

Pre-Migration Adversity and Identity Formation in Young Adult Refugees. Does the
Attachment Style Matter?

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Abstract

The focus of the present study is to determine whether pre-migration adverse experiences have an impact on five dimensions of identity (exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, commitment making, identification with commitment and ruminative exploration) and whether this relationship is moderated by the insecure-avoidant attachment style in refugees' population. 56 young adults refugees of Syrian origin ($M = 27.73$, $SD = 4.87$) completed the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale and the Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures Questionnaire. Regression analysis indicated that there is no relationship between pre-migration adversity and the five dimensions of identity. In addition, an insecure-avoidant attachment style moderating the effect of pre-migration adversity on identity development was not evident. The results were not statistically significant; however, this paper advances theoretical propositions. Specifically, it increases awareness of the current situation of refugees' crisis and guides efforts to improve adaptive functioning by fostering a better understanding of refugees' identity development and their attachment figures.

Keywords: *young adult refugees, pre-migration adversity, dimensions of identity, attachment style*

Introduction

The formation of identity is an essential stage among adolescents and young adults for their transition to adulthood, and the proximity to attachment figures provides a “secure base” for them to explore and further develop a strong sense of self (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). However, that formulation can be hampered in some sensitive groups, such as young adult refugees. Immigration experience affects young adult refugees in several aspects of their life, both psychological and behavioral (Romero & Roberts, 2003). Thus, in the present paper we examine a possible reason that could cease identity development, the pre-migration negative experiences, and we seek to investigate whether insecure-avoidant attachment style impedes the impact of adverse pre-migration experiences on young adults’ identity construction.

Identity Formation in Adolescence

The formation of a personal identity is a critical psychosocial task of adolescence, the necessary milestone of a successful transition to adulthood (Erikson, 1968, 1980). Individuals who develop a strong sense of identity create coherent values for themselves and their environment and commit to other people strongly (Erikson, 1968). On the contrary, youth who face difficulties in successfully addressing the developmental task of identity formation, experience the identity confusion, since they are not able to formulate coherent commitments and they seem disconnected from themselves (Erikson, 1968).

Building upon Erikson’s (1968) theoretical framework of identity, Marcia (1966) conceptualized the formation of identity in terms of two dimensions: exploration and commitment. Exploration involves the acknowledgement of different identity alternatives and possible future life directions; commitment suggests choosing one of these alternatives and adhering to it (Rose & Bond, 2008).

Looking at underlying processes of commitment and exploration, Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens and Beyers, (2006) differentiate the above-mentioned dimensions into two continual cycles (Figure 1). The first cycle, identity formation, consists of the dimension of exploration in breadth which refers to the active exploration and gathering of information about different identity alternatives, and the dimension of commitment making which leads to the process of choosing and adhering to one of these alternatives. The second cycle, which is the commitment evaluation, describes how existing commitments are assessed by the individual. In particular, it comprises the exploration in depth which is the evaluation and exploration of current choice so as to become more aware of it. The identification with commitment refers to identification, certainty and confidence about the current choice (Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens and Beyers, 2006).

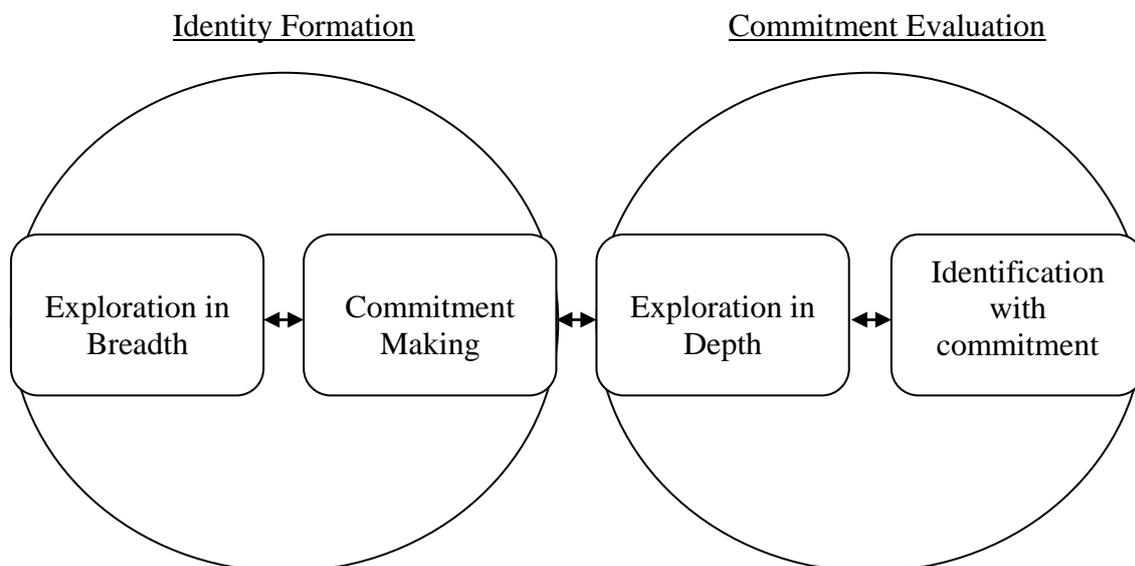


Figure 1: The two continual cycles of identity development.

In fact, current research in the field of identity indicates that exploration can be subdivided into reflective versus ruminative components (Luyckx et al., 2008;

Teynor, Gonzalez, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003). On the one hand, the reflective components refer to the positive identity exploration, which is associated with both openness and general curiosity (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993; Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006). On the other hand, the ruminative exploration refers to youth who are not able to actively explore their alternatives, and who are confronted with identity questions, without being able to create strong commitments (Luyckx et al., 2008). This maladaptive kind of exploration has been found to be accompanied by heightened anxiety and depressive symptoms (Luyckx et al., 2008).

Attachment Style and Identity

Attachment styles in late adolescence and adulthood reflect mental representations, “internal working models”, of individuals closed attachment figures, such as parents, siblings and friends (Meyer & Pilkonis, 2001). Familial and peer interactions influence the way that adolescents acquire a sense of identity (Kerpelman et al., 2012, Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). Young adults with secure attachment relationships are able to explore themselves and their environment as well to increase their risk-taking behavior; both factors are crucial for the identity construction (Lopez, Watkins, Manus & Hunton-Shoup, 1992). Meanwhile, youth with insecure attachment relationships may grow up developing a fear of abandonment (attachment anxiety) and/or strongly avoid being dependent on others (attachment avoidance; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They also tend to be less trusting and have less positive views of themselves and others (Horesh, Cohen-Zrihen, Ein Dor & Solomon, 2014). Lastly, they exhibit less self-exploration and pursuit of opportunities (Mikulincer, 1997; Mikulincer & Sheffi, 2000).

Identity Development among Young Adult Refugees

Although many young people are able to successfully navigate the challenges and transitions of adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 1999), others experience various negative developmental outcomes as a result of an unsupportive family environment or unfavorable cultural and community contexts (Dahlberg, 1998). One example of such a sensitive group is young adult refugees. Young adult refugees need to decide how to adapt and maintain a personal identity, while facing, at the same time, unaccommodating contexts, such as poverty, disempowered status in the new community, and diminished access to supportive social institutions (Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones, 2006).

Prior to migration, refugees are exposed to exceptionally high rates of traumatic events such as war, violence, torture and persecution (Gerritsen et al., 2006; Momartin, Silove, Manicavasagar & Steel, 2004) which can distract them from developing their self-identity (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Szabo & Ward, 2015). Nonetheless, the negative impact of pre-migration experiences on particular dimensions of identity in young adults who have a refugee background is still not extensively researched.

The Present Study

Therefore, the present study seeks to explore the relationship between pre-migration's adverse experiences and five dimensions of identity (exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, commitment making, identification with commitment and ruminative exploration), as well as to test whether this relationship is moderated by the insecure-avoidant attachment style. Previous research in non-immigrant groups has found that secure attachment style was positively associated with achieved and foreclosed identity statuses, but negatively related to the moratorium and diffuse identity statuses (Kerperlan et al., 2012). However, no research to date has tested

associations among pre-migration adversity, identity dimensions (as presented by Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens and Beyers, 2006) and the moderator effect of the insecure-avoidant attachment style on them. Such an examination is mostly important for young adult population because of the emergence and active intersection of identity formation, of the relationships with their closed-ones and of their future growth (Jones, McEwen, 2000).

To sum up, it is expected that pre-migration adversity will impact identity formation negatively. It is also anticipated that an insecure-avoidant attachment style with close ones (e.g. parents, siblings, mates, friends) will amplify the negative impact of pre-migration adversity on identity development. Thus, the present study will explore the following hypotheses:

H1. Pre-migration adversity is expected to have a negative effect on the dimensions of identity: exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, commitment making, and identification with commitment.

H2. The negative effect of pre-migration adversity on exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, commitment making, and identification with commitment, is expected to be amplified by insecure-avoidant attachment style.

H3. Pre-migration adversity is expected to have a positive effect on the dimension of identity: ruminative exploration.

H4: The positive effect of pre-migration adversity on ruminative exploration is expected to be amplified by insecure-avoidant attachment style.

Method

Participants

The sample of the current study comprises 56 young adults of Syrian origin who seek or have refugee status and have been in the Netherlands for at least six months but no

longer than five years prior to the start of the study. The sample was drawn from a large developmental, longitudinal study, entitled: “Karakter” focusing on examining how everyday emotional experiences may account for the link between adversity and character development in Syrian origin young adults. Participants were recruited through social media, community and language centers and asylum seekers centers. Their age ranged from 19 to 35 years ($M = 27.73$, $SD = 4.87$). Individuals who were likely to suffer emotional distress resulting from participation, were excluded from the study.

Procedure

Young adult refugees met a member of the research team to have a face-to-face session. Participants were provided with information about the study, and had the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns they may have had. In addition, an Arabic-speaking team member was always present to ensure that participants could ask possible questions that were raised during the session in their language. Moreover, written informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and participants were informed that they could leave the study at any time and for any reason if they wished to do so, without any consequences. Three questionnaires that assessed and measured pre-migration adversity, dimensions of identity and insecure-avoidant attachment style were administered on an electronic tablet, or a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, according to the participant's preference. The questionnaires were translated by using the back-translation method and the Arabic translation has not been validated. A payment of 50 euros was assigned to each participant as compensation for the time and effort invested into participating.

Measures

The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ)

The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (Shoeb, Weinstein & Mollica, 2007) is a self-report scale questionnaire. Its first part measures trauma exposure characteristics by posing 43 questions on a series of traumatic events (e.g. intrusion into homes, sexual abuse, murder). Each item is scored as 'yes' if the individual reports having experienced the specific event; otherwise, the response was scored as 'no'. Previous research has documented good reliability and validity of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (Rasmussen, Verkuilen, Ho & Fan, 2015). In the present study, the internal consistency for pre-migration adversity was excellent ($\alpha = .91$).

Experience in Close Relationships Questionnaire (ECR- RSQ)

Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures Questionnaire (Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary & Brumbaugh, 2011) consist of nine items, with six items measuring attachment avoidance (e.g. "I prefer not to show that person what I feel") and three items measuring attachment anxiety (e.g. "I often worry that my partner doesn't really care for me"). In this research design, we decided to exclude the questions referring to attachment anxiety in order to not make the questionnaire too lengthy. Hence, participants answered questions which only concerned attachment avoidance. Answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Lastly, the internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = .78$).

Dimensions of identity development (DIDS)

Identity exploration and commitment were measured using the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (Luyckx et al., 2008). The original questionnaire consists of 25 questions. However, in the present study, this questionnaire was shortened to 15 items using Item-Response Theory. Each subscale contained five items, reflecting a dimension of identity development: exploration in breadth (e.g. I think about different goals that I might pursue), exploration in depth (e.g. I think about the future plans I

have already made), commitment making (e.g. I have plans of what I am going to do in the future), identification with commitment (e.g. My future plan give me self-confidence), and ruminative exploration (e.g. I worry about what I want to do with my future). Answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale and ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Previous research has showed good psychometric quality for all dimensions of identity (Mastrotheodoros & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). In this research, the reliability was excellent for the dimensions of commitment making ($\alpha = .95$) and for the identification with commitment ($\alpha = .90$), good for the exploration in breadth ($\alpha = .84$) and acceptable for the exploration in depth ($\alpha = .78$) and for ruminative exploration ($\alpha = .74$).

Analysis Plan

In the present study descriptive and inferential statistics were used; descriptive statistics in order to present participants' sociodemographic characteristics and their answers to main parts of the questionnaires, and inferential statistics in order to test the research hypotheses. More precisely, the correlations among the variables (independent variables: pre-migration adversity, insecure-avoidant attachment style; dependent variable: 5 dimensions of identity) were investigated with Pearson's r test. Furthermore, the moderation effect (insecure-avoidant attachment style) was tested—in the first step the main effects were entered, while, in the second step the interaction effect was added—using hierarchy multiple regression analysis. Finally, the Bonferroni correction was used, which implies that the new significance value in the regression analysis was $\alpha^* = \alpha / m = .05 / 5 = .01$ ($m = 5$ since we have five dependent variables). The statistical analysis was performed with the use of the statistical package SPSS 22.0.

Results

Table 1
Sociodemographic characteristics

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	35	62.5
Female	21	37.5
Ethnic background		
Arab	47	83.9
Kurdish	3	5.4
Assyrian	1	1.8
Other	2	3.6
I would rather not say	3	5.4
Level of education		
Primary school	2	3.6
High school	14	25.5
Vocational school	4	7.3
University of applied sciences	2	3.6
University	29	52.7
Doctoral degree	1	1.8
Other	3	5.5
Religious affiliation		
None	13	23.2
Islam	35	62.5
Christianity	3	5.4
Other	1	1.8
I would rather not say	4	7.1
Refuge status		
Asylum seeker	5	8.9
Status holder	51	91.1
Main reason participants left Syria		
Unsafety because of my political beliefs	26	46.43
Unsafety because of my religious beliefs	15	26.79
Unsafety because of the conflict in Syria	43	76.79
Other	6	10.71
Other members of the participants' family present in Netherlands		
Child	8	14.29
Mother	24	42.86
Father	17	30.36
Siblings	28	50.00
Wife/Husband/Partner	11	19.64
Extended family	19	33.93
Other	4	7.14
Family left behind in Syria		
Yes	49	89.1
No	6	10.9
Child	3	5.36
Mother	25	44.64
Father	24	42.86
Family members behind in Syria		
Siblings	28	50.00
Wife/Husband/Partner	3	5.36
Extended family	45	80.36

Other		4	7.14
	Min/Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Participants' age	19.00/35.00	27.73	4.87
Length of time in Netherlands (months)	2.00/57.00	31.38	16.24

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of all study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range (<i>M</i>)
Commitment making	12.07	2.82	3 – 15 (9)
Exploration in breadth	12.36	2.29	3 – 15 (9)
Ruminative exploration	11.11	2.60	3 – 15 (9)
Identification with commitment	12.02	2.56	3 – 15 (9)
Exploration in depth	12.27	2.35	3 – 15 (9)
Pre-migration adversity	15.36	7.92	0-43 (21.5)
Insecure-avoidant attachment style	35.36	6.47	6-42 (24)

Table 3
Correlations between all study variables

	Commitment making	Exploration in breadth	Ruminative exploration	Identification with commitment	Exploration in depth	Pre-migration adversity
Commitment making	1					
Exploration in breadth	.699**	1				
Ruminative exploration	-.100	.308*	1			
Identification with commitment	.760**	.640**	.054	1		
Exploration in depth	.484**	.659**	.426**	.647**	1	
Pre-migration adversity	.016	.029	.086	.220	.108	1
Insecure-avoidant attachment style	.015	.216	.272*	.095	.167	.022

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 4
Hierarchical Linear Regression Coefficients

	Model I: Main effects				Model II: Main effects and interaction			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	T	<i>p</i> (β)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	T	<i>p</i> (β)
Commitment making								
Constant	12.071	.384	31.441	.000	12.075	.387	31.177	.000
Pre-migration adversity	.006	.049	.114	.910	.012	.052	.223	.824
Insecure-avoidant attachment style	.006	.060	.103	.918	.001	.062	.013	.990
Pre-migration adversity* Insecure-avoidant attachment style					-.004	.010	-.353	.726
	$F(2, 53) = .012. p = .988. R^2 = .000$				$F(3, 52) = .049. p = .985. R^2 = .003. \Delta R^2 = .002$			
Exploration in breadth								
Constant	12.357	.305	40.577	.000	12.355	.307	40.187	.000
Pre-migration adversity	.007	.039	.180	.858	.004	.042	.096	.924
Insecure-avoidant attachment style	.076	.048	1.604	.115	.079	.049	1.594	.117
Pre -migration adversity* Insecure-avoidant attachment style					.002	.008	.218	.828
	$F(2, 53) = 1.309. p = .279. R^2 = .047$				$F(3, 52) = .873. p = .461. R^2 = .048. \Delta R^2 = .001$			
Ruminative exploration								
Constant	11.107	.339	32.746	.000	11.105	.342	32.427	.000
Pre-migration adversity	.026	.043	.604	.548	.023	.046	.504	.617
Insecure-avoidant attachment style	.109	.053	2.054	.045	.111	.055	2.018	.049
Pre-migration adversity* Insecure-avoidant attachment style					.002	.009	.184	.855
	$F(2, 53) = 2.320. p = .108. R^2 = .081$				$F(3, 52) = 1.530. p = .218. R^2 = .081. \Delta R^2 = .001$			
Identification with commitment								

Constant	12.018	.339	35.479	.000	12.013	.341	35.181	.000
Pre-migration adversity	.071	.043	1.635	.108	.064	.046	1.385	.172
Insecure-avoidant attachment style	.036	.053	.676	.502	.042	.055	.758	.452
Pre-migration adversity* Insecure-avoidant attachment style					.004	.009	.441	.661
	$F(2, 53) = 1.590, p = .213, R^2 = .057$				$F(3, 52) = 1.109, p = .354, R^2 = .060, \Delta R^2 = .004$			
Exploration in depth								
Constant	12.268	.314	39.032	.000	12.257	.313	39.148	.000
Pre-migration adversity	.031	.040	.774	.442	.014	.042	.333	.740
Insecure-avoidant attachment style	.060	.049	1.220	.228	.075	.050	1.483	.144
Pre-migration adversity* Insecure-avoidant attachment style					.010	.008	1.207	.233
	$F(2, 53) = 1.065, p = .352, R^2 = .039$				$F(3, 52) = 1.202, p = .318, R^2 = .065, \Delta R^2 = .026$			

Assumption testing

The assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity were checked. Firstly, the independent variables were centered—the mean value was subtracted from the scores—in order to avoid multicollinearity. As regards to the normality assumption, analysis showed that there was a non-significant deviation in the dataset, since all the values of asymmetry and kurtosis were between -2 and 2 (Table 1, Appendix), and the graphical inspection of the histograms was acceptable (Figure 2 – Figure 8, Appendix). In addition, the linearity assumption was examined with the use of scatter plots, and there was a significant deviation in the linearity assumption between the independent variables and the dependent variable (Figure 9- Figure 13, Appendix). Moreover the scatter plot between standardized residuals and standardized predicted values showed that the homoscedasticity assumption was met since the data were randomly distributed and there was not a significant trend (Figure 14- Figure 18, Appendix). Lastly, there was no multicollinearity ($VIF < 10$).

Main analysis

According to Table 4, five regression models with five different dependent variables (commitment making, exploration in breadth, ruminative exploration, identification with commitment, exploration in depth) were presented. In all five regression models of model 1 (main effects) we have used the same independent variables: pre-migration adversity and insecure-avoidant attachment style. In model 2 (main effects and interaction), we have added the interaction effect between the aforementioned main effects. As it can be observed, none of the regression models were statistically significant in model 1 and 2. All predictors were not statistically significant at the $p =$

.01 level (corrected for multiple testing using Bonferroni correction). Therefore, these results indicate that hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4 are to be rejected.

Discussion

Summary and Main Findings

The purpose of this paper was to bring together issues of young adult Syrian refugees' pre-migration adversity, identity formation as well as attachment style. We hypothesized that pre-migration adversity would impact identity formation negatively, whilst the insecure-avoidant attachment style would amplify the negative impact of pre-migration adversity on the formulation of identity. We found neither direct nor indirect effects, suggesting that pre-migration adversity does not contribute to the development of particular dimensions of identity, and that the insecure-avoidant attachment style does not moderate that relationship.

First of all, we did not find any statistically significant correlations between the independent variables (pre-migration adversity, insecure-avoidant attachment style) and the dependent variables (five dimensions of identity). The results contradict previous empirical researches which found links between attachment constructs and the processes of identity formation (Årseth, Kroger, Martinussen & Marcia, 2009; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). More specifically, Marcia (1988) suggested that when youth have a secure representation of a close one, they are able to proceed to a high-quality exploration. Subsequently, that allows them to develop and commit to a certain identity. Meanwhile, other studies have shown that individuals who lack the confidence to seek their own identity are individuals who are nervous or afraid representing themselves, in other words, who display a negative internal working model of self (Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman & Vaughn, 2011).

A possible reason for that incompatibility between the present study and other studies could be that the measure used to assess the avoidant attachment style is based on youth's self-reports of relationship qualities with specific individuals, such as parents, siblings or peers. However, that questionnaire neither captures nor measures internal working models of self and others sufficiently, since it is based only on participants' subjective answers and not on other more objective ways of assessment, such as observations or interviews. For example, instruments, such as the adult attachment interview (AAI; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996), gauge the internal working models of self that a person constructs adequately, and enable researchers to assess attachment representations in adolescence and adulthood more objectively (De Haas, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van Ijzendoorn, 1994). Thus, instruments like these are more appropriate for measuring attachment in relation to identity development, and, hence, they need to serve as reference point for further research.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that we found statistically significant positive correlation between two of the adaptive identity dimensions, the exploration in breadth and exploration in depth, and the ruminative exploration. Our findings contradicts previous studies results, which revealed that there was a strong, negative correlation among the adaptive identity dimensions of commitment making, and identification with commitment and ruminative exploration (e.g., Luyckx et al., 2008; Luyckx et al., 2013).

A possible explanation for this inconsistency can be that the term "refugee" is perceived negatively by many refugees who are stigmatized by that label (Zetter, 1991, 2007). Therefore, people are no more capable of honestly stating and forming their own identity, when they receive, at the same time, labels which are linked with negative stereotypical connotations (Kebede, 2010). As a result, they may wander

among different dimensions of identity, resulting in high self-reporting in both adaptive and maladaptive dimensions of identity, as it was the case in our study.

Strengths and Limitations

The present study has several notable strengths. To our knowledge, this is the first study in the young adult refugees' population that included the ruminative exploration, rather than focusing only on adaptive dimensions of identity, as it is often the case in identity studies (e.g. Luyckx, & Goossens, Soenens, Beyers, 2006; Luyckx et al., 2008).

Moreover, the approach used for the current design was culturally sensitive since it integrated cultural characteristics, values, experiences, and norms of the target population (Syrian young adult refugees) into the research design, implementation, evaluation, and materials. More specifically, we used cultural informants, and Syrian researchers were involved in every step of the research. Lastly, all questionnaires were translated in the Arabic language so as to facilitate the entire procedure.

Finally, in recognition of the complex and multifaceted nature of the refugees' crisis, it is important to enhance our understanding of adaptation and growth in young adult refugees who have been exposed to harsh experiences and environments. Ultimately, this study increased awareness of the current situation and guided efforts to improve adaptive functioning, since it fostered a better understanding of refugees' identity development and insecure-avoidant attachment figures with their close ones.

The study, however, is subject to several limitations. Initially, the measurement of avoidant attachment through questionnaires should be interpreted with caution, as the people being questioned (especially insecure-avoidant

individuals) tended to illustrate their attachment figure in an idealized way and to deny incidents of their life, when they experienced pain (Salo, Qouta & Punamäki, 2005). Therefore, for the assessment of both attachment orientations and harsh life events, future researchers should not rely only on self-report questionnaires, but also on observational measures or multiple informants, such as parents, spouses, and/or children.

Besides, people form and reform their identities as they pass through different stages and of their lives (Erikson 1980; Gee 2000), which means that the formulation of a stable sense of identity is a continuous interplay which evolves over time from actual person–environment transactions and experiences, such as migration (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Seweryn, 2007). Unfortunately, that continuous process is not possible to be captured by the cross-sectional method used in this study.

Lastly, the current findings derived from a relatively small sample, the members of which self-selected into the study. Relying on self-reports makes it difficult to disentangle different factors and the associations among variables may be inflated by common source and method variance (Conway & Lance, 2010). As a final point, the small sample size may have resulted in insufficient statistical significance.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several avenues for future work in this area. To begin with, the questionnaire referring to experience in close relationships was shortened and included only one type of insecure attachment style, the insecure-avoidant type. Since previous research in that field revealed correlations between the insecure attachment style of anxiety and identity dimensions (Kerpelman et al., 2012), the insecure-anxiety attachment style should be included in a future replication for the potential study to be more integrated.

In addition, post-migration adverse experiences, such as poverty or lack of social support and discrimination further complicate the problems of those who have already been previously traumatized (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Laban, Gernaat, Komproe, Schreuders, & De Jong, 2004; Silove, Sinnerbrink, Field, Manicavasagar, & Steel, 1997). Hence, future studies may benefit from prospectively examining attachment orientations and identity formation at multiple migration time points.

Finally, there is evidence that males and females differ in aspects of their identity development depending on the relationship with their parents (e.g., Kroger, 1997; Pastorino, Dunham, Kidwell, Bacho, & Lamborn, 1997; Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001). Consequently, a differentiated future investigation of identity development could focus on gender differences and on how they can affect different dimensions of identity in the population of young adult refugees.

Future Implications

This study provides both future theoretical and practical implications. Although the results showed that pre-migration negative experiences affect neither the adaptive nor the maladaptive dimensions of identity in young adult refugees, focusing on the formation of identity in young adult refugees is important to keep investigating which variables affect the development and formulation of different identity paths. The quality of the interaction between family or peers and individuals can be an example of such a variable. In their study, Meeus, Oosterwegel and Vollebergh (2002) found systematic links between parent and peer trust and communication with exploration and commitment. Meanwhile, Berndt (2004) reported that individuals who have negative interactions with their close ones (e.g. friends) experienced high levels of conflict and competition while they focused only on themselves. These individuals do not pay attention to other individuals' opinions and values, they only take into account

their personal beliefs and they form their identity without much exploration. Thus, studies on the current field need to continue searching for variables that can affect the aforementioned relationship, but with more focus on young adult refugees.

Additionally, for young people with refugee backgrounds, establishing a stable sense of belonging to their family and community, as well as to their country of resettlement, is essential for their well-being (Correa-Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010). Nevertheless, current immigration policies make it difficult for families to reconcile, which may impair the well-being and security of most youths (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). By the same token, attachment relationships and well-being of most young adult refugees can be obstructed by policies which suggest the banishment and separation of families, or when a family member is detained (Juang et al., 2018). Since such relationships have a crucial impact on individuals' identity development (Koepeke & Denissen, 2012), further studies are needed to determine which strategies could lead young refugees to establish and preserve close attachment relationships.

Accordingly, we suggest that the preservation of such relationships could occur in two ways. The first way to address this matter is by reminding individuals of the people they have a secure attachment with (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005) or by helping them to form positive connections about places that are important to them (Scannell & Gifford, 2016). Through this approach we would generate a greater sense of safety and meaning that could help them develop a stable sense of identity in the long-term. Alternatively, future work might also build on existing attachment intervention programs, such as the Circle of Security (Hoffman, Marvin, Cooper & Powell, 2006), modifying them to be culturally responsive to specific refugee communities and age-groups.

Last but not least, identity and attachment relationships are deeply ingrained in the constructions of society and institutions; sometimes, even secure attachment relationships with close ones can be overwhelmed in certain contexts (Juang et al., 2018). For instance, traumatic experiences, parental symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other post-migration stresses (e.g., unemployment) may deepen the risk in regards to adverse parenting behavior, subsequently affecting the parent-youth's relationship (van Ee, Kieber, Jongmans, Mooren, & Out, 2016). Thus, attachment to people, identity development and their interrelation should be understood within the broader contexts and systems in which they reside.

Conclusion

In this research-oriented thesis design, we borrowed core principles from Erikson's (1968), Marcia's (1980) and Luyckx's et al. (2006) models of identity, alongside with key ideas in relationship-attachment science. Research on these theories indicates that the process of identity development is complex and multidimensional (Schwartz & Montgomery, 2002). Subsequently, the significance of the identity development in refugee populations was illustrated on social support and solidarity among refugees (Chatty, Mansour, & Yassin, 2013; Curley, 2009; Palmgren, 2013). However, the present study helps in filling an important gap between identity growth and attachment orientations in young refugee populations. Greater understanding of processes that facilitate growth experiences in refugee youth is highly relevant, in particular because of the severe nature of their potentially traumatic experiences and the challenging task to adapt to the various changes that emerge in their life.

In conclusion, the study has gone some way towards enhancing and expanding our knowledge base, concerning the links between insecure-avoidant attachment style

and identity development, which will be applied for helping young adult refugees to navigate the acculturation process towards a positive trajectory for adulthood.

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Appendix

Assumptions testing Table and Figures

Table 1
Testing of Normality Assumption

	Commitment making	Exploration in breadth	Ruminative exploration	Identification with commitment	Exploration in depth	Pre-migration adversity	Insecure-avoidant attachment style
N Valid	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	12.0714	12.3571	11.1071	12.0179	12.2679	15.3571	35.3571
Median	12.0000	12.0000	12.0000	12.0000	12.0000	14.0000	36.0000
Mode	12.00 ^a	15.00	12.00	12.00	12.00	14.00 ^a	42.00
Std. Deviation	2.82107	2.29171	2.59845	2.56190	2.35481	7.91645	6.47071
Skewness	-1.184	-1.266	-.444	-.976	-1.269	.719	-1.372
Std. Error of Skewness	.319	.319	.319	.319	.319	.319	.319
Kurtosis	1.389	3.572	-.600	1.525	3.218	1.095	1.810
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.628	.628	.628	.628	.628	.628	.628

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

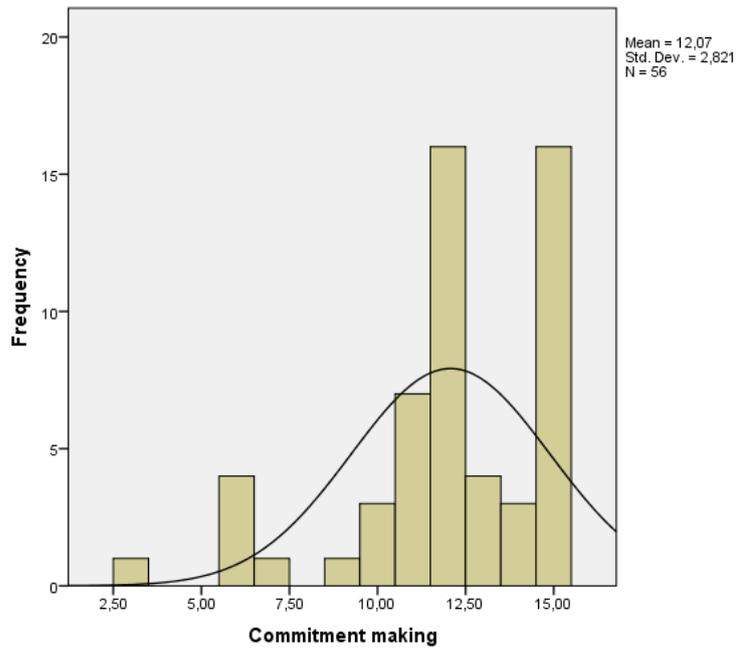


Figure 2

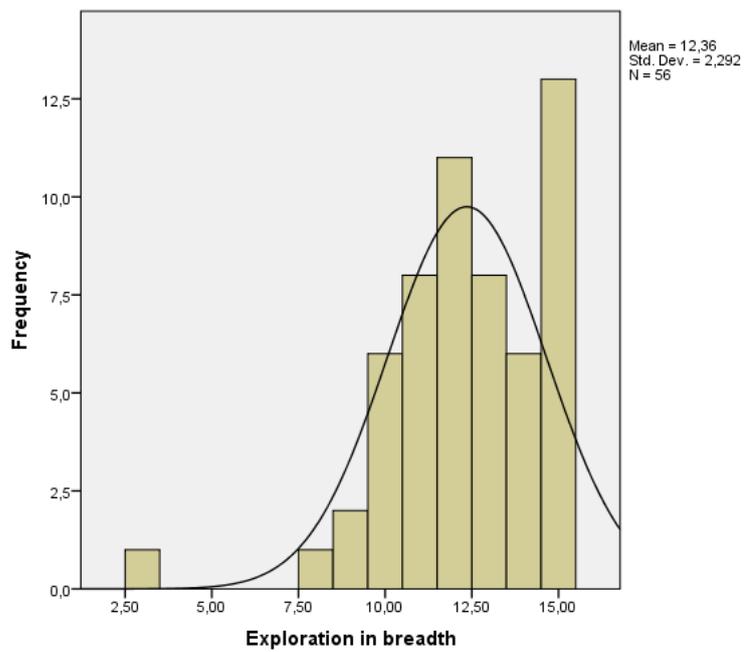


Figure 3

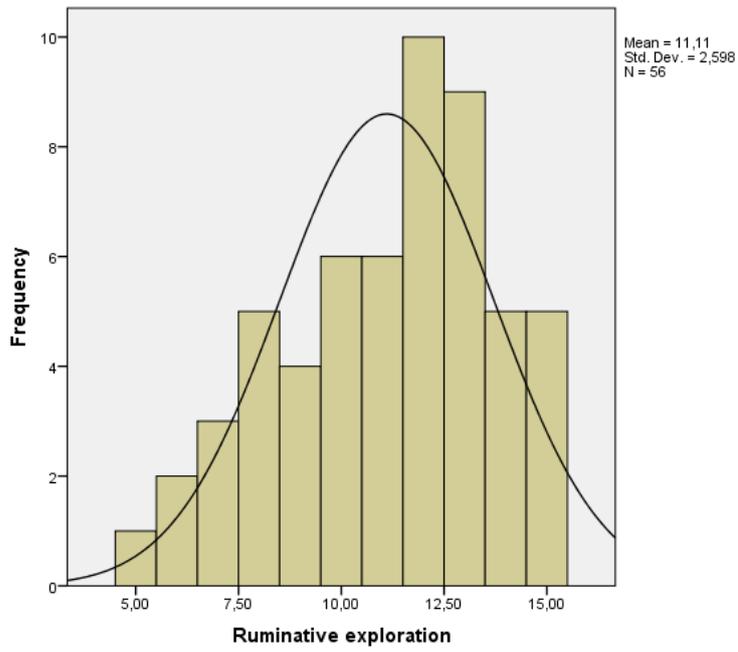


Figure 4

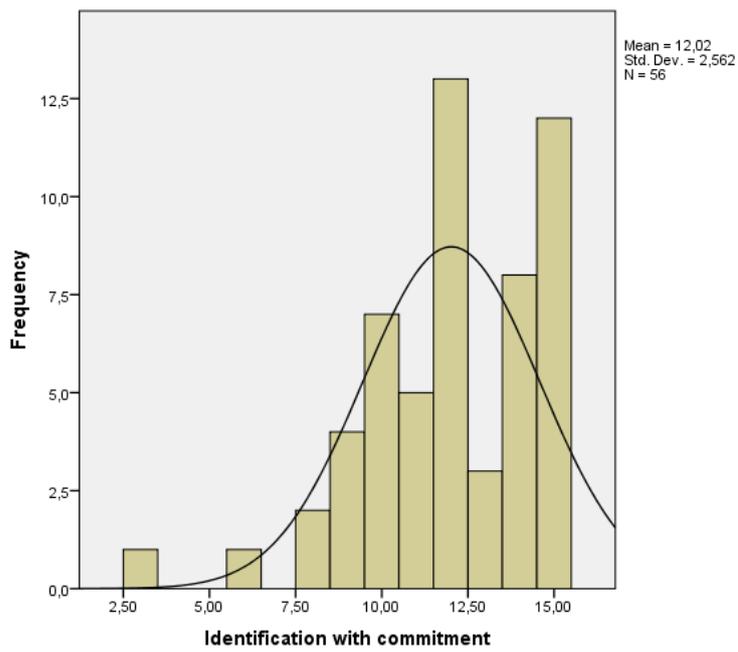


Figure 5

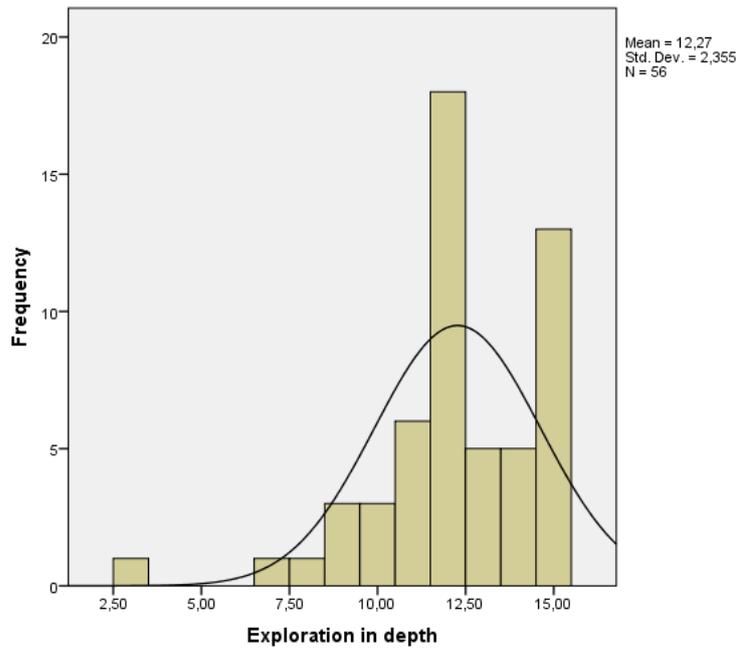


Figure 6

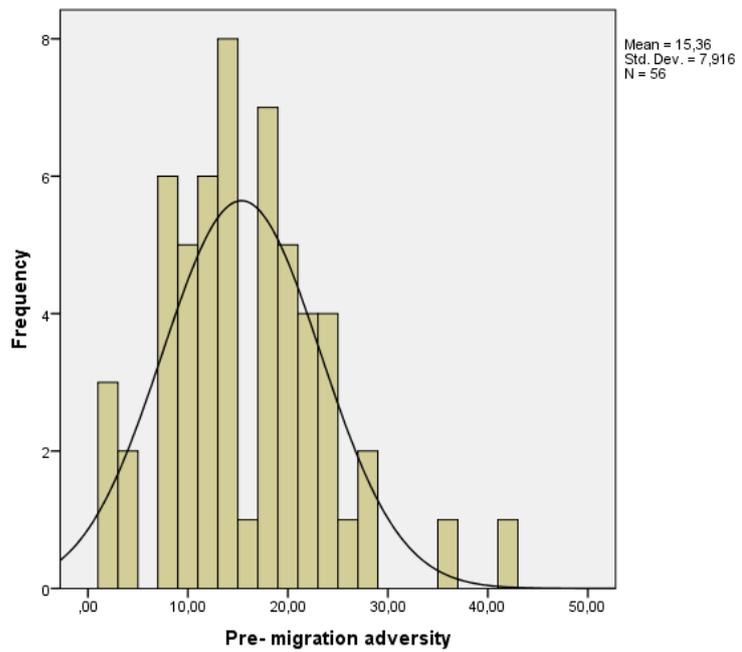


Figure 7

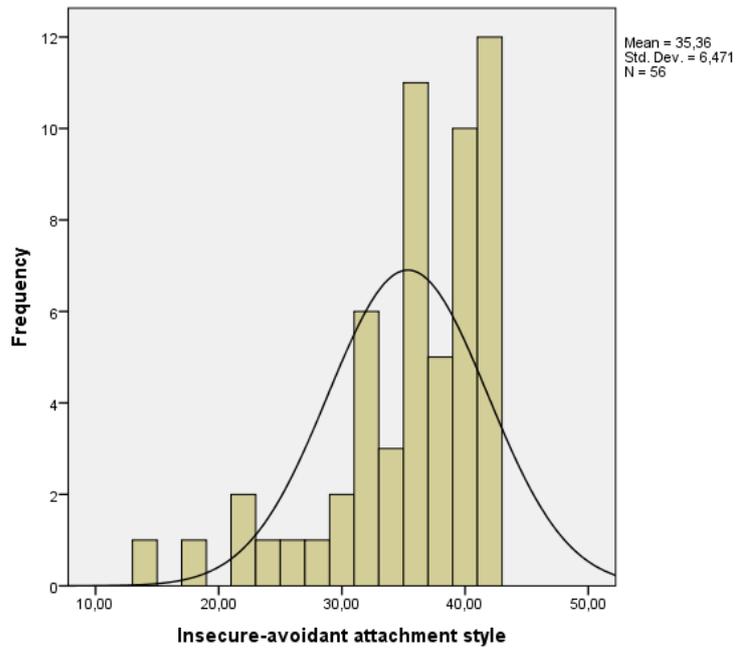


Figure 8

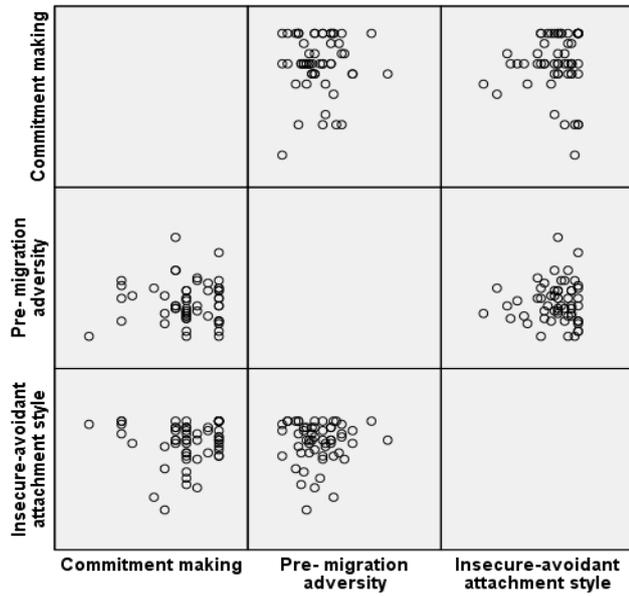


Figure 9

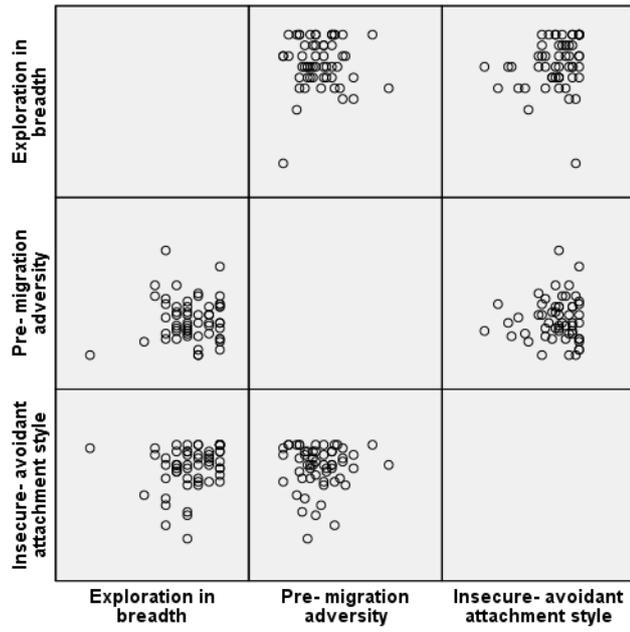


Figure 10

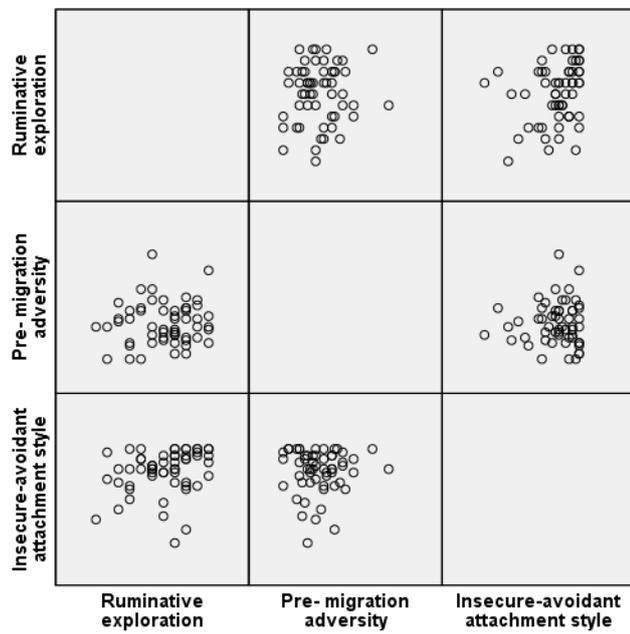


Figure 11

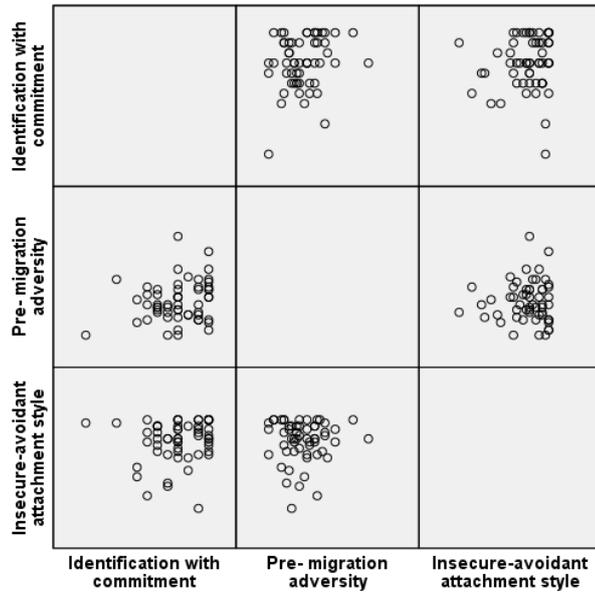


Figure 12

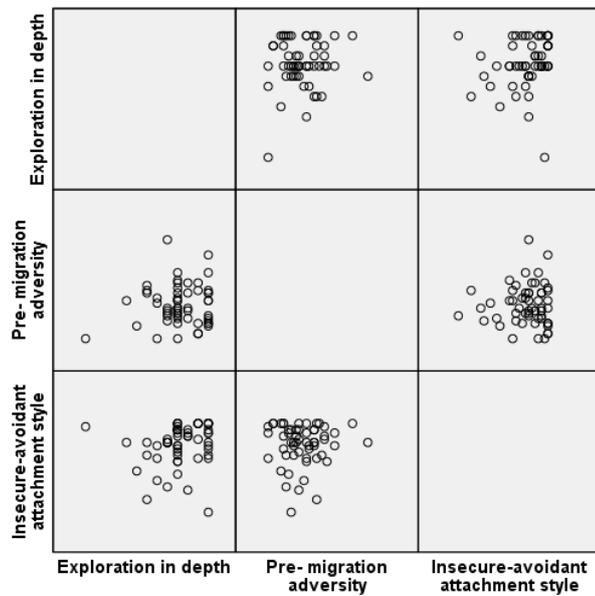


Figure 13

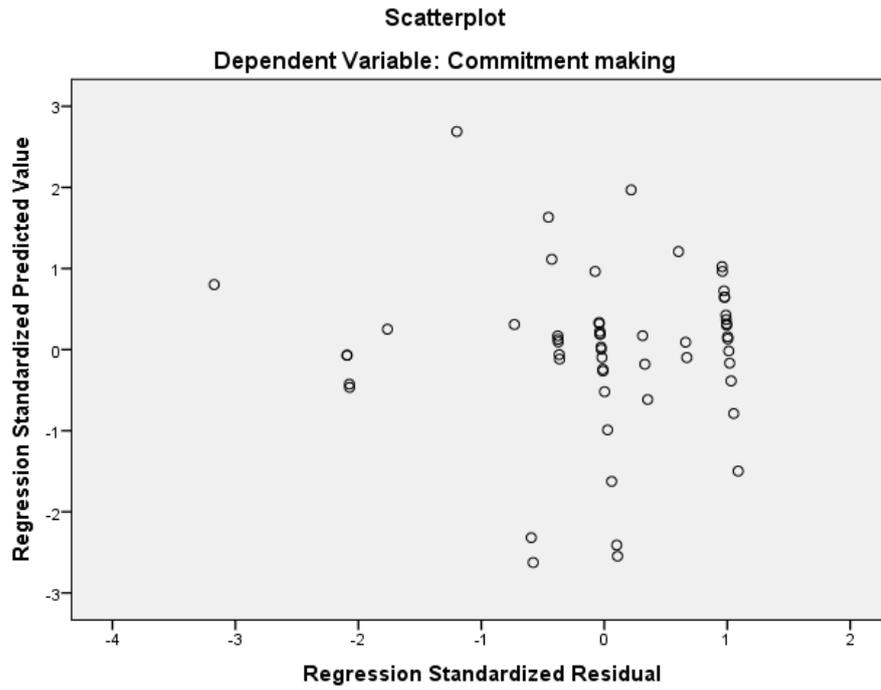


Figure 14

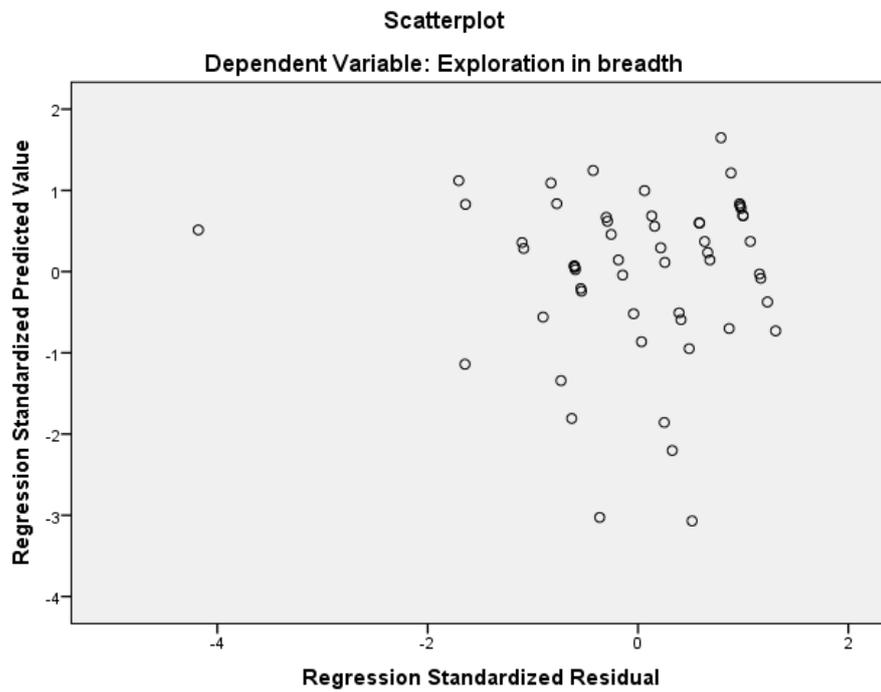


Figure 15

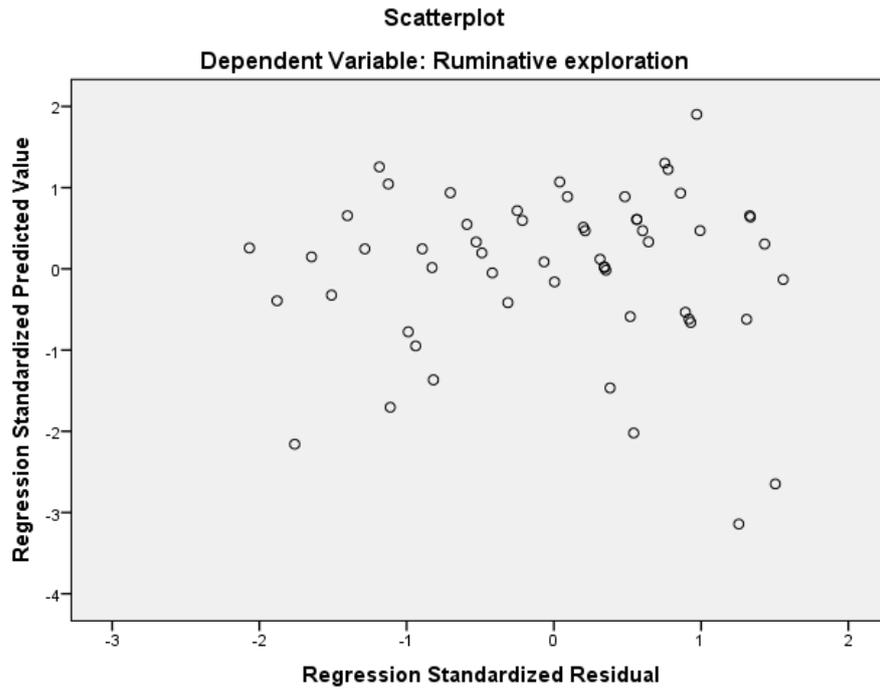


Figure 16

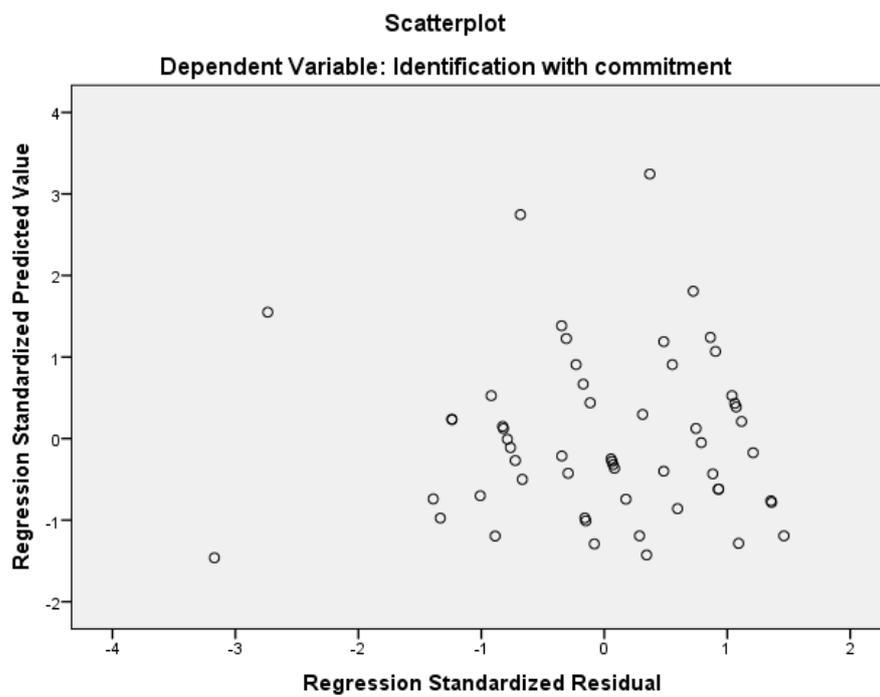


Figure 17

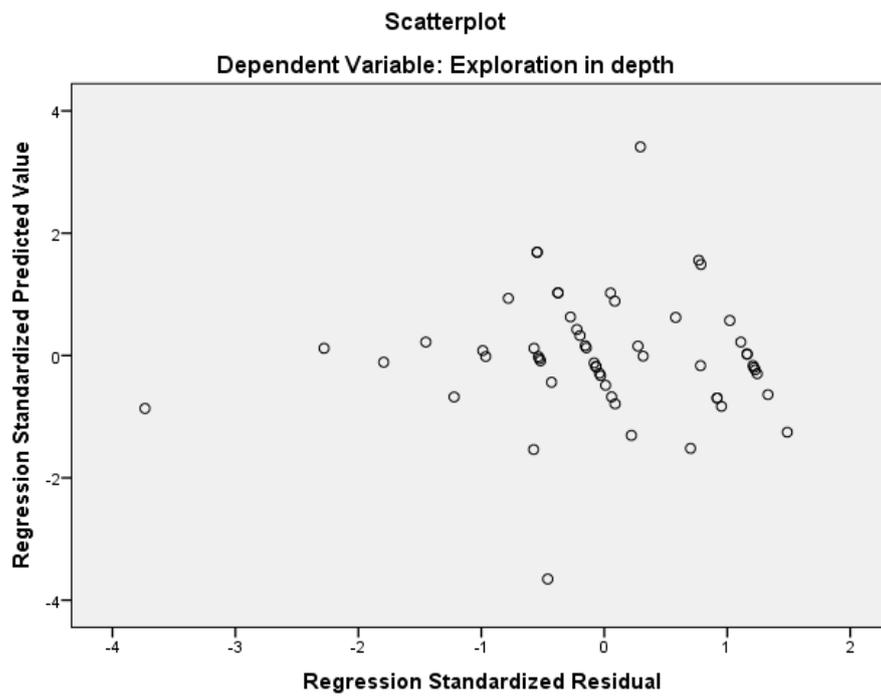


Figure 18