Attachment Representations of Psychology Candidates via the Bird's Nest Drawing Test: A Mixed-Methods Approach

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Abstract. This study aimed to explore the attachment representations of psychology candidates in the context of social and educational development. A mixed-method design was used, combining the Three-Dimensional Attachment Scale for quantitative data and the Bird's Nest Drawing Test for qualitative insights. Participants were 122 senior-year psychology students. No significant correlation was found between drawing scores and attachment subscales. However, many drawings included symbols such as parent and baby birds, eggs, and realistic coloring, often with nests placed on trees, cliffs, or hands—suggesting emotional needs for safety and care. Green, while generally symbolizing growth, appeared infrequently. Occasionally, symbols like the sun or animals suggested hope or emotional ambiguity. Content analysis revealed two themes: a "positive" theme reflecting family warmth and support, and a "negative" theme indicating anxiety and insecurity. These results offer symbolic insight into how future mental health professionals express attachment, highlighting emotional development and their relational understanding.

Keywords: Psychologist, attachment, bird's nest drawing test, drawing

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Introduction

Attachment theory, originally proposed by Bowlby (1969), emphasizes the innate emotional bond between infants and their primary caregivers. Early attachment behaviors such as crying, eye contact, and proximity-seeking are seen as foundational to the socialization process (Soysal et al., 2005). The theory gained new dimensions through Hazan and Shaver's (1987) work, which extended its applications to adult romantic relationships (Boyacıoğlu & Sümer, 2011). Recent contributions from developmental psychology and neurobiology have further enriched the theory, linking attachment to emotion regulation, mentalization, and interpersonal functioning across the lifespan (Blake et al., 2025; Girme et al., 2021; Loeb et al., 2021). Contemporary studies confirm its relevance in understanding behavior and internal working models across both clinical and non-clinical populations (Thompson et al., 2022).

Attachment representations formed during early life are internalized as mental models of the self and others (Furman et al., 2002). These models guide interpersonal expectations by answering foundational relational questions such as "Am I lovable?" and "Are others dependable?" (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; cited in İnan, 2015). Building on Bowlby's theory, Ainsworth et al. (1978) developed an observational method called the Strange Situation Procedure to classify infant attachment into three distinct styles: secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant. This classification focused on behavioral responses to separation and reunion with a caregiver. Later, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) expanded attachment theory into the adult domain by introducing a four-category model. Unlike Ainsworth's behavior-based approach, their model was rooted in cognitive-affective internal working models of self and others.

They proposed secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful styles based on positive or negative perceptions of both the self and others. This theoretical shift marked an important transition from childhood attachment behaviors to adult attachment representations, offering a more nuanced understanding of interpersonal dynamics in adulthood. Insecure attachment patterns, particularly anxious and avoidant styles, have been linked to difficulties in emotion regulation, low self-worth, and relational

dysfunction (Aktan, 2021; Morsünbül & Çok, 2011; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

In recent years, attachment theory has gained prominence in counseling psychology. Mental health professionals are expected to provide a secure relational space for clients, making their own attachment patterns particularly relevant. Establishing a strong therapeutic alliance is a key predictor of treatment outcomes, and this alliance is shaped by the therapist's emotional regulation capacity and relational style (Gelso & Carter, 1994). Studies indicate that therapists with insecure attachment styles may struggle with boundaries, over-identification, or emotional withdrawal in clinical interactions (Sauer et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2010; Moreno-Poyato et al., 2019). These dynamics can influence the therapeutic process and client outcomes.

Despite the well-established impact of attachment on interpersonal and professional functioning, research examining the attachment representations of psychology students remains limited. This population is particularly important, as they are preparing for emotionally demanding roles that require high levels of empathy, trust, and relational sensitivity. A lack of internalized secure attachment may negatively affect their ability to establish therapeutic alliances, manage emotional boundaries, and respond effectively to clients' needs. Understanding how these future professionals internalize attachment patterns is therefore essential. Such insights can inform the development of training programs that foster emotional awareness, interpersonal attunement, and psychological resilience among psychology students. To address this gap, the present study explores attachment representations among undergraduate psychology students through a mixed-method approach.

This study also employs a projective tool—the Bird's Nest Drawing Test—as a qualitative method for accessing attachment representations. While self-report measures may yield biased results due to individuals' tendencies to present themselves in socially desirable ways or due to limitations in self-awareness, projective drawings have the potential to reveal more implicit and symbolic aspects of attachment. The Bird's Nest Drawing Test offers a creative, non-verbal means of expression and enables the exploration of themes such as safety, nurturance, and connectedness through symbolic imagery (Akba & Demir, 2024; Demirbağ, 2016; Kaiser, 1996). Although limited in number, existing studies have demonstrated that the Bird's Nest Drawing Test can reveal meaningful symbolic content when applied to various clinical populations. For example, Demirbağ (2016) highlighted inter-rater reliability during the evaluation process of the drawings. In a study conducted by Gül and Demir (2025), attachment representations of individuals diagnosed with alcohol and substance use disorders were analyzed using this test. Similarly, Akba and Demir (2024) employed the Bird's Nest Drawing Test to explore symbolic attachment themes in individuals diagnosed with psychosomatic skin disorders. These findings suggest that the test, with its projective qualities, offers valuable insights when used with specific clinical samples.

This research offers practical implications beyond its theoretical contribution. By analyzing attachment patterns in future mental health professionals, the findings may inform educational curricula, supervision processes, and emotional readiness training in psychology programs. Ultimately, the study aims to highlight the relational foundations of psychological practice and encourage the integration of emotional self-awareness into professional identity formation.

In this study, it will be examined whether a significant relationship exists between secure attachment scores obtained from the Attachment Scale and the drawing themes expressed in the Bird's Nest Drawing Test. It is expected that participants with secure attachment patterns will emphasize themes of safety, protection, and relational warmth in their drawings, while those with anxious or avoidant attachment styles may reflect more ambiguous, hesitant, or insecure symbolic content. In addition, the study seeks to explore whether the narratives accompanying the Bird's Nest drawings differ in emotional tone and thematic structure based on participants' attachment styles. These inquiries aim to deepen our understanding of how internal attachment representations manifest in both visual and verbal symbolic expressions.

Methods

Sample and Population

This study utilized purposive sampling to select participants capable of providing qualified and meaningful data related to the research topic (Patton, 2018). A total of 122 senior-year psychology students (75 female, 47 male) were recruited from Istanbul Gelişim University and Istanbul Nişantaşı University during the 2024–2025 academic year. Sample size was determined using G*Power 3.1.9.7. For correlational analysis with a significance level of $\alpha = .05$, power of 80%, and effect size of .30, a minimum of 111 participants was needed. The final sample of 122 exceeded this threshold.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants. The majority of the participants were female (61.5%), and all were senior undergraduate students majoring in psychology. Participants were recruited from two universities, with

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variabel	Kategori	n	%
Jenis Kelamin	Perempuan	75	61.5
	Laki-laki	47	38.5
Universitas	Istanbul Gelisim University	63	51.6
	Istanbul Nişantaşı University	59	48.4
Tahun Studi	Senior (tahun ke-4)	122	100
Rentang Usia	21–22	84	68.9
	23–24	27	22.1
	25 ke atas	11	9

nearly equal distribution between Istanbul Gelişim University (51.6%) and Istanbul Nişantaşı University (48.4%). Age was categorized into three groups, with the largest proportion (68.9%) falling in the 21–22 age range. The remaining participants were aged 23–24 (22.1%) and 25 or older (9.0%).

Instrument

Demographic Information Form

Designed by the researchers to collect basic participant information such as age, gender, and academic institution.

Bird's Nest Drawing Test (BNDT)

The Bird's Nest Drawing Test (BNDT), originally developed by Kaiser (1996) and adapted into Turkish by Demirbağ (2016), is a projective tool designed to reveal internal attachment representations through symbolic imagery. The test is administered by instructing participants to draw a bird's nest on a blank sheet using colored pencils. No additional instructions are given, allowing for spontaneous symbolic expression. To ensure standardized interpretation, the Turkish version employs the Bird's Nest Drawing Assessment Scale (KYÇDÖ), a structured scoring rubric consisting of 12 binary items (scored as "Yes" = 1 or "No" = 0). These items evaluate both structural and symbolic features within the drawing, including:

1. Presence of a parent bird in or near the nest
2. Presence of a baby bird or eggs in or near the nest
3. Use of green as the dominant color
4. Utilization of more than 20% of the page area
5. Inclusion of a sun symbol
6. Inclusion of a cloud symbol
7. Presence of "M"-shaped birds in the sky
8. Presence of additional elements (e.g., flowers, pets)
9. Use of realistic coloring for objects
10. Nest drawn as trapped within the tree trunk (reverse scored)
11. Nest placed on a visible surface (e.g., branch, leaf, ground)
12. Presence of both a parent and a baby bird or egg

Higher total scores reflect a stronger indication of secure attachment representations. One item (Item 10) is reverse-scored due to its implication of restricted movement or symbolic confinement.

The scale was developed through content analysis of drawings produced by individuals with differing attachment styles. Inter-rater reliability ranged from .66 to 1.00 across items. Internal consistency was measured using KR-20 (.70) and split-half methods (.73). Criterion-related validity was established through a moderate, positive correlation ($r = .34$, $p < .01$) with Kern's Secure Attachment Scale, indicating concurrent validity.

This structured scoring system enhances the objectivity of BNDT interpretation and allows for consistent cross-participant comparison, thereby strengthening the test's methodological reliability and interpretive clarity.

Three-Dimensional Attachment Styles Scale (3DASS

Developed by Erzen (2016), this 18-item 5-point Likert-type scale assesses three attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent. Internal consistency coefficients were $\alpha = .69$ for secure, .80 for avoidant, and .71 for anxious-ambivalent subscales. The 3DASS was chosen for its cultural adaptation and relevance to the Turkish context, as well as its theoretical consistency with the attachment styles framework proposed by Ainsworth. Compared to other widely used tools such as the ECR or AAS, which focus on dimensional or relational aspects of adult attachment, the 3DASS offers a more categorical classification that aligns with the aims of this study, particularly in identifying stylistic patterns in a student population. Its brevity and clarity also make it suitable for educational samples without clinical backgrounds.

Data Collection and Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Istanbul Kent University (Decision No: 2024/10, dated 14.08.2024). Participants were informed about the study, signed consent forms, and completed the Demographic Information Form. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) was employed. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously in a single session. Participants first completed the 3DASS, followed by the BNDT. They were given freedom in how they used the materials. After drawing, participants were asked if they wanted to add or revise anything. Drawings were analyzed by researchers with doctoral training in psychology and experience in projective assessment. The evaluation was conducted using a structured coding guide reviewed by two expert faculty members to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation Analysis via SPSS 25, with significance level set at $p < .05$. This analysis aimed to examine relationships between attachment subscale scores and drawing indicators. Qualitative data, including visual drawing elements and written narratives, were analyzed through descriptive content analysis. Visual data were coded using the 12-item BNDT scoring framework (e.g., inclusion of birds, symbolic elements, area usage), while narratives were categorized into positive and negative themes. This dual analysis provided complementary insights into conscious and unconscious dimensions of attachment representations.

Results and Discussion

Results

Descriptive statistics for the Three-Dimensional Attachment Styles Scale (3DASS), showing the mean and standard deviation for each attachment style dimension. The data provides an overview of the general distribution of attachment tendencies among participants in Table 2.

As shown in Table 3, the correlation analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between the Bird's Nest Drawing Test scores and any of the attachment subscales (secure, avoidant, and anxious-preoccupied). These findings suggest that the symbolic indicators measured in the drawings may not directly correspond to self-reported attachment dimensions.

In Table 4, the presence of items in the bird nest drawings of psychology candidates is examined according to the criteria for evaluating the bird nest drawing. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained from this study. the following findings were obtained: participants who drew parent birds in the nest (n=73). participants who drew baby birds or eggs in the nest (n=94). participants who used green as the dominant color (n=37). participants who used more than 20% of the paper (n=103). participants who drew a sun figure (n=23). participants who drew clouds (n=17). participants who drew birds in the shape of an "M" (n=8). participants who drew extra prominent figures like flowers or pets (n=57). participants who colored figures according to their nature (n=89). participants who drew the nest without enclosing it within the trunk of a tree (n=119). participants who drew the nest on any surface (n=106). and participants who drew both parent and baby birds (n=66).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for attachment style dimesnions (3DASS)

Attachment Style	M	SD
Secure Attachment	19.98	2.69
Avoidant	15.41	4.65
Anxious-Preoccupied	15.18	4.95

Table 3

Correlation between the bird's nest drawing test and the three-dimensional attachment styles scale

Scale	r	P
Secure Attachment	-.090	.323
Avoidant	.050	.602
Anxious-Preoccupied	.010	.884

This section presents selected bird nest drawings created by senior-year psychology students. Figures 1 to 4 represent secure attachment representations. whereas Figures 5 to 8 reflect insecure attachment representations.

Visual integration of eight bird nest drawings assessed through projective analysis. Secure attachment representations (Figures 1–4) exhibit symbolic features such as nurturance. containment. and relational closeness. Insecure attachment representations (Figures 5–8) are characterized by elements of emotional detachment. isolation. and symbolic fragmentation. reflecting the absence of safety and cohesion in the internal world.

Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the relationship between the Birds Nest Drawing Test and the subscales of the Three-Dimensional Attachment Scale to examine the attachment representations of psychology candidates. The findings of the study reveal that there was no statistically significant relationship between the Birds Nest Drawing Test scores and the subscales of the Three-Dimensional Attachment Scale; however. frequency analyses related to the Birds Nest Drawing Test indicate that certain drawing features may provide important clues about attachment representations.

These findings emphasize that the inconsistency between qualitative and quantitative approaches should be addressed in an academic context.

Although the Bird's Nest Drawing Test and the Three-Dimensional Attachment Scale assess attachment at different psychological levels—one tapping into symbolic and unconscious representations. the other measuring consciously recognized patterns—their combination offers a richer. more holistic view of attachment. The lack of statistical correlation should not be seen as a contradiction. but rather as evidence of the multifaceted nature of attachment experiences. In this sense. the projective data serve not to confirm or contradict the quantitative data. but to complement and expand upon it. The conscious level. accessed through self-report measures like the 3DASS. reflects how individuals perceive and describe their own attachment styles in a reflective. language-based format. In contrast. projective tools like the Bird's Nest Drawing Test explore the implicit. often non-verbalized or unconscious emotional schemas related to early relational experiences. These two levels may not always align statistically because they represent different modes of psychological processing—one cognitive and explicit. the other affective and symbolic. However. their intersection lies in the shared aim of mapping relational patterns. Integrating both allows researchers to observe discrepancies. convergences. and the layered complexity of attachment in a more comprehensive way. especially in psychologically literate populations like future mental health professionals.

In the study. the correlation between the Bird Nest Drawing Test and the Three-Dimensional Attachment Styles Scale was examined. and no significant relationship was found. The Bird Nest Drawing Test is a projective method aimed at reflecting individuals' unconscious attachment representations through art (Akba & Demir, 2024; Demirbağ, 2016; Gül & Demir. 2025; Kaiser, 1996). Projective methods provide an advantage in gaining insight into the unconscious dimensions of emotions and the implicit processes underlying these emotions. in contrast to self-report-based measurement tools (Santillo et al.. 2025). In this context. the Bird Nest Drawing Test aims to reach attachment representations that individuals may not be consciously aware of. while tools like the Three-Dimensional Attachment Styles Scale measure attachment characteristics based on individuals' ability to express themselves and their emotional awareness levels (Erzen, 2016). The methodological differences between these two methods can lead to inconsistencies in the findings. Specifically. while the Bird Nest Drawing Test aims to access attachment representations that individuals are not consciously aware of. quantitative methods focus more on attachment characteristics expressed at the conscious level. Therefore. the inability to establish a direct relationship between the two measurements may be due to the different levels of attachment representations reached by each method. This suggests that using both methods together offers an important opportunity to assess attachment representations in a multidimensional way. but these differences should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

Among the evaluation criteria for the Bird Nest Drawing Test are items such as "Is there a parent bird in the nest/near the nest?". "Is there a baby bird or egg in the nest/near the nest?". and questions that inquire about perceived parental attitudes and the presence of a mother-father relationship. The presence of parent birds and baby birds/eggs in the bird nest drawings or references to these figures in the stories reflects the theme of family unity. This situation reflects the feelings of closeness. support. and security in relationships with attachment figures. which is one of the key characteristics of secure attachment. This finding may suggest that psychology candidates symbolically express secure attachment representations in their drawings. In the literature. it has been found that psychological counseling candidates with secure attachment styles positively and significantly predict the therapeutic alliance between counselor and client (Kuşçi, 2019; Leiper & Casares, 2000). Counselors with secure attachment styles are reported to cope better with breaks in the counseling process compared to counselors with anxious attachment styles (Meyer & Pilkonis, 2001). Recent studies emphasize that secure attachment contributes to the formation of stable therapeutic relationships and professional emotional resilience in mental health professionals (Koslowsky, 2020; West, 2015).

According to Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) attachment theory. individuals need consistent. responsive. and close relationships in early childhood in order to develop secure attachment. In this context. the presence of parent birds and baby birds/eggs in the Birds Nest Drawing Test increases the likelihood of representing such relationships. The absence of birds in the drawings suggests insecure attachment (Akba & Demir, 2024). Furthermore. Hyler (2002) found that children with insecure attachment tended to draw their nests defenseless. The presence of only baby birds in the drawing is associated with loneliness (Gül & Demir, 2025).

Individuals with avoidant attachment styles are described as having a tendency to avoid sharing with others and maintaining emotional distance to preserve a positive self-image. often rejecting attachment needs to protect themselves from rejection (Collins & Feeney, 2004). Kaiser and Deaver (2009) reported that the presence of a bird family in nest drawings was associa-

Table 4
Analysis Results of Participants' Birds Nest Drawing Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
1. Is there a parent bird in or near the nest?	73	59.8	49	40.2
2. Is there a chick or egg in or near the nest?	94	77.0	28	23.0
3. Is the dominant color green?	37	30.3	85	69.7
4. Considering the total area of the drawing. is more than 20% of the paper used?	103	84.4	19	15.6
5. Is there a sun figure?	23	18.9	99	81.1
6. Is there a cloud?	17	13.9	105	86.1
7. "Are there birds in the shape of "M"?	8	6.6	114	93.4
8. Are there additional prominent figures such as flowers or pets?	57	46.7	65	53.3
9. Is the coloring appropriate for the nature of the drawn figures?	89	72.9	33	27.1
10. Is the nest (if present) enclosed by the trunk of a tree?	119	97.5	3	2.5
11. Does the nest (if present) touch any surface (branch. leaf. soil. etc.)?	106	86.9	16	13.1
12. Are both the parent and chick/egg birds present in the drawing?	66	54.1	56	45.9



Figure 1 The results of projective analysis (Figure 1-8)

ted with secure attachment to the mother. In the same study. it was stated that the lack of protection in the nest. specifically the absence of its bottom. was related to negative experiences in close relationships. Avoidant attachment was characterized by features such as emptiness and isolation. whereas the presence of birds and a bird family were among the features that demonstrated high reliability. Recent findings highlight that the Bird's Nest Drawing. especially when accompanied by narrative data. can reflect representations of attachment security through symbolic and spatial features (Wijayanti et al., 2023; Yoon et al., 2020).

Demirbağ's (2016) Turkish adaptation of the "Draw a Bird's Nest Test" revealed that participants with insecure attachment representations rarely included a baby bird or egg figure in the nest or nearby. In the same study. it was found that only a small percentage of participants drew both baby birds and parent birds. Similarly. a study conducted by Gül and Demir (2025) on individuals with alcohol and substance use disorders found that individuals without such disorders more frequently depicted parent birds and baby birds/eggs in their drawings. In family-themed drawing tests. the presence or absence of family members. as well as their positions and distances from each other. are related to the emotional

closeness between family members (Akoğlu, 2023). Studies with individuals representing secure attachment have shown similar findings to those of this study. For example. in a study by Procaccia et al. (2014). it was found that children with secure attachment representations drew all family members in their pictures. In Shiakou's (2012) study. children with insecure attachment representations were reported to draw themselves alone in family drawings and place distance between themselves and other family members. However. comparisons between our study and those studies should be made with caution due to the differences in sample groups.

In the research findings. it was observed that green was not the dominant color in the drawings. Only a limited number of participants included additional figures such as the sun. clouds. "M"-shaped birds. flowers. or pets. The presence of such elements in the Bird's Nest Drawing Test has been associated with secure attachment (Demirbağ, 2016). Prior research indicates that brighter colors and symbolic elements are commonly linked with positive affective states and attachment security. particularly in children (Hass-Cohen et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2003). However, adult participants—especially university students—tend to prioritize concrete and functional content over symbolic imagery (San, 2010; Gerlitz et al., 2020). From this perspective. the limited use of figures such as the sun or flowers may reflect developmental shifts in symbolic representation rather than indicators of attachment insecurity. Therefore. age and developmental stage should be considered critical variables when interpreting the symbolic features in projective drawings among adults (George & West, 2011; Maharani et al., 2023; Wijayanti et al., 2023).

It was also found that in the drawings. the nest was not confined to the trunk of a tree but instead touched the ground or branches. The fact that the nest touches the ground and is not confined to the trunk is an important feature reflecting the sense of trust. support. and healthy closeness in relationships with attachment figures (Demirbağ, 2016). When evaluated within the framework of attachment theory. this finding indicates that individuals symbolically express that they have emotional support systems and can form secure bonds with their environment. According to Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) attachment theory. individuals with secure attachment can continue their healthy development when they can establish closeness with attachment figures while also having opportunities for independence. The nest's contact with the ground can be seen as a symbol reflecting the individual's ability to maintain this balance. On the other hand. other details in tree drawings can provide clues about individuals' psychological states. For example. cracks or scratches on the trunk of a tree may represent traumatic experiences (Çankırılı, 2012). Additionally. an empty nest between the branches of a tree or a hole in the tree trunk may be seen as a symbol reflecting the individual's need for love and protection. A study by Zannis (2002) revealed that individuals who witnessed domestic violence were more likely to add holes to the trunks of trees in their drawings. In this context. the findings of the current study suggest that psychology students' attachment representations may be secure.

Another notable finding from the research is that the colors used in the drawings were generally appropriate for the figures depicted. and participants utilized more than 20% of the total paper area. In the literature. the size. level of detail. and space usage in projective drawings have been associated with attachment security (Gantt & Tabone, 2003; Bat Or et al., 2022). Individuals with secure attachment tend to produce larger. more colorful. and more detailed drawings that reflect emotional availability and openness (Fury et al., 1997). Bat Or et al. (2022) further emphasize that spatial organization and expressive detail in drawings can symbolically represent one's relational patterns and internal working models. These visual indicators may suggest that participants in the current study hold secure attachment representations. From Bowlby's perspective. secure attachment facilitates trust in others and supports a greater capacity for self-expression (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). In contrast. insecure attachment patterns may be reflected in limited use of space and minimal visual investment. In line with these findings. Gül and Demir (2025) found that individuals diagnosed with alcohol and substance use disorders used significantly less space in their Bird's Nest Drawing Test productions. which was interpreted as a visual indicator of insecure attachment representations. Supporting this. Overbeck (2002) also reported that pregnant women with insecure attachment used only a very small portion of the page when completing the Bird's Nest Drawing Test.

The stories written by the participants according to the "Bird's Nest Drawing Test" were analyzed using content analysis. and two main themes were identified: "positive theme" and "negative theme." The positive theme is based on expressions that reflect a warm. safe. and supportive family environment. Under this theme. expressions such as "the mother bird made the nest" (Figure 1). "the mother bird is waiting for her chicks" (Figure 2). "the mother and father made a beautiful nest" (Figure 3). and "the whole family is together" (Figure 4) are included. On the other hand. the negative theme consists of expressions that reflect feelings of anxiety. deficiency. and insecurity. Under this theme. expressions such as "the father is not in the nest" (Figure 5). "leaving the nest and not coming back" (Figure 6). "the nest falling in the wind and storm" (Figure 7). and "hunger and loneliness" (Figure 8)

stand out. As a result of the thematic analysis. it is seen that the positive theme may represent secure attachment. while the negative theme may evoke patterns of insecure attachment. In this context. content analysis has allowed for the extraction of qualitative clues about attachment representations from the participants' written narratives.

This study has some limitations. The Bird's Nest Drawing Test is a qualitative assessment tool that highlights the unconscious and creative aspects of attachment representations. The participants' drawings were scored based on details such as the presence of the parent figure. chicks. or eggs in the nest; however. this scoring system might have contradicted the participants' unconscious representations with a self-report quantitative scale like the Three-Dimensional Attachment Scale. The structured nature of objective tests and their requirement for clear responses may make it difficult for participants to transition to projective tests. where more free and personal expressions are expected. This can negatively affect the authenticity and depth of the projective test. Although the test provides clues about attachment. it may not be sufficient on its own to assess an individual's attachment style. The sample group of this study consisted of senior students continuing their undergraduate education at two different universities in Istanbul. A study conducted with participants from different institutions may yield more reliable results. There is no control group in this study. The absence of a control group. which could have provided data richness and been important for evaluating the findings. is considered a limitation of this research.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of using both quantitative and qualitative tools to explore attachment representations among psychology students. Although no statistically significant correlation was found between the Bird's Nest Drawing Test and the Three-Dimensional Attachment Scale. the symbolic content of the drawings revealed meaningful patterns consistent with attachment theory. These findings indicate that projective tools such as BNDT can reveal implicit relational dynamics that may not be easily accessed through self-report measures. Therefore. combining both approaches can enrich psychological assessment and training in clinical contexts. Future research should focus on larger and more diverse samples. and consider integrating behavioral and interview-based data to triangulate findings and enhance interpretive depth.

Based on the findings of this study. several recommendations can be made for future research and clinical applications. First. this study was conducted with psychology students who were still in the process of completing their undergraduate education. In future studies. it would be beneficial to include individuals who are actively working as mental health professionals. Exploring whether attachment representations evolve throughout professional practice may offer valuable insights into the impact of clinical experience on therapeutic relationships. Second. while the current study utilized the Bird's Nest Drawing Test as a projective tool. future research may consider using additional projective techniques such as the Draw a Family Test or the Flower Family Drawing Test.

These tools could provide alternative symbolic representations and allow for richer comparative analysis across different artistic modalities of attachment expression. Finally. the present study did not include a control group. Future studies could address this limitation by incorporating control groups composed of individuals from various mental health disciplines. Comparing attachment representations across distinct professional or educational backgrounds using projective drawing tests may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how attachment patterns manifest in different therapeutic contexts.

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