). It promotes the psychological conditions necessary for exploration, personal and social development, and coping efficacy under stress (Diener & Diener, 1996). Therefore, psychologists have been trying to understand the underlying predictors and mechanisms that enhance life satisfaction (see, Diener et al. 1999; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005).

According to a recent comparative study conducted in 29 countries by UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund, 2013), a child's sense of subjective well-being and their sense of life satisfaction go hand in hand. The UNICEF study confirms the basic tenet of attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1973; Cassidy 2008) by indicating that relationships with parents are the single most important predictor of children's happiness (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013).

In order to understand the implications of poor or absent parenting, Bowlby (1969/1982) proposed an innate motivational system called the "attachment behavioral system", which causes infants to seek comfort or protection from an attachment figure when they are tired, in pain, frightened, or distressed. As indicated by Mikulincer and Shaver (2013), achieving a sense of safety and security is one of life's natural forms of happiness.

The quality of early interactions within the family is believed to affect a child's competence in social and personal domains later in life. Research on

attachment theory supports the idea that quality of parent and peer relationships are strongly related, and that both contribute to the prediction of happiness (see Demir et al. 2013; Gilman & Huebner 2003; Mikulincer & Shaver 2013). Indeed, this effect is largely attributable to the power of PA. Across the life span, there exist bidirectional associations between the indicators of positive close relationships, including secure attachment and PA. Life satisfaction can be seen as a different assessment of happiness and PA as the fundamental function of a secure attachment (Ramsey & Gentzler, 2015).

As explained earlier, individual differences in attachment orientations can be represented via the two fundamental dimensions (attachment-related anxiety and avoidance) which are believed to be relatively stable from a person's early years into adulthood (Brennan et al. 1998; Mikulincer & Shaver 2007). Attachment anxiety reflects a strong need for closeness, which is not uncommon in collectivist relational cultures, whereas attachment avoidance represents an extreme self-reliance and emotional distance from others, which is not uncommon in individualistic contexts (Schmitt, 2010; Sümer, 2015).

Individuals who are anxiously attached to primary caregivers or peers might experience physical and/or emotional abandonment. As a result, they apply hyperactivating emotion and behavior-regulation strategies. Anxiously attached individuals exaggerate their distress by constantly seeking closeness and clinging to their friends and partners to attain safety and avoid feelings of abandonment. As a result, these individuals are continually challenged by their negative emotions, which in turn reduce their happiness (Sümer, 2015).

Conversely, avoidant attachment dimension is organized around the deactivating emotion and behavior-regulation strategy, which consists of defensive

attempts to keep the attachment system down-regulated to avoid being further distressed by the unavailability of an attachment figure. This strategy is characterized by extreme self-reliance, denial of attachment needs, and avoidance of emotional involvement, where the individual tries to avoid rejection from attachment figures by maintaining psychological, social, and emotional distance (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007). In all cultures, secure people remain relatively calm during times of stress and experience longer periods of positive affectivity, which contribute to sustained emotional well-being and happiness. We believe that when the attachment system is activated under an actual or perceived threat or stressor, individuals in collectivist contexts are more likely to follow hyperactivating strategy, whereas those in individualistic contexts are more likely to divert to a deactivating strategy.

Overall, attachment security is positively linked with almost all the indicators of well-being, while attachment insecurity is negatively associated with the same indicators (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, 2015). Specifically, while attachment security strongly promotes positive emotions, attachment anxiety was shown to intensify negative emotions through deteriorating feelings of life satisfaction. Also, attachment avoidance leads to defensive suppression of emotions, which once again is associated with a decline in life satisfaction (see Mikulincer & Shaver 2013;). Consistent results have been obtained in cross-sectional, prospective, longitudinal, and cross-cultural studies (Shaver, Mikulincer, Alonso-Arbiol, & Lavy, 2010).

Even though anxious and avoidant strategies are guided by opposite relational goals such as intensification or inhibition of closeness, both can interfere with positive emotions. Several studies using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule found that both of these insecure attachment dimensions are associated with lower positive affect scores (e.g., Barry, Lakey, & Orehek, 2007; Wearden, Lamberton, Crook, & Walsh,

2005) as well as lower levels of subjective well-being (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013).

Mikulincer and Shaver (2013) believe that this variation between attachment security and well-being is to some extent due to secure individuals possessing more effective emotion-regulation techniques compared to insecurely attached, anxious, or avoidant individuals. According to these researchers, people who are securely attached have interactions with available and supportive attachment figures that can reduce distress and enhance positive emotions by creating a sense of safety and security. Through repeated interactions, this sense of attachment security becomes associated with memories of positive experiences and emotions. Therefore, secure individuals possess a positivity-supporting memory network which enables them to maintain emotional balance even when faced with threats or other stressors (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

It is plausible to assert that the effect of culture on both attachment patterns and happiness indeed stems from how cultures shape positive emotions to fit cultural expectations. In a seminal study, Kitayama, Marcus, and Kurokawa (2000) have demonstrated that positive emotions are mostly related to interdependence and interpersonal engagement in Japan, but to independence and interpersonal disengagement in the United States. Indeed, individuals try to sustain their SWB by altering their emotions to fit the culturally predominant ones. Therefore, emotional fit not only between intimate partners (e.g., Gonzaga, G. C., Campos, B., & Bradbury, T. 2007) but also at the group, systems (e.g., Solak, Jost, Sümer, & Glore, 2012), and cultural levels is instrumental for happiness and well-being (De Leersnyder, Mesquita, Kim, Eom, & Choi, 2014). In other words, individuals come to see and feel themselves and their external worlds similarly to how others sharing the same group or collective identity do. Disengaging emotions (e.g., pride) are relatively

common in individualistic cultures, therefore attachment avoidance is congruent with these cultural contexts. Conversely, because engaging emotions (e.g., sympathy) are common in collectivistic cultures, attachment anxiety is relatively congruent with these contexts.

Attachment security is believed to be the optimal normative pattern in most cultures. However, the pattern and distribution of adult insecure attachment vary greatly across cultures (Schmitt, 2010), probably because of their culturally adaptive values. Rothbaum et al. (2002) argued that since extreme dependency is functional among cultures valuing closely-knit relatedness, attachment anxiety should not be perceived as maladaptive in these cultures. However, considering that attachment avoidance may imply a complete independence, this attachment dimension should be perceived more maladaptive in collectivist cultures (Rothbaum et al., 2002).

In order to address cultural variability in attachment theory, Friedman et al. (2010) proposed the "cultural fit hypothesis", suggesting that culturally incongruent attachment orientations would have a stronger impact on relationship quality. Hence, we expect that attachment avoidance in collectivist cultures and attachment anxiety in individualistic cultures predict SWB. In this study specifically, we expect that the power of two fundamental dimensions in predicting LS would vary between Turkey and the United States.

The Present Study

Previous studies conducted in western cultures have focused mainly on the secure/insecure divisions of attachment theory and have argued that being insecurely attached to one's parents would reduce the quality of relationships and the level of satisfaction with one's life. If this insecurity is not ameliorated, attachment insecurity

can interfere with the experience, expression, and benefits of positive emotions, including happiness (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013). However, these studies don't explain whether the differences in insecure attachment patterns, namely anxious and avoidant attachment, would have varying effects on life satisfaction and well-being in individualistic and collectivist cultural contexts.

In line with the research explained above, Sümer (2015) suggests that, unlike attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance may not be very dysfunctional in individualistic cultures. In such cultural contexts (like the United States), interpersonal boundaries are clear, and relationships are characterized by low levels of emotional interdependence. However, attachment avoidance would be detrimental for life satisfaction and happiness in more collectivistic cultures, where interpersonal boundaries are unclear, and relationships are characterized by emotional closeness and interdependency. In these relational cultures (such as Turkey), attachment avoidance rather than attachment anxiety is expected to be strongly associated with life satisfaction and happiness.

The Turkish cultural context incorporates polyphony in terms of the presence of independent and interdependent values within the culture. These values constitute a phenomenon described by Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) as the psychologically (emotionally) interdependent family model. This model is characterized by closely knit family ties and refers to a dialectical synthesis of both self-reliance and harmony rather than an independent or interdependent model of the family (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). Particularly in the Turkish urban and middle-class, parents are believed to be using psychological control behaviors to create the circumstances for emotionally interdependent yet autonomous children (Sümer & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010; Sümer, Sakman, Harma & Savaş, 2016). Therefore, as the cultural fit hypothesis suggests, the function of attachment

anxiety and avoidance on individuals' well-being in Turkey may diverge from the pattern typically observed in the United States.

Based on the "culture fit" hypothesis (Friedman et al., 2010), we suggest that attachment avoidance is relatively strongly and negatively associated with individuals' happiness in Turkey, whereas attachment anxiety is more strongly and negatively associated with happiness in the United States. We used life satisfaction as a general indicator of happiness and asked participants from the community samples the same single item used in World Values Survey: "Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" We tested our prediction using two data sets from Turkey and the US that includes both measures of adult attachment dimensions and life-satisfaction.

Study I

Using a very large data set from Turkey as part of a study on attachment, caregiving, and family dynamics in Turkey (Sümer et al., 2009), we tested if attachment avoidance and anxiety predicts life satisfaction differently for married men and women using dyadic analyses. Specifically, consistent with the previous studies in Turkey, we expect that attachment avoidance would be lower than attachment anxiety for both wives and husbands (e.g., Sümer et al., 2016). We also predicted that attachment avoidance would have a stronger relationship with LS than with attachment anxiety among Turkish people.

Method

Participants and procedure. Mothers and fathers were recruited via their children attending fourth and fifth grade in four large cities in Turkey. They were asked to complete a survey battery including measures of attachment anxiety,

avoidance and life satisfaction. Two separate envelopes containing the set of measures were sent to 2132 couples via their children and they were specifically asked to fill out the survey on their own. Of the participants, 1553 were wives with an average age of 36.39 years (*SD* = 4.83) and 1438 were husbands with an average age of 40.67 years (*SD* = 5.37). To run Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) analyses, we included only intact families, and thus 325 wives and 210 husbands were excluded from the data set. This left 1228 married couples in the final sample. The mean duration of marriage was 14.54 years (SD = 4.38). Detailed information about the sample is available in Harma and Sümer (2016).

Measures

Attachment dimensions. The attachment dimensions of anxiety and avoidance were measured using the Turkish translation (Selçuk, Günaydın, Sümer, & Uysal, 2005) of Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) developed by Fraley et al., (2000). The ECR-R consists of two 18-item scales, one measuring attachment related anxiety and the other measuring attachment related avoidance. The avoidance subscale assesses individual's discomfort with closeness, dependence, and self-disclosure (e.g., 'I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me'). The anxiety subscale reflects individuals' strong need for closeness, fear of rejection, and abandonment (e.g., 'I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me'). Participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert scale. Both dimensions had satisfactory internal consistencies for women and men, with Cronbach's alpha scores varying between .83 to .88.

Life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was measured using a single item: "Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" This

item is commonly used in international studies of happiness such as World Values Survey (2008). The respondents provided their ratings on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = not satisfied, 6 = very satisfied).

Results

Descriptive statistics are presented separately for both spouses in Table 1. There were significant gender differences on attachment dimensions. As expected, wives' attachment anxiety (M = 2.24, SD = 0.61) was significantly higher than that of husbands (M = 2.12, SD = 0.55) (*Paired t* (1227) = 5.90, $p < .001$). We also tested our hypothesis that attachment avoidance would be lower than attachment anxiety in this Turkish community sample. Consistent with our expectation, results demonstrated that attachment avoidance (M = 1.69, SD = 0.61) was lower than attachment anxiety (M = 2.18, SD = 0.58) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = .82$), (t (2455) = 38.05, $p < .001$).

We tested our main hypotheses by employing the APIM analysis for distinguishable partners with SEM following the guidelines of Kenny, Kashy, and Cook (2006). First, the saturated model was tested by adding the correlations between all predictors (i.e., couples' attachment dimensions) and correlated errors between husbands and wives' life satisfaction. As illustrated in Figure 2, the saturated model yielded a significant effect (χ^2 (9); the baseline model = 497.69, $p < .001$). As seen in Figure 1, actor effects on life satisfaction for attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety were significant for both men and women. However, the effect size for attachment avoidance was much stronger than attachment anxiety for both wives (Beta = -.39 vs. -.10) and husbands (Beta = -. 21 vs. -.07).

To specifically answer the question of whether a wife's attachment avoidance predicts her life satisfaction more strongly than attachment anxiety, the link from wife anxiety to wife's life satisfaction and the link from wife avoidance to wife's life satisfaction were set to be equal. The Wald test suggested that attachment avoidance (-.39) had higher predictive power than attachment anxiety for wives (-.10); Wald (1) = 33, 30, p< .001. Similarly, the link from husband anxiety to husband's life satisfaction and the link from husband avoidance to husband's life satisfaction were set as equal to see whether their predictive power would be equal or not. Wald test showed that attachment avoidance (-.21) had higher predictive power than attachment anxiety for husbands as well (-.07); Wald (1) = 6, 91, p< .05. Overall, these findings are consistent with our prediction. Besides the actor effects, wives' attachment anxiety had also a weak but significant partner effect (*Beta* = -.07, *p*< .05) on husbands' life satisfaction.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for variables in Study 1

	Attachment Anxiety	Attachment Avoidance	Life Satisfaction
Attachment Anxiety	.26**	.44**	-.27**
Attachment Avoidance	.42**	.38**	-.43**
Life Satisfaction	-.17**	-.26**	.35**
Wives			
M	2.24	1.69	4.95
SD	.61	.63	.95
Husbands			
M	2.12	1.69	4.94
SD	.55	.58	.89

Note. Correlations on the diagonal are cross-partner correlations. Correlations below the diagonal are for husbands and above the diagonal are for wives.
$^{**}p < .01$.

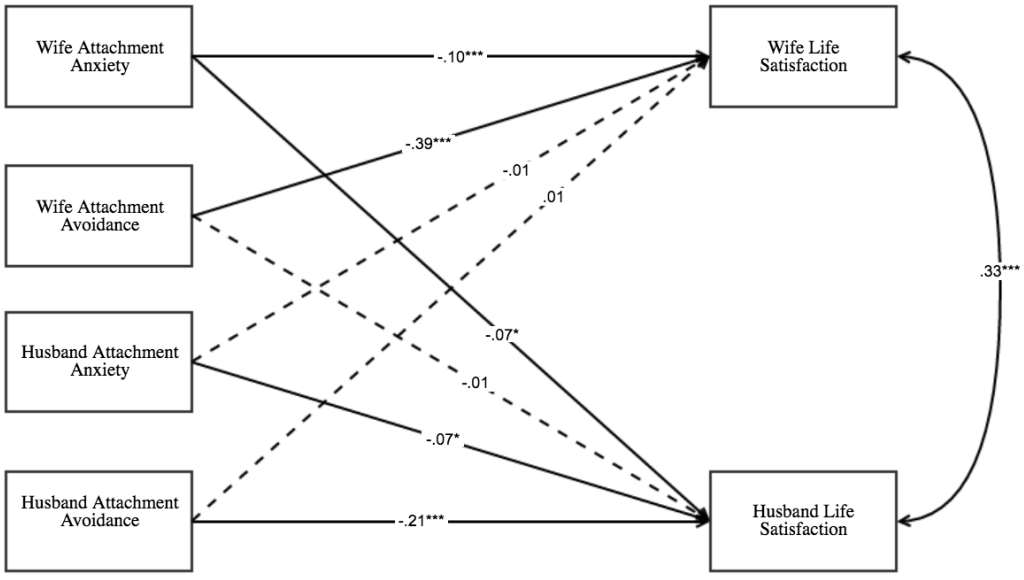

Figure 1. APIM analyses in predicting life satisfaction from couples' attachment dimensions.
Note. Dashed lines indicate non-significant associations (N = 1228)
$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

Discussion

Study 1, involving a large community sample of married couples from Turkey, confirmed that attachment avoidance is less prevalent than attachment anxiety in this collectivist culture. In dyadic analyses, both attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety predicted life satisfaction among men and women. However, in line with the proposed hypothesis, attachment avoidance was found to be a stronger predictor of life satisfaction in Turkey. Surprisingly, attachment avoidance had only significant actor effects, but not significant partner effects. In other words, one's attachment avoidance does not impact his/her spouse's LS. Using the same data set, Harma and Sümer (2016) found that both wife's and husband's attachment avoidance have significant partner effects on marital satisfaction. Therefore, it seems that although attachment avoidance had more detrimental effect in relationships satisfaction, it only negatively influences one's own life satisfaction. It is also plausible that as with one's cognitive evaluation of SWB, LS does spill over its effects in intimate relationships. This issue should be examined further.

Moreover, unlike Harma and Sümer's (2016) findings on marital satisfaction, attachment anxiety had a weak but significant actor effect on life satisfaction and the wives' attachment anxiety had a significant partner effect. These findings suggest that in addition to the predominant effect of attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety also aggravates life satisfaction. This suggestion is in line with the argument that insecurely attached individuals mostly experience negative emotions rather than positive ones, especially in response to a partner's happiness (see Mikulincer and Shaver, 2013). It seems that negative emotionality leading to life dissatisfaction is not uncommon among anxiously attached people, although its detrimental effects would be more intense in individualist cultures.

Study II

Study I examined the association between the attachment dimensions and life satisfaction in Turkey only and supported our expectation that attachment avoidance, but not attachment anxiety, strongly predicts life satisfaction. To test our cultural claim, this should be confirmed by comparing collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Consistent with the culture-fit hypothesis, we predicted that attachment avoidance in Turkey and attachment anxiety in the United States will be predominant predictors of LS. Moreover, we predicted that attachment anxiety will be higher than attachment avoidance in Turkey and that the reverse will be true in the United States.

Participants and Procedure

In the framework of a cross-cultural study, mothers from the United States (N = 91) and Turkey (N = 89) who had children in middle childhood were recruited using convenience sampling in two major universities in Ithaca, New York and Ankara, Turkey. The mean age of participants in the United States was 40.95 (SD = 4.03) and in Turkey the mean age was 30.75 (SD = 7.12). Mothers in both samples were from middle SES families and the majority were university graduates (the US 70.3%, Turkey 80.7.%).

Mothers' adult attachment dimensions and LS in both countries were assessed using the same measures as in Study I. Cronbach's alpha values for attachment anxiety were .81 and .93, and for attachment avoidance they were .91 and .95 for the United States and Turkey, respectively.

Results

As seen in Table 2, attachment avoidance (Mean = 2.12, SD = 0.58) was higher than attachment anxiety (Mean = 1.80, SD = 0.70) in the United States (*Paired t* (91) = 4.92 *p*<. 001), whereas these two attachment dimensions were not significantly different from each other in Turkey (*Paired t* (89) = -.52, ns). As expected, attachment anxiety was higher in Turkey compared to the United States (*F* (179) = 4.11, *p*< .05). However, there was no significant difference in attachment avoidance between the two countries (*F* (179) = 2.20, ns). Finally, United States mothers reported marginally higher level of life satisfaction (Mean = 4.97, SD = 0.78) than Turkish mothers (Mean = 4.74, SD = 0.96) (*F* (179) = 2.71, *p*< .10) (See Table 2).

Attachment anxiety and avoidance were significantly correlated with life satisfaction both in the United States (r = -.49, p < .001 and r = -.31, p <.01, respectively) and Turkey (r = -.51, p < .001 and r = -.60, p <.001, respectively). Next, we ran regression analyses on two samples separately to predict life satisfaction from attachment anxiety and avoidance. In line with the proposed hypothesis, life satisfaction was predicted by attachment avoidance only in Turkey (Beta = -.49, p < .001), and by attachment anxiety only in the USA (Beta = -.45, p < .001).

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for the Major Variables in Turkey and the US.

	Attachment Anxiety	Attachment Avoidance	Life Satisfaction
Attachment Anxiety	-	.55**	-.49**
Attachment Avoidance	.71**	-	-.31**
Life Satisfaction	-.51**	-.60*	-
The USA			
M	1.80	2.12	4.97
SD	.58	.69	.78
Turkey			
M	2.01	1.97	4.75
SD	.66	.69	.95

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are for Turkish mothers and above the diagonal are for the US mothers.
** $p < .01$.

Discussion

Study 2 pursued the question of cultural variability in attachment dimensions by comparing data from collectivistic and individualistic cultural domains. This study measured mothers' adult attachment dimensions and life satisfaction in Turkey and the United States. Once again, in line with the proposed hypothesis, attachment avoidance was found to be higher than attachment anxiety in the individualistic context of United States. Furthermore, attachment anxiety was found to be relatively higher in Turkey. Both insecure attachment dimensions, anxious and avoidant, were correlated with life satisfaction in the United States and Turkey. However, life satisfaction was predicted only by attachment avoidance in Turkey and by attachment anxiety in the United States.

General Discussion

"Feeling good"—namely, positive emotions, are the essence of SWB, though what one feels good about is mostly culturally constructed. The focus in the current investigation was on LS, representing the cognitive dimension of happiness. We argued that the link between the two fundamental dimensions of attachment and LS should be examined considering the fit between cultural emotional patterns and attachment orientations.

Attachment as the fundamental emotional bond is influenced by cultural construals. We believe that because attachment avoidance is characteristically a disengaging feeling, it fits the independent, individualist relational style. Likewise, attachment anxiety is characteristically an extremely engaging feeling, and fits with the interdependent, collectivistic relational style. In this framework, we proposed that differences in insecure attachment patterns, namely anxious and avoidant attachment, would have varying effects on life satisfaction in different cultural domains. In particular, we hypothesized and found that attachment avoidance is strongly and negatively associated with individuals' happiness in Turkey, whereas attachment anxiety is strongly and negatively associated with happiness in the US.

Overall, the findings from both studies are in line with the cultural fit hypothesis (Friedman et al., 2010), suggesting that culturally incongruent attachment orientations would have a stronger impact on relationship quality where attachment avoidance in collectivist cultures and attachment anxiety in individualistic cultures predicts relationship functioning and subjective well-being (Sümer, 2015). The studies reported in this chapter extend the findings supporting cultural fit hypothesis on relationship functioning to LS.

The evidence presented in this chapter opens up possibilities for using a novel

strategy to promote well-being through attachment security. This strategy would not only identify and focus on insecure attachment as a potential threat to the quality of relationships and life satisfaction, but should also consider culturally relevant approaches, especially considering the prevalence of anxious and avoidant attachment patterns in a given culture (see Sümer & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010).

Further research should explore the interplay between culturally shaped emotions (especially engaging and disengaging ones) and attachment dimensions to see how this interplay explains "emotional fit" and leads to happiness in varying cultural contexts. Considering positive engaging emotions are the common factor for both attachment security and happiness, future research should investigate the cultural aspects of "broaden-and-build consequences" (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015), of attachment security, and of positive emotions in order to enhance happiness globally.

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