

The Relationships Between Family Attachment, Family Commitment and School Attachment among High School Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationships between family attachment, family commitment and school attachment of High school Students in Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Data was collected from January to June, 2023. The study was conducted on a total of 914 high school students, grade 10, grade 11 and grade 12 in Dong Thap Province, Mekong Delta, Viet Nam. The study sample was randomly selected for convenience with the permission of the leaders of school, students and parents. Three professors were used to examine the validity of the questionnaire. Correlation analysis was conducted for construct validity, and reliability was measured using Cronbach's α . Data collection was conducted through the use of Questionnaire that modified by the investigator. The data was analyzed by the SPSS 22.0 program using Descriptive statistics and Correlation. This research analyzed the relationships among the family commitment – family attachment, family attachment – school attachment, family commitment – school attachment. Results showed that Family commitment and Family attachment have a statistically significant linear relationship. School attachment and Family attachment have a statistically significant linear relationship. School attachment and Family commitment have a statistically significant linear relationship. Therefore, students will ask questions about the importance of being attached to school from teachers and school social workers. This study has applied attachment theory, explaining attachment to school and attachment to family. The research results can be used as a reference for further research and contribute positive value to school and social work education. When exploring the relationship of family commitment, family attachment and school attachment, this research found that family commitment and family attachment are more significant and it is vital important to build strategy to build up school attachment for teachers, school social worker in high school in Vietnamese context.

Keywords: family attachment, family commitment, school attachment, high school student

1. Introduction

Commitment describes the level of dedication invested in common standards and goals. Hirschi postulates that a person who has invested resources, time, and energy in achieving compliance goals will lose more through deviant behavior than someone who has invested less in pursuing the goals accepted by society. For example, a student who has invested a lot of time to get good grades will lose more when expelled than a lazy student who does not value grades (Krohn and Massey 2016).

Family commitment or behavioral commitment has been studied in terms of investment of effort and time (Jordan and J Nettles 1999). Research on behavioral engagement often involves the following aspects: Social acceptance, sense of belonging, and social support (Goodenow 1993). Attachment describes the strength of bonds and relationships that exist within an individual's social environment. Relationships with parents are especially important, but other institutions and agents such as schools and friends also play a role. Attachment to a peer group can also prevent deviance, but only if that peer group does not represent deviant norms (Krohn and Massey 2016). Giddens and Bowlby (1970) defined family attachment as a stable connection that provides a sense of safety and security for the child (Giddens and Bowlby 1970). Family attachment can provide a secure basis for children to explore and engage in developmental behaviors (Hazan and Shaver 2009). Continued parental engagement in adulthood is also important. According to Kenny and Donaldson (1991), parents may not always act as primary attachment figures for their adult children, but they never relinquish their role as attachment figures (Kenny and Donaldson 1991). Berman, Heiss, and Sperling (1994) define ongoing attachment as "a preoccupation, desire, interest, and desire to be in contact with an attachment figure" (Kenny and Donaldson 1991). According to attachment theory, the attachment system is central to the functioning of all other behavioral systems, including the mating, caregiving, and bonding behavioral systems (Péloquin et al. 2013).

School Attachment, in Goodenow's view, attachment to school is called a sense of belonging to school (Goodenow 1993), forming a network of relationships with friends as well as other members of the school (Williams 1987) and a sense of values developed during the learning process as it relates to the student's life (Hemati Alamdarloo and Moradi 2021). Attachment to school can impact students, increasing their likelihood of academic success or failure (Calabrese 1987). Some of the literature that has outlined the characteristics of students at risk for school failure has identified a range of factors that have influenced student failure in school. Factors can be listed as wealth, substance abuse, low parental education, troubled family life (Barber and McClellan 1987), deviant behavior, being absent from school, violates school discipline and can eventually lead to dropping out of school (McWhirter et al. 2003; Hạnh 2019; Thơ 2010; Hữu and Tuấn 2016). Recently, it has become widely accepted that school engagement is considered a composite construct comprised of diverse related constructs, made up of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive components (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris 2004). This study we focus only on element of family attachment, family commitment and school attachment.

Family attachment and school attachment can affect students' success or failure in school, so our research aims to show the current situation of family attachment and school attachment in the high school student's family has parents who are workers or Temporary worker. If attachment is high, it needs to be promoted. In contract, it is low, it needs to be improved with different strategies, and intervention recommendations by social workers are necessary.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted on a total of 914 high school students, grade 10, grade 11 and grade 12 in Dong Thap Province, Mekong Delta, Viet Nam. The study sample was randomly selected for convenience with the permission of the leaders of school, students and parents. Three professors were used to examine the validity of the questionnaire. Factor analysis was conducted for construct validity, and reliability was measured using Cronbach's α .

To survey the Family Attachment of high school students, we used a 10-items psychological attachment scale that represents the sense of belonging. The scale has a reliability level with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.777 for 10 items (Each items, survey question has 6 level, (0) Strongly Disagree; (5) Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

Total		N	Percentage
		914	
Gender	Male	428	46.8%
	Female	432	47.3%
	Other	54	5.9%
Grade	Grade 10	296	32.4%
	Grade 11	381	41.7%
	Grade 12	237	25.9%
Area	Town/city	497	54.4%
	Rural / suburban	417	45.6%
Father's level of Education	Primary	190	20.8%
	Secondary	279	30.5%
	High school	241	26.4%
	College, university	204	22.3%
Father's level of Education	Primary	210	23.0%
	Secondary	322	35.2%
	High school	198	21.7%
	College, university	184	20.1%
Economic conditions	Rich	178	19.5%
	Average	647	70.8%
	Low	68	7.4%
	Very poor	21	2.3%

To survey the Family Commitment of high school students, we used a 5-items behavioral commitment scale that represents the interactions with members in their family. The scale has a reliability level with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.684 for 5 items (Each items, survey question has 5 level, (0) Never; (1) Rarely; (2) Sometimes; (3) Often; (4) Always.

To survey the School Attachment of high school students, we used a 10-items Psychological engagement scale that represents the sense of belonging in their schools. Psychological attachment assessed students' sense of identification with school, sense of membership at the school, and positive relationships with peers. Ten items were adapted from the Psychological Sense of School Membership scale (Goodenow 1993). The scale has a reliability level with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.810 for 8 items (Each items, survey question has 5 level, (0) Strongly Disagree; (1) Disagree; (2) Neutral; (3) Agree; (4) Strongly Agree.

3. Result and discussion

3.1 Family attachment

Hirschi showed the first element of the social bond was attachment to parents. While the examination of the relationship between parents and their children has been an integral part of

deviant behavior research and is generally supportive of Hirschi's view. Rubamande and Mukadi (2021) emphasize that social groups such as family, and relatives at home contribute to students' positive performance in their study (Rubamande and Mukadi 2021). The direct environment has a significant influence on their performance at the school. Strong emotional bonding among family members also can play as a significant social support. When high school students have enough social support from their families, it will encourage the process of social reintegration. In this studying, the high school students share to significant others about their concerns and how they are feeling. Some of them talk to their parents. Some feel, believe to their parents

Table 2: Family attachment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I love my mother	4.85	0.594
I love my father	4.66	0.955
I am close to my brother/sister	4.11	1.390
I feel comfortable staying at home with my parents	4.16	1.291
I often talk to my father/mother	3.70	1.419
When I have difficulties, I can rely on my parents	3.85	1.549
I feel like I hate my parent*	4.78	0.827
I believe my parents want the best for me	4.62	0.933
I believe that my parents always love me	4.68	0.830
My parents don't care about me*	4.58	1.071

*Note: minimum =0; maximum =5; * = converted value; N=914*

The given Table 2 illustrates the family emotional bond among high school students in this survey sample is quite high, most students responded that they have positive feelings towards their parents. Emotional connection with mother "I love my mother" has the highest average score, followed by "I love my father" and "I believe that my parents always love me" has the average score are 4.85, 4.66 and 4.62 respectively. For questions that have an inverse meaning compared to other questions in this questionnaire such as: "I feel like I hate my parents", "My parents don't care about me". We also obtained similar results, which shows that students answered this questionnaire carefully. The average scores of these questions are 4.78 and 4.58 respectively. In general, the family attachment of high school students is quite high.

3.2 Family commitment

We include the temporal dimension of involvement under the element of commitment which Hirschi treated as a separate element. It is assumed that a person who has free time invested in the participant in traditional activities simply does not have much time left over in which to perform deviant acts.

Table 3: Family commitment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Eat meals with family	3.33	1.078
Doing housework (e.g. helping repair things, watering plants or cleaning, cooking, etc.)	3.17	0.943

Caring for and helping other family members (for example: taking/picking up children to school, preparing cool water for parents to drink...)	3.05	1.125
Visiting relatives	1.73	1.002
Spending free time with someone in the family (e.g. watching TV with a parent; playing games with a sibling...)	2.70	1.288

Note: minimum =0; maximum =5; N=914

Conducting a survey on participation in family activities, in other words, behavioral commitment in the family, we surveyed with 5 questions. The results show that the act of eating with family is the highest, followed by the act of participating in working with the family, with an average score of 3.33 and 3.17. In our opinion, these are important groups of behaviors that increase the bond between members, and are a time to share feelings between family members. The act of visiting relatives has the lowest average score, 1.73, which means that when students go to school, they have less time to visit relatives and relatives. In addition, it could also be because relatives live far away, so it takes more time to visit. So this behavior has low average results.

3.3 School attachment

Hirschi's view of attachment referred to ties between the individual and teacher, staff at the school. Hence, when Hirschi asked respondents whether they cared what teachers thought of students, it was suitable with his earlier view of family attachment in that the focus remained on attachment to "traditional" people. However, when he asked students whether or not they liked school. The core was shifted here, away from affective ties to people, toward ties to a social institution. This change seems to differ a departure from Hirschi's earlier formulation of attachment, unless it is assumed that educational institutions can be treated as fictitious or artificial "persons." Even if this convention is adopted, however, it remains unclear precisely how this bond is mediated between the individual and the school. Hence, while operationalizing attachment in this way has some intuitive appeal, its empirical referent is ambiguous.

Table 4: School attachment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel like a real part of the school.	3.34	0.906
People here notice when I'm good at something	2.88	1.062
Most teachers at this school are interested in me.	2.33	1.130
There's at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.	2.27	1.534
People at this school are friendly to me	2.69	1.176
The teachers here respect me	3.12	1.028
I feel proud of belonging to this school	3.04	1.255
I feel safe at school	2.74	1.055

Note: minimum =0; maximum =4; N=914

The Table 4 shows that students' feelings with positive questions have a very high average score. The positive questions " I feel like a real part of the school." have the highest average score, followed by the questions "The teachers here respect me", " I feel proud of belonging to this school", with average scores of 3.34, 3.12 and 3.04 respectively. With the above average score, school attachment, students' feelings about studying at school are very positive.

3.4 Correlations within and between sets of variables (Family attachment, Family commitment and School attachment)

The attachment was first conceptualized by Bowlby (Hazan and Shaver 2009). Bowlby's attachment theory was impacted by the need to explain the social, psychological and developmental problems of children (for example, deviant behavior in high school). According to the attachment theory, children form mental representations about themselves and members of their family, caregivers or teachers during the interaction with them. The impact of these mental representations models continues throughout the life (Bretherton 1999). These mental representations in secure attachment help to cope with stress situations together with the basic sense of trust, whereas, in anxious attachment, where the family behaves inconsistently or unresponsive, the child feels worthless (Bowlby 1988). While safely-attached individuals have highly positive communication skills with teachers and parents (Guerrero and Jones 2005), it was concluded that insecurely-attached individuals have lack of social interaction levels and high levels of loneliness (Anders and Tucker 2000). As a result, an increase or decrease in the level of deviant behavior might be observed according to the level of attachment of the high school student to their parents and school.

Table 5: Correlations within and between sets of variables (Family attachment, Family commitment and School attachment)

	Family attachment	Family commitment	School attachment
Family attachment	1		
Family commitment	0.228**	1	
School attachment	0.121**	0.154**	1

Note: Significance level where, ** $p < 0.01$; $N=914$

The table 5 illustrates the correlation of Family commitment and Family attachment ($r=0.228$), based on $n=914$ observations with pairwise non-missing values. Correlation of School attachment and Family attachment ($r=0.121$), based on $n=914$ observations with pairwise non-missing values. Correlation of School attachment and Family commitment ($r=0.154$), based on $n=914$ observations with pairwise non-missing values.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlations of family attachment, family commitment and school commitment in high school students' life. The results showed that there were positive correlations between family attachment, family commitment and school commitment in students. In addition, it was found that family attachment was a positive and significant predictor of the school attachment. In line with the current research findings, the level of school attachment increases as the level of family attachment increases in students. Moreover, increasing school attachment will decrease risk behavior of high school students. Considering the literature, there are studies which are similar to the findings of the present research. In the group of factors in preventing the risk behavior of youth, Mihic and others (2022), and Novak and others (2021) found that school attachment and family attachment was a significant predictor of the risk behavior of high school students (Novak et al. 2021; Mihić et al. 2022), which supports the results of the current research.

The findings of this study revealed that, attachment to the family more strongly predicted all problems compared to attachment to school. According to the attachment theory, the basic link

between the high school students and their school facilitates the child's adaptation to feeling and student's care (Shaver and Mikulincer 2004).

4. Conclusion

Based on the results, we can state the following: Family commitment and Family attachment have a statistically significant linear relationship ($r=0.228$, $p < 0.001$). The direction of the relationship is positive (i.e., Family commitment and Family attachment are positively correlated), meaning that these variables tend to increase together (i.e., greater Family commitment is associated with greater Family attachment).

School attachment and Family attachment have a statistically significant linear relationship ($r=0.121$, $p < 0.001$). The direction of the relationship is positive (i.e., School attachment and Family attachment are positively correlated), meaning that these variables tend to increase together (i.e., greater School attachment is associated with greater Family attachment).

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The magnitude, or strength, of the association is approximately mild ($0.1 < |r| < 0.3$).

The study found that family attachment, family commitment, and school attachment are positively correlated with each other. This is an important finding to propose strategies to promote family cohesion not only by social workers but also other professionals.

To improve family attachment and family commitment, social worker should work on good communication skills with all member of family. Focus on listening and understanding what your family member is trying to say. Carve out time to work on communication skills by putting away phones and other devices at the dinner table so you can interact with each other.

Social worker should establish traditions, values, and goals together. If you have already developed some activities of family traditions. Sit down to discuss and reinforce values, invent new traditions, and plan how members will accomplish goals together.

Social worker should try new things together with members of family. Play a new board game, discover a new craft, or try different foods, drinks, places. Choose a night each week for movies and games. If families have children, let members help make decisions about new things to try. Social worker should connect with distant family members. Make time to connect with long distance family members by phone, email, or video calls. Staying in touch with people outside of your home will help you feel more connected to them.

Social worker does stay active. Physical activity can help reduce stress. Have a family dance party or set family exercise goals, schedule weekly walks together, or create competitions to see how many pushups or jumping jacks each of members can do. These activities can create moments of attachment.

Social worker make laugh together. Find things to do that will make all members laugh. Choose a funny movie to watch together, read a favorite book, or tell each other jokes.

Creating and maintaining strong family attachment takes time, effort, and patience. With the daily pressures of work, children, and chores, it can be easy to neglect their relationships and take their loved ones for granted. Here are some strategies to help strengthen family attachment, family commitment and develop school attachment not only on worker families, permanent worker families and also all of ours.

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