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REVIEW ARTICLE

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

Bağlanma Teorisi Perspektifinden Kadına Yönelik Şiddeti

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women continues to be an important social problem worldwide. Violence against women encompasses all kinds of damaging acts against women's freedom, rights and safety, whether physical, psychological, sexual or economic. Attachment theory is an approach used to explain how individuals' parental relationships in childhood affect their attitudes and behaviors in romantic relationships in adulthood. In this context, attachment theory plays a critical role in understanding how attachment styles of victims and perpetrators of violence shape and sustain such relationships. In fact, violent tendencies are more likely to be seen in individuals with anxious, avoidant and disorganized attachment styles. Interventions such as promoting secure attachment and helping victims of to establish healthy relationship dynamics reduce the risk of recurrence of violence. For this reason, understanding the relationship between attachment styles and violence against women is thought to be an important step towards solving this problem. Taking attachment theory into consideration for the prevention of violence and the healing of victims will help to build healthier social relations. Therefore, in our study to understand the relationship between violence against women and attachment theory, it is aimed to provide an important perspective in understanding this complex problem. As a result, our study aims to organize the existing information on the relationship between attachment theory and violence and to fill a gap regarding the effect of attachment styles on women exposed to violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence, attachment styles, secure attachment, avoidant attachment, anxious attachment, neglect and abuse, domestic violence cycle

Öz

Kadına yönelik şiddet, dünya genelinde önemli bir toplumsal sorun olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir. Kadına yönelik şiddet, fiziksel, psikolojik, cinsel veya ekonomik anlamda kadınların özgürlüğüne, haklarına ve güvenliğine yönelik yapılan her türlü zarar verici eylemi kapsamaktadır. Bağlanma teorisi ise, bireylerin çocukluk dönemindeki ebeveyn ilişkilerinin, yetişkinlikteki romantik ilişkilerdeki tutumlarını ve davranışlarını nasıl etkilediğini açıklamak için kullanılan bir yaklaşımdır. Bu bağlamda bağlanma teorisi, şiddet mağdurlarının ve şiddet uygulayan bireylerin bağlanma stilleri, bu tür ilişkilerin nasıl şekillendiğini ve devam ettiğini anlamada kritik rol oynar. Bağlanma teorisi ekseninde şiddet mağdurlarına yönelik; güvenli bağlanmayı

teşvik etmek, şiddet mağdurlarının sağlıklı ilişki dinamikleri kurmalarına yardımcı olmak gibi yapılan müdahaleler, şiddetin tekrar etme riskini azaltmaktadır. Bu sebeple bağlanma stillerinin kadına yönelik şiddetle olan ilişkisinin anlaşılmasının, bu sorunun çözülmesi adına önemli bir adım olacağı düşünülmektedir. Şiddetin önlenmesi ve mağdurların iyileştirilmesi için bağlanma teorisinin dikkate alınması, daha sağlıklı toplumsal ilişkilerin inşa edilmesine yardımcı olacaktır. Dolayısıyla kadına yönelik şiddet ve bağlanma teorisi arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamaya yönelik yapılan çalışmamızda, bu karmaşık sorunun anlaşılmasında önemli bir perspektif sunmak amaçlanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, çalışmamızda bağlanma teorisi ve şiddet arasındaki ilişkiye dair mevcut bilgilerin değerlendirilmesi ve bağlanma stillerinin şiddete maruz kalan kadınlar üzerindeki etkisine ilişkin bir boşluğun doldurulması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aile içi şiddet, bağlanma stilleri, güvenli bağlanma, kaçınan bağlanma, kaygılı bağlanma, ihmal ve istismar, aile içi şiddet döngüsü

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women- especially intimate partner violence- is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights. Estimates published by WHO show that around 1 in 3 (30%) women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is intimate partner violence. Worldwide, almost one-third (27%) of women aged 15-49 in a relationship report experiencing some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner (Who, 2024).

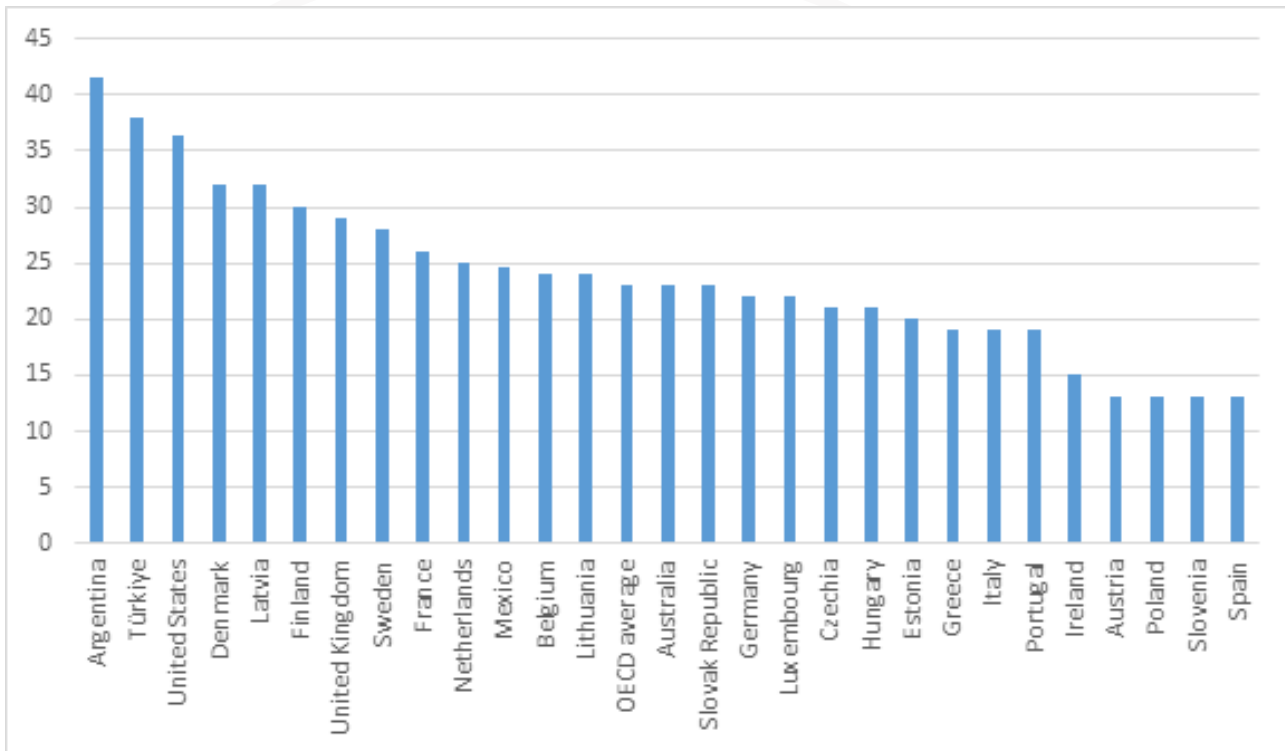
Violence against women is the most shameful human rights violation and knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth (Kassa, 2021). Globally, an average of 24 people per minute experience rape, physical violence or abuse by an intimate partner, with intimate partner violence alone affecting more than 12 million people each year (Hotline, 2024). More frequent and severe abuse has also been reported by some women during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sheppard et al., 2024). These estimates are large, but the actual numbers are likely to be even larger due to the challenges women face in being open about their experiences of violence. Evidence suggests that violence from an intimate partner can often remain unrecorded due to social stigma and women not wanting to make things worse for themselves (WHO, 2024)

Violence against women is a worsening global emergency that requires urgent action by governments (Lawn, 2024). Violence can have serious consequences, including injuries, disabilities and death. Individuals who experience violence are more likely to face a range of health and social risks throughout their lives- for example, mental illness, anxiety disorders, high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse and unsafe sex, chronic and communicable diseases and low educational attainment, and social problems such as violence and criminality. The prevalence and far-reaching effects of this violence require urgent and comprehensive action (Ligiero et al., 2024).

Surveys conducted to identify different types of violence against women in Türkiye show that 38% of women in Türkiye have been exposed to lifetime physical and sexual violence by their husbands and 11% have been subjected to physical and sexual violence by their husbands or partners in the last 12

months Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2020). Notably, there are no national statistics on the rate of sexual violence among foreigners who are not spouses or partners. Furthermore, the rate of child marriage in Türkiye is significant and reported to be 14.7% (UNICEF, 2021).

Table 1. Violence against women in OECD Countries



As shown in Table 1, Across the 27 OECD countries with available data almost a quarter (23%) of women report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner. This ranges from a low of %13 in Spain, Slovenia, Poland and Austria to as high as 36% in the United States and 38%, or almost two in five women, in Türkiye. The highest rate of violence against women among OECD countries is in Argentina with 41.6%. Rates of violence are estimated to be even higher in many others of the world (OECD, 2023).

One of the paradigms used to explain male perpetrated domestic violence is attachment theory (Goldenson et al., 2007). Attachment plays a fundamental role in development from “cradle to grave” (Bowlby, 1979). According to attachment theory, the nature of relationships with primary caregivers forms the basis of expectations about the self, the world and others, and designs a coping style in terms of secure, anxious or avoidant attachment (Luzmanna & Soomerfeld, 2024).

Attachment theory deals with the relationship between children and their caregivers and emphasizes how these relationships influence children’s self-concept and worldview. According to the theory, it is through initial interactions with the primary caregiver (usually mother or father that an individual develops his or her own Internal Dynamic Model of relationships, in which cognitive orientations about

how to behave are given. It generates expectations of how others should behave in relationships and influences later relationships, such as domestic violence. Therefore, the attachment system remains important throughout an individual's lifetime. Thus, a child who experiences loving care tends to develop an internal dynamic in which he or she considers himself or herself worthy of love and expects others to behave in a trustworthy and loving way, whereas a child who experiences maltreatment and unpredictable care may develop an internal dynamic in which he or she considers himself or herself worthless and expects others to be unpredictable and loving. They are more likely to have difficulty trusting others. These attachment experiences are internalized and generalized to other relationships (Costa & Botelho, 2021).

Many women who fail to achieve secure attachment are likely to develop such a perception, ready to relive similar traumas through repeated experiences. The self-perception of those who have been neglected or abused during their upbringing is shaped by experiences of humiliation and belittlement. Thus, they think that "the person who will abuse or use violence against them" is their fate, and in some cases, they do not try to change their experiences and do not oppose them (Van Der Kolk, 2020).

Attachment is a risk or vulnerability factor for violence due to its role in interpersonal relationships (Koral and Kovacs 2022). An insecure attachment can predispose women victims to psychological maladjustment that may reflect psychopathology. Likewise, our general society also manifests beliefs that support and legitimize violence. Thus, attachment difficulties are thought to be a plausible explanation for violence (Ørke et al. 2021).

Some researchers note that securely attached individuals tend to experience greater satisfaction and form trusting relationships, whereas insecurely attached individuals (i.e., expressed mainly as reluctance in the relationship and other mixed emotions such as feelings of dependency, rejection, and fear) tend to experience high levels of anxiety, anger, and frustration in their intimate relationships. Thus, an insecure attachment may reduce female victims' resilience and resources, predisposing them to psychological maladjustment, which in turn may reflect greater vulnerability and psychopathology. For example, securely attached victims show lower levels of psychopathology compared to insecurely (e.g. avoidant) attached victims, who show higher levels of psychopathology such as depression, anxiety and anger (Almeida et al., 2023).

In general, studies have shown a relationship between women's victimization of violence and insecure attachment (Ørke et al. 2021), because when women experience violence, they tend to feel more anxious when forming social relationships as adults (Almeida et al., 2023).

Although there are many studies on adult attachment and violence in Türkiye there is very little research on the relationship between adult attachment and violence. Therefore, our study aims to fill a gap regarding the impact of attachment styles on women who are exposed to violence. In addition, by looking at the attachment styles of women who have been subjected to violence, it is aimed to



provide awareness and take action to break the cycle. In addition, it is thought to increase their psychological self-defense power, to develop self-confidence and self-worth levels necessary for abstract and/or concrete actions to stop violence, and to predict the relationship styles, communication skills and personality traits necessary to strengthen them by identifying their weaknesses

Although there is some support for the relationship between attachment and domestic violence in the literature, we believe that our study will contribute theoretically to the knowledge and development of this research area, which can be developed in the context of domestic violence and attachment in future studies.

This review article aims to examine the relationship between attachment theory and violence and evaluates the existing literature on how the attachment styles of victims of violence are shaped. Therefore, our study aims to clarify the strength of the relationship between domestic violence and attachment styles. This study aims to fill an important gap by examining the relationship between intimate partner violence and attachment theory, an area that is rarely explored despite many studies addressing each topic separately. The dynamic relationship between intimate partner violence and attachment styles is often considered independently, whereas the interaction between these two factors plays a critical role in understanding the psychological and emotional states of violence victims. In this context, this study seeks to address the gaps in existing literature by exploring both intimate partner violence and attachment theory together, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their relationship. It also aims to offer a new perspective in the development of intervention strategies for victims of violence. Additionally, understanding this relationship could contribute to the design of more effective initiatives and interventions to prevent violence. And finally, we believe that our study can provide important insights for professionals developing therapeutic interventions and programs for victims of violence.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment Theory

The attachment theory proposed by John Bowlby states that attachment styles develop in the first years of an individual's life. An individual may develop an insecure attachment style when their physical needs are not met, when they are not shown affection, when they are physically hurt or exposed to violence (Dalgat et al., 2021). This theory has been further developed in adult romantic relationships by Sandy Hazan and Philip Shaver, who categorized adult attachment into three categories: secure, anxious and avoidant (Toof et al., 2020). Attachment theory states that the bond between caregivers and infants can affect the child's attachment styles (Yahya et al., 2017). The behaviors of caregivers and their reactions to infants will determine the internal pattern of working models. These working models formed in infants are a stable force and then extend into adolescence and adulthood (Zeifman, 2019).

Attachment plays a fundamental role in development “from cradle to grave” (Bowlby, 1979). According to attachment theory, activation of the attachment system, i.e. behaviors aimed at getting close to an attachment figure, is an adaptive response in times of distress. According to attachment theory, the nature of relationships with primary caregivers forms the basis of expectations about the self, the world and others and designs a coping style in terms of secure, anxious or avoidant attachment. Secure attachment contributes to the formation of mental representations of the worthiness of the self and expectations that others will respond to one’s needs. These ‘internal models’ promote healthy development in adolescence and adulthood and facilitate the possibility of using interpersonal adaptive resources in difficult life situations. Insecure attachment (i.e. anxious or avoidant attachment) is conceptualized as a developmental outcome associated with early relationships with attachment figures in which attachment needs are not appropriately met, leading to the development of secondary strategies to cope with distress. In particular, attachment anxiety is conceptualized as hyperactivation of the attachment behaviour system, i.e. intense help-seeking accompanied by an ambivalent attitude towards the other. Attachment avoidance is conceptualized as deactivation of the attachment behavior system (Bosmans et al. 2022).

Styles

Secure Attachment

Responsive caregiving behavior, which includes the ability to recognize, interpret, and respond quickly to the child’s signals of need and/or interest, is a central determinant of secure child-caregiver attachment (Madigan, 2024). Securely attached individuals can identify times when they are emotionally distressed and cope with this distress by seeking closeness and trusting others. Secure attachment increases individuals’ ability to cope with uncertainty by enabling them to be more flexible and also allows them to remain open to new information and interpretations (Spencer et al., 2020).

Individuals with a secure attachment style have a positive sense of self-worth and respect for others. Moreover, they are comfortable with intimacy in relationships and have the ability to identify their feelings and distress and cope with them by seeking help. People with anxious attachment style have a negative sense of self and a positive sense of others. They care a lot about being approved and accepted by others and are concerned about relationships and rejection (Sadeghmohammadi and Spencer, 2024). Although they are aware of their emotions, it is difficult to recognize and manage them. Individuals with avoidant attachment style have a negative perception of themselves and others. Although they care about the acceptance and approval of others, they avoid intimacy to avoid the pain of rejection or loss. They try to protect their self-worth by avoiding close relationships (Spencer et al., 2021).

Individuals with secure attachment style feel comfortable with emotional closeness and are equally comfortable with independence. They do not feel rejected, fearful or anxious about their relationship



when their partner needs space. They can trust others and allow others to trust them. Securely attached individuals also encourage and respect their partner's need for personal space and time apart. They feel secure in their relationships and establish a healthy balance between their competing needs (Lein, 2024).

In line of this information, many studies have shown that the presence of attachment-promoting behaviors leads to increased marital satisfaction and a more secure and stable relationship. From an attachment perspective, emotional security and stability are primary components of relational health and safety in romantic relationships. For couples, emotional safety promotes a sense of security through reassurance and trust in their partner's ability to be a reliable source of comfort, support, and understanding and to consistently show up in their relationship in a way that facilitates trust and a secure bond (Kanaganayagam, 2024). It is possible to say that this sense of safety acts as a barrier to the occurrence of violence.

Anxious Attachment

Individuals with anxious attachment style desire high levels of emotional and physical closeness to their partners and fear abandonment. If the individual has an anxious attachment style, they may try to achieve the desired level of intimacy through violence, especially when they perceive a threat to the relationship or believe that their partner has left the relationship (Allison et al., 2008).

People with anxious attachment may behave in ways that elicit negative reactions from their partners, such as making overly negative attributions about themselves, their partners and their relationships. These negative attributions often drive their behavior with their partner, resulting in cold, distant behavior, biting remarks, or bizarre accusations about their motives and feelings about the relationship. In this way, the cognitive and emotional patterns of anxiously attached people can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to behaviors that undermine their relationships (Chorpik et al., 2023). In addition, anxiously attached individuals are easily triggered and have difficulty coping with their triggers. Anxious attachment not only increases the individual's need for closeness, but also increases fears of relationship and rejection (Spencer et al., 2020). Anxiously attached individuals make inferences about their partner's attitudes, judge them and translate their behavior (Costa and Botelho, 2021).

Women with an anxious attachment style stay in an abusive relationship because they fear a possible separation. In addition, women with high attachment anxiety may tolerate violence in order not to lose intimacy with their partner (Gehl et al., 2024).

Avoidant Attachment

Avoidant attachment style is an insecure attachment that develops in early childhood when the caregiver is emotionally unavailable, unresponsive or punitive. The child learns to use an emotionally disabling strategy to suppress their emotional needs and relies on themselves to maintain peace and

closeness with the caregiver. Avoidant attachment continues into adulthood as a dismissive-avoidant attachment in which individuals deny the importance of emotions, avoid emotional intimacy, and maintain distance in relationships to maintain autonomy and protect themselves from rejection (Li, 2025).

Infants with avoidant attachment seem to think that their mothers will not be there when they need them. After separations, they tend to avoid contact with their mothers or ignore their mothers' efforts to interact. They show less distress when alone than other infants. Mothers of babies characterized as avoidant seem to reject their babies. It is almost as if they are angry with their babies. They hold and love their babies less than other mothers and their interactions are more unpleasant and even hurtful. These babies cry a lot at home, are not easily calmed by contact with the caregiver, and yet are very uncomfortable with separations. Mothers of infants with avoidant attachment often minimize or devalue their own childhood attachment experiences (Main & Solomon, 1990).

Avoidant attachment best represents an adaptation to an environment in which it may be an advantage to become more self-reliant and withdraw from others, whereas preoccupied and disorganized attachment may be the most 'effective' style of attachment in unpredictable and/or inconsistent social environments (Sagone et al., 2023).

Avoidant attachment disorder develops when a person's efforts to seek comfort from others are overlooked. The result is that they stop being close to others. Growing up with a parent who does not console the child's distress can have a profound negative impact on the child's ability to feel and understand their own emotions. The person with this attachment pattern often disdains close relationships and has difficulty seeking comfort from others when emotionally distressed. It is as if the person does not see others as a source of comfort. Most individuals with an avoidant attachment pattern lack flexibility in relationships and are very isolated. One way this pattern can manifest is in narcissistic personality disorder, where the person acts as if others are not important. The person may become sulky and withdrawn, as seen in a person with schizoid personality disorder, or they may become angry and controlling of others. Whichever maladaptive pattern the person adopts, they cannot effectively access others for comfort and safety when distressed (Lahousen et al., 2019).

A person with avoidant attachment disorder may appear to be very calm in a distressing situation, when in fact his or her inner experience is quite the opposite. Psychophysiological studies show that heart rate and cortisol levels increase in such individuals when they are stressed by the separation or loss of an attachment figure (Spangler & Grossmann, 1993). Over time, avoidant individuals learn to suppress physiological responses to distress. This does not mean that they do not feel distress, but when they feel overwhelmed, they seem unable to come up with a solution. As a result, they over-regulate their affect to appear unaffected and in essence become emotionally paralyzed. The hallmarks of the personality of an individual with an avoidant attachment pattern are avoidance of physical contact; a rough, stagnant and impersonal relationship style; and flat affect, which can man-



ifest as depression or apathy. Sometimes the person does not remember childhood and may normalize or over-idealize their mother as a “good mother” when describing their early history. The person with this pattern has not had their needs met as a child and has subsequently learned to live as if their needs were not met. Some people develop a sense of self that they are flawed, helpless and dependent but isolated from others. Another defense may be to see others as weak and flawed and to see themselves with inflated self-esteem. When this occurs, they may reject others and become very controlling and punitive as a way of distancing themselves from intimacy (Drescher, 2024).

Avoidant attachment is typically associated with avoidance of interpersonal intimacy, discomfort with emotional disclosure, and a desire for relational independence (Shaver & Fraley, 2008). Avoidantly attached individuals typically mask their emotions and are less aware of their emotional states and react less to both positive and negative emotions (Degangi, 2017). Individuals with avoidant attachment style often experience attachment problems and may be emotionally aggressive or unpredictable (Tanasugarn, 2023). In addition, people with avoidant attachment style equate closeness and intimacy with loss of freedom. These people have difficulty in responding to the emotional needs of their partners. They prefer not to share their deepest feelings. They have difficulty trusting. Instead of establishing intimacy with a single partner, they prefer superficial relationships where attachment does not occur (Li, 2025).

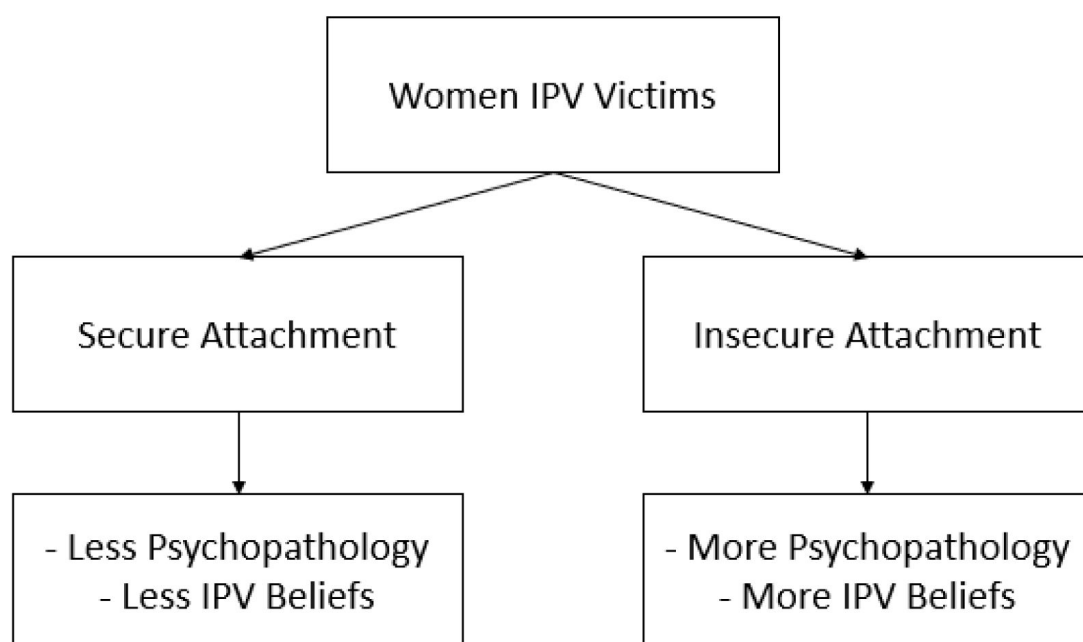
Avoidant attachment seek connection but fear rejection. Thus, they tend to have lower attachment expectations as a self-protection mechanism. Help situations expose avoidantly attached people to factors that can threaten their sense of security because such situations often involve an expectation of emotional connection. Previous research shows that avoidantly attached people feel less empathy when asked to respond to help situations. Such empathy avoidance is a phenomenon that occurs when people are aware that they will be asked for help and that it will be costly to help before they encounter a person in need (Power, 2023). Given their reluctance to emotional intimacy, possibly due to fears of rejection, avoidantly attached people may engage in empathy avoidance behavior in helping situations to protect themselves against this uncomfortable possibility (Bosmanss, 2020).

Attachment and Domestic Violence

One of the paradigms used to explain domestic violence perpetrated by men is attachment theory. Attachment theorists argue that adult psychological and relational functioning is largely determined by childhood relationships with caregivers. Proponents of attachment theory argue that children internalize their early experiences with caregivers and form enduring internal working models of self and others. Many researchers have used this theory as a developmental framework for understanding the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of relationship distress in the context of adult romantic relationships. Insecure attachment has been associated with vulnerability to various psychopathologies, including depression and borderline antisocial personality disorder (Goldenson et al., 2007).

An insecure attachment may predispose female victims to psychopathology (Carnelley et al., 2016). Given the evidence that a secure attachment is related to marital satisfaction, quality and functioning, it is reasonable to assume that an insecure attachment plays a primary role in domestic violence (Almeida et al., 2023). Moreover, violence may reflect patterns of behavior learned within the family. Direct exposure to parental violence may trigger insecure attachment patterns, as victims of violence who were exposed to or witnessed violence in childhood are expected to have more difficulty in developing a secure attachment in adult relationships (Dutton et al., 1994).

Table 2. Relationship between adult attachment, psychopathology, and IPV beliefs.



As shown in Table 2, attachment is an violence risk or vulnerability factor, in part because of the role that it plays in interpersonal relationships. An insecure attachment can predispose women victims to psychological maladjustment, which can reflect psychopathology (Almeida et al., 2023).

Many women who fail to achieve secure attachment are likely to develop such a perception, ready to relive similar traumas through repeated experiences. The self-perception of those who have been neglected or abused during their upbringing is shaped by experiences of humiliation and belittlement. Thus, they think that “the person who will abuse or use violence against them” is their fate, and in some cases, they do not try to change their experiences and do not oppose them (Van Der Kolk, 2020).

Childhood experiences and attachment patterns have an impact on women’s choice of partners in adulthood. In other words, whether women develop a secure attachment depending on the quality of their relationships with their caregivers is important for partner relationships (Mohommadi et al, 2016).



Various traumatic experiences such as childhood abuse/neglect, death/separation of a parent, or witnessing domestic violence can lead individuals to develop insecure attachment styles in their future romantic relationships and negatively affect a child's functioning in relationships with family, friends and romantic partners in their adult lives (Erozkan, 2016).

Insecure attachments can lead to various relationship problems such as dissatisfaction and cases of intimate partner violence. Those who report avoidant attachment styles are known to show more childhood trauma experiences and dating violence victimization compared to other attachment styles (Rubin-Wylie & Macphail, 2024).

WHO (2023) found meta-analytic evidence that attachment insecurity is an important individual vulnerability factor (diathesis) associated with partner maltreatment and that when individuals with insecure attachment orientations experience stress, the tendency to engage in partner maltreatment typically increases. Furthermore, many studies have shown that individuals with insecure attachment styles (i.e., anxious and avoidant styles) are more motivated to aggression and partner violence due to emotional withdrawal, poor marital interaction processes, harmful conflict resolution strategies, shame and guilt, and a ruined social image.

Therapeutic Intervention and Attachment-Based Approaches

Violence against women is more than just a physical assault; it has profound effects on women's mental health, their ability to attach and their place in society. Attachment disorders can occur as a result of the trauma experienced by women survivors of violence and can make it difficult for them to form healthy relationships. Treatment should be aimed at both mitigating the effects of violence against women and strengthening attachment skills. In this process, various methods such as psychotherapy, support groups and family therapy can help women heal and form healthy attachments (Wessells, 2022).

Attachment-based interventions can be an important treatment modality for individuals with a history of violence against women and trauma. The role of attachment theory in therapeutic interventions is to help women rebuild secure attachment patterns and develop skills to build healthy relationships. The aim of such therapies is for women to understand their past traumas, develop a healthy perspective on relationships, and rebuild their emotional security (Diamond et al., 2021).

By exploring in depth the reasons why women stay in violent relationships, therapists can help them discover healthy forms of attachment and build secure relationships. This process can allow women to regain both their inner security and their trust in others (Gillis, 2024).

Although Attachment-Focused Therapies are not yet a widespread therapy model in Türkiye, attachment theory and approaches to healing traumatic experiences such as violence are gaining more and more attention in the field of psychotherapy. This therapy can be particularly useful when working

with individuals who have experienced childhood trauma, attachment issues, victims of violence and challenging relationship situations. Studies on this therapy continue, mostly at the academic level and in some psychotherapy centers. Therapists use attachment theory to help individuals secure their emotional bonds and support their recovery after trauma (Andriopoulou, 2021).

Attachment-Focused Therapy is practiced especially by professionals who adopt an approach based on attachment theory and integrate this theory into their therapeutic interventions. It is a type of therapy that is increasingly accepted in Türkiye, but it requires expertise to be applied effectively (Diamond et al., 2022).

Attachment-Focused Therapy is an approach that can be integrated with various therapeutic practices and can be applied by professionals such as psychotherapists, psychologists, couple/family therapists, trauma therapists, child psychologists, family counselors and social workers in Türkiye. In order to apply this therapy effectively, professionals need to have an in-depth knowledge of attachment theory and be able to integrate this knowledge into therapeutic processes. Therefore, in order to be able to use attachment theory in therapeutic interventions, it is very important for them to receive trainings such as psychotherapy trainings, attachment-focused therapy, trauma-focused therapy, EMDR, and to gain competence through supervision and audits in order to minimize violence by empowering clients (Bucci et al., 2015). In this context, attachment-based interventions for victims of violence can be listed as follows:

Individual Psychotherapy

Approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and trauma-focused therapy can be used to address the anxiety, lack of self-confidence and fear of abandonment experienced by women victims of violence. These therapies can help women survivors of violence recognize their negative beliefs and behaviors, question them, and replace them with healthy alternative thoughts and behaviors (Simon et al., 2021). While CBT focuses on helping individuals recognize and change negative thought patterns stemming from their traumatic experiences, trauma-focused therapy addresses the emotional and psychological effects of traumatic events, especially violence, and contributes to the healing process. These therapies can help women overcome fears and anxieties stemming from their past traumas, regain self-confidence, and improve their ability to build healthy relationships (Tibebu, 2019).

Attachment Focused Therapy

Attachment-focused therapy is a therapeutic approach that helps individuals understand and change their attachment style. This therapy aims to heal the emotional wounds of the person, enabling them to develop more secure attachment styles. For victims of violence against women, Attachment-Focused Therapy addresses posttraumatic attachment deficits and guides the process of building emotional trust (Brubacher, 2017).

Attachment-focused therapy believes that emotional bonds are the foundation of healthy relationships. Therapists encourage women survivors of violence to form secure attachments and process their past trauma in a healthy way. A therapy process that focuses on the attachment style of women survivors of violence can improve their ability to form secure attachments. In this process, women survivors of violence can understand how their past violent experiences have affected them and gain the ability to form healthier bonds in their relationships (Prather & Golden, 2009). This process takes place as follows:

Establishing a secure therapeutic relationship: Attachment-focused therapy aims to create a secure relationship between the therapist and the client. The therapist's sensitive and empathic approach helps the woman to gain trust and reveal her traumas. By trusting the therapist, the woman begins the process of emotional and psychological healing.

Exploration of attachment patterns: The woman's attachment experiences in past relationships, especially with her parents or first close relationships, are explored. In this process, situations and negative experiences in which the woman could not establish a secure attachment are addressed and the points where the secure attachment model is lacking are determined.

Reconstruction of past traumas: The woman's past experiences of violence, neglect or abuse are processed. This means that the woman reevaluates her traumatic experiences and transforms the negative beliefs, emotions and behaviors she has developed towards these events. In this step, it is important for the woman to understand the pain and fear she is experiencing and to express these emotions in a healthy way.

Reconstruction of secure attachment patterns: The therapist supports the woman to form secure attachments. The woman begins to feel valued and important, which enables her to have healthier relationships with other people. She is also taught to set her own boundaries, to protect herself and to connect with others in a healthy way (Opland and Torrico, 2024).

Trauma-Focused Therapy

Trauma-Focused Therapy for victims of violence against women is a therapy model that aims to heal and cope with the traumatic events these individuals have experienced. Victims of violence can suffer great harm, both physically and psychologically. This therapy aims to provide emotional, cognitive and behavioral healing for the traumas experienced by the victims (Gonçalves et al., 2023).

In addition, victims of violence may have serious difficulties in coping with traumatic experiences. Trauma-focused therapy supports victims of violence to confront traumatic events, make sense of these experiences and support their healing process (Ferreira et al., 2023).

Victims of violence against women experience emotional difficulties such as post-traumatic anxiety, depression, guilt, anger and insecurity. Through trauma-focused therapy, individuals develop strate-

gies to cope with these emotional and psychological burdens. These strategies include coping with stress, relaxation techniques, and healthy ways of thinking (Hosny et al., 2023).

Family Therapy and Systemic Approach

Family Therapy and the Systemic Approach play an important role in the healing process of victims of violence. In cases where violence occurs within the family or in close relationships, an attachment-based approach is used to understand and heal family dynamics. In such therapies, communication between family members is strengthened, emotional bonds are rebuilt and healthy boundaries are developed (Dallos & Vetere, 2021).

Support Groups

Women survivors of violence can accelerate their emotional and psychological healing process by coming together with others who have gone through similar experiences. Support groups allow participants to talk openly about the traumas they have experienced, learn from similar challenges others have experienced, and find emotional support. These groups help individuals feel that they are not alone and create a strong network of social solidarity during the healing process (Chespo et al., 2021).

In the therapeutic process, therapists aim for their clients to develop attachment style awareness, increase secure attachment skills, develop independence and self-confidence, develop safe strategies related to violence, set healthy boundaries, and meet their own emotional needs without being overly dependent on others (Jacopsen et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Violence against women not only causes physical harm, but also has a profound impact on women's psychological, emotional and social lives. Violence disrupts victims' attachment systems, weakening their ability to form secure bonds, feel valued and trust others. Attachment theory reveals the effects of attachment styles that individuals develop from childhood on the relationships they establish in later life. In this context, the traumas experienced by victims of violence against women may negatively affect their attachment styles and hinder their ability to establish secure relationships.

The hypothesized relationships between early attachment experiences and adult romantic attachments should be empirically tested in longitudinal studies. In addition, how internal working models mediate the relationship between early attachment security and the security of adult romantic relationships, and how the relationship between attachment security and domestic violence in infancy and adulthood is shaped, should also be examined in prospective research.

Therefore, the relationship between violence against women and attachment theory plays a critical role in understanding the reasons for entering or staying in violent relationships. For women in violent



relationships, attachment-based approaches are an important tool for rebuilding secure attachment patterns.

Strengthening attachment skills can help victims of violence to build healthy and secure relationships. This process plays a vital role in combating violence against women in line with the goals of gender equality, awareness raising and long-term recovery. It is clear that in order for women to recover from the effects of violence, a comprehensive support mechanism needs to be developed at both individual and societal levels.

Attachment disorders in survivors of violence against women can cause them serious difficulties in achieving emotional balance, establishing secure relationships and feeling valued. Women survivors of violence often struggle with anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological disorders following their experience of violence. These women may struggle to understand healthy relationship dynamics and have difficulty establishing emotional attachments. Attachment disorders can cause serious fractures in the inner world of victims of violence, preventing them from meeting basic emotional needs such as identity, trust and love. This situation may cause victims of violence to become isolated and lonely in their social lives, to experience isolation and to act with a constant feeling of insecurity. As a result, the role of attachment theory in this process is not only to support victims of violence against women to establish healthy, secure and healthy relationships, but also to be an important tool for a general change in society."

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