

## Lifetime Attachment: Adult Daughters Attachment to Their Old Mothers

**Authors :** Meltem Anafarta Şendağ, Funda Kutlu

**Abstract :** Attachment theory has some major postulates that direct attention of psychologists from many different domains. First, the theory suggests that attachment is a lifetime process. This means that every human being from cradle to grave needs someone stronger to depend on in times of stress. Second, the attachment is a dynamic process and as one goes through developmental stages it is being transferred from one figure to another (friends, romantic partners). Third, the quality of attachment relationships later in time directly affected by the earliest attachment relationship established between the mother and the infant. Depending on these postulates, attachment literature focuses mostly on mother - child attachment during childhood and romantic relationship during adulthood. However, although romantic partners are important attachment figures in adults' life, parents are not dropped out from the attachment hierarchy but they keep being important attachment figures. Despite the fact that parents could still be an important figure in adults' life, adult - parent attachment is overlooked in the literature. Accordingly, this study focuses on adult daughters' current attachment to their old mothers in relation with early parental bonding and current attachment to husbands. Participants of the study were 383 adult women (Average age = 40, ranging between 23 and 70) whose mothers were still alive and who were married at the time of the study. Participants were completed Adult Attachment Scale, Parental Bonding Instrument, and Experiences in Close Relationship - II together with demographic questionnaire. Results revealed that daughters' attachment to their mothers weakens as they get older, have more children, and have longer marriages. Stronger attachment to mothers was found positively correlated with current satisfaction with the relationship, perception of maternal care before the age of 12 and negatively correlated with perception of controlling behavior before the age 12. Considering the relationship between current parental attachment and romantic attachment, it was found that as the current attachment to mother strengthens attachment avoidance towards husband decreases. Results revealed that although attachment between the adult daughters and old mothers weakens, the relationship is still critical in daughters' lives. The strength of current attachment with the mother is related both with the early relationship with the mother and current attachment with the husband. The current study is thought to contribute to attachment theory emphasizing the attachment as a lifetime construct.

**Keywords :** adult daughter, attachment, old mothers, parental bonding

**Conference Title :** ICPS 2016 : International Conference on Psychological Sciences

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** June 23-24, 2016