



Career Satisfaction and Adult Attachment Style Among Working Adults: Evidence from Turkey

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between employee attachment style, organizational factors, and career satisfaction among adult employees in Turkey. A total of 288 (167 female, 121 male) employees working in two sectors participated in this study with an age range of 22 to 60 years ($M=31.8$, $SD=7.4$). Adult attachment styles were measured with the Relationship Scales Questionnaire and career satisfaction was assessed with the Career Satisfaction Scale. A series of multiple hierarchical regression analyses and correlational analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between career satisfaction, attachment style, and organizational factors. The results revealed that organizational factors and attachment styles are important predictive measures of career satisfaction. A unique finding was the positive relationship between dismissing attachment and career satisfaction, a result we interpret as an outcome related to economic insecurity and crisis. Both theoretical and applied implications of the results are discussed and suggestions for future directions are addressed.

Keywords Attachment · Career satisfaction · Organizational psychology · Turkey

Career Satisfaction and Adult Attachment Style Among Working Adults: Evidence from Turkey

Determining predictors of career satisfaction is important for evaluating employee success, motivation, and performance, and is a key element in talent development (Bargsted et al., 2021; Heslin & Turban, 2016). Previous research has mostly concentrated on job-related factors such as job security, perceptions of fairness, and reward systems (Iqbal et al., 2020; Yean and Yahya 2013). Despite individual

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differences having received extensive attention (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hogan & Holland, 2003), there has been little empirical focus on investigating the relationship between adult attachment patterns and career satisfaction (Sumer & Knight, 2001). Much of the literature concerning adult attachment style, attachment behaviors, and their relationship to various organizational outcomes has been limited to samples recruited from undergraduate university students and focuses on career choices, rather than occupational experience (Meredith et al., 2007).

Rooted in ethology and evolutionary theory, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1986) maintains that infants pursue strategies to maintain within close proximity to primary caregiving figures as an adaptive response to dependency and to promote survival. It is during the attachment period that infants develop internal working models in terms of their relationships with a primary attachment figure who serves as a secure base and offers protection and support in times of threat (Bowlby, 1986). An individual's attachment style is internalized into wide regulatory strategies that guide an individual's sense of self and interpersonal relationships.

Attachment styles represent internal working models enduring into adulthood (Chui & Leung, 2016; Cobb & Davila, 2009; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Sheinbaum et al., 2015). Main and Hesse (1990) defined primary conditional attachment strategies as those that allow an individual to respond promptly and sensitively to an individual's attachment signals. Primary strategies included using attachment figures as a secure base for activities such as seeking and keeping intimacy, protesting separation, and engaging in environmental exploration (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Internal working models influence cognition and behavior in later relationships and contexts as attachment is transferred from parental figures to adult peers and significant others, and informs both interpersonal relationships and environmental interactions across a broad range of settings. Through internal working models, attachment influences various behaviors including coping skills, the feeling of personal worth, and quality of adaptation to environmental requirements (Mikulincer, 1995), including adult workplace settings (Harms, 2011; Richards & Hackett, 2012).

Blustein, et al. (1995) suggested that work environments required coping with novel situations and adapting to change, and exhibited a psychological and interpersonal dynamic paralleling infant environment interactions. Starting a job is a socialization process requiring employees to form new relationships and nurture existing ones. Lowman (1993) further stated that significant interpersonal challenges were presented in the workplace, and therefore the workplace corresponded to a risky environment for many employees and that adjustment and employee well-being were partly informed by adult attachment style. For example, insecurely attached individuals are reported to be more vulnerable to change due to their less successful adaptations to stressful situations (Hudson, 2013). Secure attachment has been correlated with adaptation and work-related adjustment (Blustein et al., 1995; Chen et al., 2021), leadership (Mayselless & Popper, 2019; Underwood et al., 2016), progress in career decision making (Hazan & Shaver, 1990), work-related exploration activities, and career exploration (Littman-Ovadia et al. 2013).

Individual differences in attachment relationships have important implications for orientation and attitudes toward work (Neustadt & Furnham, 2006). The exploration system which is developed in infancy is largely dependent on the availability of

the attachment figure (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Empirical studies have demonstrated that attachment to parents is associated positively with environmental exploration (Blustein et al., 1994; Elliot & Reis, 2003). As the infant attachment process supports infant exploration, adult attachment supports work activity as adults explore novel employment settings in order to develop competency in interacting with the physical and social environment (Fraley & Shaver, 2008). Secure attachment has been associated with freely exploring work environments and greater work satisfaction. Insecure attachment styles hindered efficient productivity and time-dependent task completion (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). The sub-categories of insecure attachment exhibit variation in predicting job success and determining employee–workplace fit across different components of the workplace environment, including autonomy, collaboration, goal setting, and conflict resolution (Littman-Ovadia et al., 2013).

There are three insecure attachment styles: fearful, dismissing, and preoccupied (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), and each has been differentially related to work-related outcomes (Sheinbaum et al., 2015), including job searching (Leenders et al., 2017), workplace satisfaction (Scrima et al., 2015), and leadership (Boatwright et al., 2010). Insecure attachment style classifications are centered around two relational dimensions associated with dealing with distress in interpersonal relationships: anxiety and avoidance. Insecure–fearful attachment demonstrates a high level of anxiety concerning relationships and distancing from others to prevent or minimize this anxiety. Insecure–dismissing involves attempts at avoidance of anxiety through reliance on self-sufficiency and a minimization of distress. Insecure–preoccupied attachment demonstrates less avoidance, but more anxiety and distress in relationships (Sheinbaum et al., 2015; Vîrgă et al., 2019).

Attachment styles are associated with differential outcomes related to economic precarity, with secure attachment demonstrating a relationship with more positive outcomes among low-income adults, whereas insecure attachment is associated with more deleterious effects (Mills-Koonce et al., 2011). However, although limited, research suggests that insecure–dismissing attachment demonstrates a protective function in regard to traumatic events (Bogaerts et al., 2009), partly through the mechanism of distancing and a positive view of self. Similarly, posttraumatic symptoms have been reported to demonstrate a negative relationship with secure and insecure–dismissing attachment but not with insecure–fearful and insecure–preoccupied (Muller et al., 2000), suggesting that the shared self-view may protect against negative outcomes related to traumatic events and situations.

Career Satisfaction

Career satisfaction is an individual’s perception of one’s own career achievement with reference to self-determined standards (Nabi, 2001, 2003). Organizational factors are strongly associated with career satisfaction, including income, status, promotion, development opportunities, organizational culture and commitment, work–life integration, employer recognition, and opportunity for advancement (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; 2008; Illies, & Reiter-Palmon, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Krueger et al., 2002; Park, 2018). A consistent finding in the organizational literature is that

person–workplace fit predicts job satisfaction and employee organizational commitment (Klaic et al., 2018; Player et al., 2017; Sylva et al., 2019), with environment fit being considerably influenced by internal psychological factors and dispositions among employees, including personality (Steel et al., 2019), self-efficacy (Perera et al., 2018), and temperament (Jaracz et al., 2017).

Less studied, but also predictive of career satisfaction is adult attachment patterns. Regarding career satisfaction, empirical evidence suggests that adult attachment is a predictor of employee–job dynamics and this relationship demonstrates conceptually similar characteristics as early childhood attachment experiences. Employees show differential responses to workplace environment experiences, including hierarchical navigation, interpersonal relationships, and opportunity seeking that are conceptually similar to young children exploring their proximal environment. Based on this conceptualization, it would be predicted that securely attached individuals would demonstrate greater work exploration, including seeking out career opportunities, creating and developing strong interpersonal relationships, and managing negative affect more adeptly than insecurely attached individuals, and as a consequence, would show higher levels of career and job satisfaction.

Attachment style influences employee work-related behaviors, attitudes, and responses (Harms, 2011; Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Richards & Schat, 2011), and demonstrate that secure attachment facilitates work-related exploration activities, being positively associated with career exploration (Littman-Ovadia et al. 2013), confidence in receiving good evaluations by colleagues (Blustein et al., 1995), ability to negotiate (Ketterson & Blustein, 1997), and progress in career decision making (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Insecure attachment, on the other hand, is correlated with lower levels of productive behaviors, organizational commitment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), and job satisfaction (Hazan & Shaver, 1990).

Securely attached individuals depend on basic guidelines of the attachment system such as engaging in instrumental action, asking for others' support, and expectation for successful management of the situation (Mikulincer, 1998). They tend to engage in support-seeking behaviors during potential overload in the workplace and are more likely to experience lower levels of workplace stress (Richards & Schat, 2007) and demonstrate a greater ability to redefine stressful situations as opportunities for growth (Mikulincer & Florian, 1995). These individuals have confidence in others' good intentions and actions (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Secure attachment has been associated with trust in line managers, peers, and top management (Simmons et al., 2009) as they are prone to share their goals not because it creates a sense of security, but to gain intimacy with them (Mikulincer, 1998). Thanks to their relationship with coworkers, securely attached individuals build a social support system at work and in private life (Simmons et al., 2009) and they are less likely to register psychosomatic and physical illnesses (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Secure attachment is related to a reduced focus on rejection and poor performance compared to insecurely attached employees.

Individuals demonstrating a preoccupied adult attachment style demonstrate greater concerns about rejection and performance evaluation (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Moreover, preoccupied attachment style has been associated with greater

worry about workplace relationships and report less job satisfaction, more stress, and greater burnout (Fraley & Shaver, 2008) and are less likely to engage in emotion-based coping strategies during stressful situations. Dismissing and fearful attachment styles are characterized by distance in the relationship, low levels of emotional intensity, little reliance on partners, inattention to distress indicators, and greater reticence in sharing personal information (Monteoliva et al., 2012). Fearful attachment is related to the work environment being conceptualized as an opportunity to avoid social interaction (Hardy & Barkham, 1994), and to maintain psychological independence (Rholes & Simpson, 2004). Fearful and dismissing attachment is associated with lower levels of workplace trust (Cranshaw & Game, 2010). Mikulincer and Florian (1995) reported that insecure attachment is related to less likelihood of engaging in support-seeking behaviors and greater distance between self and others (Erez, et al., 2008; Geller & Bamberger, 2009) leading to low levels of workplace dissatisfaction (Hardy & Barkham, 1994).

Findings related to organizational success and career performance and satisfaction, however, do not indicate only negative relationships between insecure attachment patterns and outcomes. Insecure–dismissing attachment, which shares important characteristics related to self-image and ego strength with secure attachment, has been associated with successful outcomes at work and in career settings. Ein-Dor et al. (2012) reported evidence that in careers that reward independence and autonomy, and which provide limited immediate support, an avoidant attachment was associated with positive outcomes and greater career success. Insecure–dismissing attachment may also serve to promote resilience in situations and environments where individuals are exposed to chronic sources of stress associated with social inequalities (Bartley et al, 2007) primarily as a defensive mechanism of ego protection.

Sheinbaum et al. (2015) reported that attachment style is related to affect, social functioning, and cognitive appraisals. Individuals, for example, with dismissing attachment were more likely to show fewer positive states of well-being and endorse a preference to be alone compared to securely attached individuals. A fearful attachment was related to having more stress and anxiety and a greater likelihood to perceive rejection from others. Evidence suggests that when presented with a choice, individuals tend to select careers and jobs that are seen as reflecting personality characteristics (Alkhelil, 2016). Attachment style is also related to self-disclosure, trust, and group functioning (Pistole, 1993; Shechtman & Rybko, 2004).

These behavioral and perceptual differences manifest not only in family and group dynamics, but also inform workplace experiences of individuals, including leadership (Manning, 2003), resilience (Bartley et al, 2007), and the ability to trust others (Vasquez et al., 2002). Related to satisfaction measures, attachment has been found to predict general life satisfaction (Gnilka et al., 2013; Wright & Perrone, 2010) and workplace and career satisfaction (Krauz et al., 2001; Oh & Sung, 2011; Tziner et al., 2014).

Attachment, Gender, and Career Satisfaction

One robust research finding in the organizational psychology literature is that women report greater job satisfaction than do men, and this finding has been replicated across different industries, organizations, and sociocultural contexts (Redmond & McGuinness, 2020). Various explanations and theories have been proposed to account for this finding. One plausible explanation is likely women's greater focus on maintaining family–work balance compared to men, especially in cultures with a greater gender-based division of labor, and this finding may show greater representation at higher-income levels (Redmond & McGuinness, 2017, 2020). Cultural definitions of gender roles and norms surrounding appropriate and permitted expressions also suggest that men may be more willing to express displeasure than women (Hodson, 1989). In Turkey, however, this relationship may point in the opposite direction, as women have been reported to experience job overload as they attempt to balance work demands and primary care for children and the family (Bozkurt et al., 2011). Additional factors undermining job and career satisfaction for women in Turkey include patriarchal attitudes toward women's formal employment, limited social welfare programs, and limited vertical job mobility (Kağnıcıoğlu, 2017).

Gender is also related to child-rearing practices in Turkey, with male and female children experiencing different parenting practices, especially in the domains of control and autonomy (Sunar, 2009; Telsiz, 1998). These differences are to an extent generational in nature and overlap with family demographic variables, including income, mothers' employment, education, and geography (Sunar, 2009). While there is limited research on gender differences in attachment style as a function of parenting practices, the extant research among Turkish samples does suggest that parenting does have a moderate effect on the development of attachment, with authoritative parenting associated with higher scores on measures of secure attachment (Doinita & Maria, 2015).

Current Study and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of attachment styles in the workplace and their relationship with the career satisfaction of employees in various private organizations in Turkey. The private employment sector in Turkey represents a unique environment characterized by economic upheaval and precarity, and greater emphasis on collectivistic relational dynamics than represented in studies on attachment and work in Western societal contexts. Previous research on the relationship between adult attachment patterns and workplace experiences, career satisfaction, and employee well-being has primarily focused on samples drawn from societies and cultures scoring high on values associated with individualism and with greater economic stability (Hofstede, 2011; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). Cross-cultural research examining individuals from diverse societies suggests that although attachment theory demonstrates cross-cultural application, it does so with considerable cultural variation (Lin et al., 2017) as a function of the

cultural emphasis on the individualism–collectivism continuum and is related to economic development level (Strand et al., 2019).

Turkey scores lower on measures of individualism compared to the USA, other English-speaking countries, and most Western European countries, so-called WEIRD societies (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) (Henrich et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2011). In collectivist countries, relationships are perceived as having greater importance and are more highly valued than in more individualistic-oriented societies (Sunar & Fişek, 2005). Thus, it would be likely that variation in attachment relationships and outcomes would be differently experienced in Turkey, and by extension, across diverse cultures. For example, Agishtein and Brumbaugh (2013) reported that attachment anxiety was associated with the country of origin, cultural values, and ethnicity. Although limited research explores the role of cultural valuation systems on attachment patterns, research demonstrates the utility of including a more diverse set of cultural experiences (Butler et al., 2007; Harma & Sümer, 2016; Rothbaum et al., 2000; Sorensen & Oyserman, 2010). Moreover, the historic economic crises in Turkey, and the ongoing (2021–2022) economic disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes economic precarity, high inflation, and employment disruption, all macro-level variables that are shared across developing and emerging economies, suggest the necessity to pursue this investigation so as to confirm previous findings conducted in primarily Western developed countries.

Previous research suggests that career and occupational choice reflects inner working structural components reflecting person-level variables, including temperament, personality, and dispositional traits (He et al., 2021; Ripski et al., 2011; Sui et al., 2021; Yusof et al., 2020). This study, therefore, includes a separate investigation exploring attachment dimensions relative to employee selection of the job sector, as different sectors of employment, have different expectations for workers (Furnham & Fudge, 2008; van Dolen et al., 2002).

This study extends the literature on attachment styles and how they relate to work experience and career satisfaction in a culture that places high importance on the cultural value of collectivism (Kagıtcıbaşı & Ataca, 2005; Kagıtcıbaşı et al., 2005). Building on previous research findings demonstrating a relationship between organizational factors (employment time, position tenure, and income) and career and workplace satisfaction (Aryee & Luk, 1996; Cerci & Dumludag, 2019; Kara et al., 2018; Martínez-León et al., 2018) this study examined structural and remunerative factors. Beyond these factors, the role of attachment patterns in the quality and nature of interpersonal relationships and person–environment fit suggests that as a domain of relational experience, workplace experiences and career satisfaction would be experienced differently by individuals scoring higher on measures of secure and insecure–dismissing attachment through the mechanism of ego protection (Hayden et al., 2017; Richards & Schat, 2011; Ronen & Zuroff, 2017; Virgă et al., 2019). Based on previous studies highlighting the role of gender in explanatory models of career and job satisfaction, this study includes an analysis of gender in relation to both career satisfaction and attachment. Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses guided the current study.

Hypothesis 1: Attachment style will predict career satisfaction over and beyond the influence of employee background and organizational factors, with both secure attachment and insecure attachment—dismissing associated with greater career satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Gender will demonstrate an interaction effect with organizational factors and sector in predicting career satisfaction.

Methods and Materials

Ethical Compliance.

After receiving university ethical permission, participants completed an informed consent waiver indicating their voluntary participation in the study. Participants were asked to answer demographic questions and then a series of questions relating to their working and employment situation, including salary, employment tenure, sector, and experience in their current position. Next followed the measure of attachment and career satisfaction. The participants were recruited using a non-random convenience sampling technique. An online link was distributed through business and social network platforms using SurveyMonkey, an online cloud-based survey software program.

Participants

The current study included 298 employees working in different sectors including management consultancy, retail, and consumer goods in Turkey. Univariate and multivariate outlier analysis determined four outliers, which were excluded from the analysis. There was 167 female (58%) and 121 male (42%) participants. Participants ranged from 22 to 60 years of age ($M=31.8$ years, $SD=7.4$). The education level varied from doctorate degree to associate degree. The greater part of the participants ($n=153$, 53.1%) had undergraduate degrees, very few ($n=10$, 3.5%) had an associate degree, 36.1% of the participants ($n=104$) had a graduate degree, 7.3% of the participants ($n=21$) had a doctorate degree. The work experience of the participants varied, with 22% of the participants having 1–3 years of work experience and 16% having more than 15 years. The greater part of the participants (35.8%) had been at their current position for 1–3 years.

Main Sector

Workplace environment was assessed by asking individuals to indicate in which sector they were employed and to indicate for how long they had been employed in their current sector. Employment sectors were divided into two main sectors based on the existing literature (Kenessey, 1987). The first grouping included participants employed in the *secondary sector* where raw materials are produced and processed into manufactured goods and products. Sub-sectors of the secondary sector include automotive, construction, energy, retail and consumer goods, pharmaceutical, and

chemicals. The second grouping was the *service sector* that involved the selling of services and skills. Sub-sectors of the services sector are management consultancy, logistics, information technology, and finance (Kenessey, 1987).

Attachment Styles

Attachment styles were assessed with the Relationship Styles Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). The RSQ is a 30-item self-report questionnaire that measures general orientations to close relationships on a 7-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (Not at all like me) to 7 (Very much like me). The RSQ was adapted to Turkey by Sümer and Güngör (1999) and most recently, Devci Şirin and Şen Doğan, (2021) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.78 for the total RSQ in a Turkish sample. In the current study, attachment subscales had acceptable reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas), ranging from 0.53 to 0.78.

Career Satisfaction

Career satisfaction was assessed using the Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990). The scale was translated to Turkish and back-translated to English by two individuals fluent in both languages and a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the factor structure and reliability of the Turkish translation. The CSS consists of 5 items with 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This scale has been widely used in previous literature (Abele & Spurk, 20,011 Graves et al., 2012) and has demonstrated high levels of reliability (Nae & Choi, 2022; Spurk et al., 2011, 2015) across samples drawn from different cultures and societies (Krauz et al., 2001; Meredith et al., 2007; Onadiran & Arogundade, 2021; Tziner et al., 2014; Wright et al., 2017).

Factor Analysis

As the CSS had not previously been translated to Turkish, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine the factor structure of the scale. Initial analysis indicated that all five CSS items demonstrated intercorrelations greater than 0.6. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.85, above the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974), and Bartlett's (1954) test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(10) = 1146.04, p < 0.05$), indicating a non-random correlation matrix. Both indices indicate the appropriateness of using factor analysis to determine the factor structure of the CSS. The initial eigenvalues indicated one factor explained 75% of the variance and yielded one component. All five variables are loaded on one factor at or above 0.80. Since there was only one factor, there was no rotation. Results of the CFA indicate the Turkish translation of the CSS demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties and was an appropriate measure of career satisfaction in a Turkish sample. See Table 1.

Table 1 Factor Loadings for the Turkish Translation of the Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS)

	Component Loading	Communality
Item 1	0.90	0.81
Item 2	0.93	0.86
Item 3	0.75	0.56
Item 4	0.90	0.81
Item 5	0.84	0.70

Data Analytic Strategy

All collected responses were coded and analyzed using the SPSS statistical analysis software program (IBM Corp. Released 2013. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 22.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.). A post hoc power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to determine the power of the regression analysis was conducted. A baseline sample size of 300 participants with 10 predictor variables was used for the determination of power. The recommended effect sizes are: 0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (medium effect), and 0.35 (large effect) (Cohen, 1977). The alpha level used for all analyses in the study was $p=05$. The post hoc analyses revealed the statistical power for this study exceeded 0.99 for the detection of a moderate to large effect using conventional standards (0.80), indicating sufficient power.

Results

The scores on each variable were computed and reliability coefficients were calculated. All scales and subscales had acceptable reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) ranging from 0.53 to 0.96 (for reference, see: Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the RSQ and CSS.

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations for Relationship Styles Questionnaire (RSQ) and Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS)

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
RSQ		
Secure	3.24	0.97
Fearful	3.79	0.86
Preoccupied	4.08	0.93
Dismissing	4.57	1.39
CSS		
Item 1	4.69	1.62
Item 2	4.70	1.62
Item 3	4.19	1.71
Item 4	4.80	1.57
Item 5	4.70	1.51

Correlational Analyses

Correlations were computed among the background characteristics and career satisfaction. Results indicated that participant career satisfaction was positively and significantly correlated with salary ($r=0.16$, $p<0.05$) and education ($r=0.28$, $p<0.05$). No significant correlation was found between career satisfaction and age, marital status, position experience, or work experience.

Hypothesis 1: Attachment style will predict career satisfaction over and beyond the influence of employee background and organizational factors, with both secure attachment and insecure attachment—dismissing associated with greater career satisfaction.

To examine the unique contribution of organizational characteristics and attachment style in the explanation of career satisfaction, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed in three steps. Variables that explain career satisfaction were entered in two steps. In step 1, career satisfaction was the dependent variable, and (a) age (b) marital status, and (c) educational level were the independent variables. In step 2, organizational variables (salary, position experience, work experience) were entered into the step 1 equation. In step 3, scores on the four attachment styles were entered into the equation. Before the hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed, the independent variables were examined for collinearity. Results of the variance inflation factor (all less than 2.0), and collinearity tolerance (all greater than 0.64) suggest that the estimated β s are well established in the following regression model.

The hierarchical regression analysis for career satisfaction revealed that, at stage one, demographic variables did not contribute significantly to the regression model, $R^2 = .005$, $F(3, 251) = 0.384$, $p > 0.01$ and accounted for 0.7% of the variation in career satisfaction. At stage two, demographic and organizational variables also did not contribute to the regression model, $R^2 = .03$, $F(6, 248) = 1.505$, $p > 0.01$ and accounted for 1% of the variation in career satisfaction. Finally, at stage three, adding attachment styles to the model contributed significantly to the regression model, $R^2 = .09$, $F(10, 244) = 2.440$, $p < 0.01$ and accounted for 5% of the variation in career satisfaction. However, not all of the predictors are significant in the analysis. According to these results, when all ten independent variables were included in stage three of the regression model, salary, dismissing attachment style and secure attachment style were significant predictors of career satisfaction. The summary of the hierarchical analysis of variables predicting career satisfaction can be seen in Table 3.

Hypothesis 2: Gender will demonstrate an interaction effect with organizational factors and sector in predicting career satisfaction.

To examine Research Question 2, a 2×2 factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the employment sector and gender entered as predictor variables and scores on the secure attachment measure entered as the

Table 3 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Career Satisfaction

Variables	β	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			0.06	0.005	-0.007
Education Level	0.06	0.36			
Age	-0.004	-0.30			
Marital Status	0.20	0.94			
Step 2			0.18	0.03	0.01
Education Level	0.05	0.28			
Age	-0.01	-0.64			
Marital Status	0.17	0.74			
Salary	0.54	2.72*			
Position Experience	-0.16	-0.65			
Work Experience	-0.03	-0.14			
Step 3			0.30	0.09	0.05*
Education Level	0.03	0.21			
Age	-0.01	-1.13			
Marital Status	0.16	0.69			
Salary	0.54	2.74*			
Position Experience	-0.07	-0.30			
Work Experience	-0.05	-0.19			
Fearful	-0.05	-0.37			
Dismissing	0.32	2.79*			
Preoccupied	0.11	0.98			
Secure	0.32	2.22*			

* $p < 0.05$.

dependent variable. Prior to the data analysis, the data were screened for outliers and normality of distribution. There were no outliers and a test of kurtosis and skewness indicated no serious departures from normality (all coefficients had values of less than 1). Levene's test for homogeneity of group variance was nonsignificant.

A 2 X 2 ANOVA was used to examine scores on secure attachment by gender and employment sector (secondary and service). There was not a statistically significant interaction effect ($F = 1.65$, $p > 0.05$) or main effect for the sector ($F = 0.91$, $p > 0.05$). There was a statistically significant main effect for gender ($F = 8.58$, $p < 0.00$). Male participants had a higher score on secure attachment ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.81$) than female participants ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.84$), $d = 0.34$. For fearful attachment, there was no interaction effect ($F = 0.69$, $p > 0.05$) or effect of the sector ($F = 1.33$, $p > 0.05$). There was a statistically significant main effect for gender ($F = 5.59$, $p = 0.02$), with female participants scoring higher ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.16$) than male participants ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.12$), $d = -0.30$.

There was no significant interaction ($F = 0.97$, $p > 0.05$) or main effect for either gender ($F = 1.46$, $p > 0.05$) or sector ($F = 0.86$, $p > 0.05$). Similarly, no interaction effect was reported for insecure-preoccupied attachment ($F = 0.48$,

$p > 0.05$), and both gender ($F = 0.44$, $p > 0.05$) and sector ($F = 0.41$, $p > 0.05$) were nonsignificant predictors. There was no main effect for insecure–dismissing attachment ($F = 0.62$, $p > 0.05$). An independent sample t test was conducted to determine whether there existed a significant difference between females and males in terms of career satisfaction. Results indicated that the mean career satisfaction score of females was 4.54 ($SD = 1.43$) and was not significantly different than that of males ($M = 0.71$, $SD = 1.33$), $t(286) = 1.03$, $p = 0.30$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of attachment styles and organizational factors within a cultural and social context differing from the prevalent environments in which this relationship has been researched. Specifically, cultures scoring highly on measures of collectivism suggest the possibility of different relationships between attachment and workplace satisfaction (Strand et al., 2019). Additionally, workplace precarity and economic insecurity characterizing many developing and emerging economies, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, suggests the importance of further contextualization (Anh et al., 2019). To this end, the current study examined adult attachment styles and career satisfaction of employees in private organizations in Turkey.

Hypothesis 1: Attachment style will predict career satisfaction over and beyond the influence of employee background and organizational factors, with both secure attachment and insecure attachment—dismissing associated with greater career satisfaction.

In the first step of the regression analysis, none of the participant background characteristics significantly predicted career satisfaction, while in the second step, employee salary exhibited a significant positive relationship. The latter finding is consistent with previous research (Faupel-Badger et al. 2017), although importantly, absolute salary may demonstrate less predictive ability than perceived salary relative to similarly employed individuals (Hammami et al., 2020). The results of the analysis for the relationship between attachment style and career satisfaction revealed that secure attachment and insecure–dismissing attachment were both positively and significantly associated with greater levels of career satisfaction. Insecure–fearful and insecure–preoccupied subscales were not significant.

Findings on the secure attachment dimension are consistent with the literature reporting that higher levels of secure attachment predict career satisfaction, and more generally, life satisfaction (Chris et al., 2009; Gould & Penley, 1984; Lévy-Garboua & Montmarquette, 2004; Nickerson & Nagle, 2005; Sumer & Knight, 2001; Yang et al., 2008). One possible explanation for the consistent finding is that people with secure attachment experience positive and healthy interpersonal relationships that include trust, reciprocal sharing, and mutual support (Karapınar, 2015; Leiter et al., 2015; Simpson and Rholes 2017). Considering that social capital, which includes personal relationships, is strongly correlated with life satisfaction

(Amati et al. 2018), it is expected that individuals higher in secure attachment would evince greater career satisfaction. These results support the centrality of personal relationships, both inside and outside work, in general well-being and domain-general life satisfaction (Moghadam et al., 2016; Sharif et al., 2021; Temiz & Comert, 2018). One possible explanation for the current finding is that adult attachment has been linked to work balance, with individuals exhibiting secure attachment in adulthood better able to experience greater levels of positive work–life balance (Sumer & Knight, 2001).

The results related to insecure–dismissing attachment suggest a novel finding that seems to reflect larger macro-level factors characteristic of developing and emerging economies, including Turkey, and differing from the economic context of previous research that has primarily studied workers from developed economies (Zhang et al. 2021). Cranshaw and Game (2010) found that insecure–dismissing and insecure–fearful attachment dimensions were associated with lower levels of career satisfaction and trust of others. However, they also found that the insecure–dismissing attachment style had similar work satisfaction levels in terms of job security and opportunities for learning compared with securely attached individuals. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), there is a similarity between dismissing and secure attachment patterns. Both attachment forms are categorized as having a positive sense of self and internal working model and exhibit more constructive internal regulatory mechanisms.

Correspondingly, the self-perception and attributional style characteristic of insecure–dismissing attachment may lead to positive explanatory mechanisms associated with workplace satisfaction. In the current economic context of Turkey, it is suggested that aspects of the dismissing attachment pattern may prove protective for workers when faced with workplace challenges and larger macro-level economic insecurity. Turkey has experienced multiple economic crises over the last 20 years (Cömert & Yeldan, 2018; Susam & Bakkal, 2008), with corresponding ramifications for employees, including the potential of job loss, income devaluation, and limits on freedom, and these crises have only intensified during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Özdin & Bayrak Özdin, 2020). These economic crises have brought about long-lasting effects on organizations and employees characterized by ambiguity and stress.

Additionally, many organizations in Turkey do not have settled procedures and processes for career management systems (Hay Group 2014). Therefore, employees with a positive self-image related to career management and workplace dynamics, including in the perception of income, status loss, promotion or demotion, and job opportunity, would potentially demonstrate greater resiliency. Studies in higher-income cultures scoring higher on measures of individualism report a negative relationship between insecure–dismissing attachment and resiliency (Fraleley et al., 1998; Galatzer-Levy & Bonanno, 2013). However, research evidence suggests that individuals that engage in repression related to negative stimuli show lower levels of response to negative events and, correspondingly, experience less negative affect (Myers, 2000). While repression is associated with numerous deleterious health outcomes, in the face of high levels of economic dysfunction, repression may serve individuals to help blunt the negative experiences they face.

Research examining coping strategies in stressful conditions suggests that repressing emotions or experience is a frequently employed defensive mechanism. For example, Palomar (2008), reports that individuals living in poverty and lower socioeconomic statuses (SES) show different coping mechanisms, including greater adoption of avoidance and minimization strategies, compared to higher SES individuals. Although sub-optimal, research suggests that repression is related to greater resilience for individuals when confronted with traumatic events (Coifman et al., 2007). Considering the context within which this study was conducted, it is probable that repeated economic crises, as has happened and continue (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic) to happen in Turkey, and also across the developing world, with the concomitant effects of employment instability and precarity, would serve as an ongoing traumatic experience for many individuals. This finding would seem to generalize to other cultures and societies where individuals are faced with repeated crises and traumatic experiences in their environments, economic or otherwise.

Hypothesis 2: Gender will demonstrate an interaction effect with organizational factors and sector in predicting career satisfaction.

The major finding related to Hypothesis 2 was a significant relationship between secure attachment, gender, and career satisfaction, although no significant interaction effects were found to be significant. One of the novel findings from this study relates to the positive and significant relationship between insecure–dismissing attachment and career satisfaction, but the lack of an interaction effect with gender, although different than what has been reported in Western cultures, does find support in cross-cultural research not based in Western, more individualistic cultures. Previous research, has reported significant gender differences in attachment patterns (Ardenghi et al., 2020; Brennan et al., 1991; Monteoliva et al., 2012), with men exhibiting greater levels of insecure–dismissing attachment. Yet, research from non-Western cultures suggests that this distinction may not represent a cross-culturally valid finding (Schmitt, 2003).

We suggest one explanation for the nonsignificant findings related to gender differences in insecure–dismissing attachment and career satisfaction relates to the cultural context of participants. Specifically, in cultures that place a high value on collectivism, like Turkey, support seeking in difficult and stressful situations, as characteristic of individuals scoring high on secure attachment, may be lower with insecure–dismissing attachment and represent a reflection of a broader-based coping strategy. In such a context, ego-protective dynamics, as evinced with insecure–dismissing attachment, would function to promote well-being when faced with broader-based social stressors. Schmitt (2003), in a cross-cultural study of 62 cultures, suggested that a lack of gender differences in insecure–dismissing attachment may be more ecologically and economically based rather than representing a fundamental gender difference. Thus, while individuals high in secure attachment would demonstrate greater social support seeking when dealing with problems, individuals high in insecure–dismissing attachment may be less willing to do so, and instead, rely on ego-protective mechanisms (Wise & Mengüç, 2021).

Contributions of the Current Study

The contribution of this study to the current literature consists, first, of the finding that secure attachment levels in adulthood predict career satisfaction for workers in Turkey beyond what has been traditionally seen as determining factors in career satisfaction (e.g., salary, promotion opportunities). Securely attached individuals demonstrate several characteristics that translate to job-related success, including more positive interpersonal relationships (Scrima et al. 2015), problem-solving competence (Arslan et al., 2012), hierarchical navigation (Ronen & Zuroff, 2017), and problem-focused coping strategies (Johnstone & Feeney, 2015). In contexts with challenging economic situations and repeated exposure to social stresses related to ongoing and chronic economic pressure, individuals scoring higher on measures of secure attachment in adulthood are more likely to show the least amount of distress and exhibit better adjustment.

While insecure–avoidant and insecure–fearful attachment scores were not predictive of career satisfaction, there was a demonstrated relationship with insecure–dismissing attachment. Considering the overlap in the ego-protective dynamics in both secure and dismissing attachment, it is suggested that individuals scoring higher on the dismissing attachment dimension may experience emotional and cognitive protection from difficult work-related experiences, even though this protection may come at the cost of poorer physical health and long-term outcomes. Our findings related to dismissing attachment scores and career satisfaction suggest a connection with research demonstrating ego-protective functions and resiliency among low-SES individuals facing traumatic experiences, both chronic and acute, insofar as economic crises are considered as traumatic inputs into the work–life of an individual. This finding may generalize beyond Turkey and suggest unique dynamics between adult attachment patterns and workplace and career experiences within economies demonstrating instability of employment, inflation, and organizational disruption related to economic crises, as demonstrated globally during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further, results in the current study did not point to any gender-based difference in career satisfaction among participants. As discussed above, this finding is similar to research on gender differences in job and career satisfaction conducted cross-culturally but does differ from previous research examining gender differences in Turkey. This is partly due to the economic status of the participants in this study, as previous research in Turkey demonstrating a gender difference in satisfaction levels has derived largely from middle- and lower-SES groups. The current sample consisted entirely of middle to upper-SES employed individuals and as such, findings are similar to previous studies in Western countries. A final contribution of the current study relates to the translation and validation of the Career Satisfaction Scale in Turkish, which provides researchers across different disciplines with a new instrument to study adults in workplace settings.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The correlational and cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow for statements of causality, but the causal precedence in the variable sequence is suggestive. Self-report measures are vulnerable to response bias as the self-assessment methods assess the explicit level of the internal representation of an individual and results should be interpreted with this in mind. Third, although attachment style has been indicated as a universal domain of individual differences, the measure may demonstrate cross-cultural differences related to attachment styles and organization satisfaction, although findings in Turkey do suggest strong similarities with previous research (Sumer & Gungor, 1999).

These findings highlight some potentially fruitful directions for future inquiry, including how different organizational cultures may maximize employee success and productivity through recognition of motivational elements in work performance. Recognition of employee psychological dispositional characteristics, including personality and attachment behaviors, can assist human resource managers and organizational support systems to integrate diverse employee background characteristics into workplace culture to promote greater organizational success. More importantly, however, is the recognition that factors beyond the organizational context influence employee career satisfaction, and by extension, employee success, in an intersectional dynamic reflecting the person–environment fit between individual-level attachment variability and macro-level structural forces.

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Data Availability The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to the possibility that information could compromise research participant privacy/consent, but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent All participants completed an informed consent specifying their participation was voluntary and anonymous and explained the possible risks and benefits of participation.

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