THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MOTHER’S ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT PARENTING STRESS AND TODDLER’S ATTACHMENT

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Caregiver’s unresponsive and insensitive behaviors are likely to be identified as risk factors for children’s healthy development (Bowlby, 1980; Warren, Houston, Egeland, & Sroufe, 1997) and secure attachment in early years (Kerns & Brumariu, 2014). Both providing a nurturing environment for an infant and adaptation to parent role could be stressors (Belsky, 1984). The present study aimed to examine the association between mothers’ romantic attachment, parenting stress and toddlers’ attachment security in low SES. Mothers (N= 127) of toddlers between 12-38 months (M= 23.46, SD= 6.71) filled several questionnaires including Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) and Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF; Abidin, 1995) that consisted of one Total Parent Stress Score and three subscales in terms of Difficult Child, Mother-Child Dysfunctional Interaction and Maternal Stress in a 2-hour home visit for observation. The home observations were coded for Attachment Q-Sort (AQS; Waters, 1987) by two independent coders (inter-class correlation coefficient varies between .80 to .96). Results showed that mothers’ attachment anxiety and avoidance were positively associated with total parenting stress: $r = .37^{***}$ and $r = .20^*$. Mothers who reported their toddlers as more difficult child was negatively correlated to child’s security ($r = -.31^{***}$), while the mother-child dysfunctional interaction was also negatively associated to security, $r = -.35^{***}$. Also, mother’s attachment avoidance was negatively associated with child’s attachment security ($r = -.29^{**}$). In addition, mother’s total parenting stress and child’s secure attachment were negatively related ($r = -.37^{***}$). A series of regression analyses will be conducted to examine the pattern of associations. The preliminary results indicated that mothers’ partner attachment and parenting stress can play role in child’s attachment security in low SES. The findings will help to identify risk factors for attachment security at early development, which would facilitate designing effective interventions, especially for low-SES mothers in Turkey.