

Relationship of Emotional Intelligence with Parental Attachment among University Students

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The study aimed to investigate the relationship of emotional intelligence with parental attachment among university students. The Participants of the study consisted of $N=200$ participants including both genders (Male $n=100$ & Female $n=100$). Data was collected through simple random sampling from University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Two questionnaires namely, Parental Attachment Questionnaire, and Emotional Intelligence scale were administered on the participants. Findings of the study revealed that parental attachment, parental social support, and parent as facilitator of independence are positively correlated with emotional intelligence of university students. Moreover, significant gender differences in parental attachment were apparent where females perceived their parents as more facilitating and supportive. Implications of the study are useful for the parenting, family therapy and student counselling.

Keywords: Parental Attachment, Emotional Intelligence, University Students

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Parents are the most significant figures in the life of any child. They are responsible for the physical, psychological, social and emotional development of children. Parents who are not emotionally responsive to their children tend to raise children who are more distressed and less involved in social activities (Volling, Mc Elwain, Notaro & Herrera, 2002).

Early parent-child relationship strongly influences emotional wellbeing of children (Dawson & Fischer, 1994), their basic coping and problem-solving abilities, and future capacity for new stable relationships (Ainsworth, 1967; Hong & Park, 2012; Lerner & Castelline, 2002; Wilkinson, 2006). Parental attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) explains that parental attachment is an emotional bond between children and parents. This bond consists of comfort, safety and support. According to Bowlby (1969) attachment is the ability to be close to another person and to feel secure when that person is present. It is a long-lasting feeling of emotional security which provides freedom and emotional support to children (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Walls, 1978).

According to Sears and Sears (2001) attachment with parents nurtures emotional adjustment, reasoning and constructive problem solving in children. Various studies (Segal, Glenn, & Robinson Hamarta, 2016) have reported that children who do not have stable attachment with their parents suffer from cognitive impairment, as well as behavioral and socio-emotional problems. The insecure parental attachment style gives rise to depression, anxiety, stress and other emotional problems among children (Chugani et. al, 2001). Short-term separation from an attachment figure leads to distress (Bowlby, 2012) while long-term consequences of maternal deprivation include; increased aggression, reduced intelligence, delinquency, depression and affectionless psychopathy (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 1951).

Different studies reveal that attachment is one of the most important factors in making us socially mature, interactive, and in developing emotional control (Simpson, 1990; Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Secure attachment style is the best predictor of emotional intelligence (Hamarta, Deniz, & Saltali, 2009; Segal, Glenn, & Robinson, 2016). It develops confidence in children to

interact with others, and to control their own emotions (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2004). Neglected parenting plays a role in developing behavioral problems, mental health problems and aggression in children (Karen & Gerhardt, 2013). Two forms of individual differences shown in adult attachment namely: anxiety and avoidance (Brennani, Clark & Shaver, 1998; Shaver & Fraley, 2004). Both attachment anxiety and avoidance are caused due to failure in developing closeness with attachment figures to alleviate distress.

Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; 2001) is a combination of self-motivation, self-determination, self-control and ability to recognize the feelings of others. It enables one to motivate themselves and in the face of frustrations control impulses and delay gratification, to regulate their emotions, keep distress away and develop the ability to think and to be hopeful. Few studies (Siu, 2009; Liau, Liau, Teoh & Liau, 2003) have revealed that emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with behavior problems. The individuals who have low emotional intelligence possess more behavioral problems, such as stress, anxiety, depression and aggression externally. Some studies have reported no significant gender differences in emotional intelligence. Males tend to have higher interpersonal skills and have the ability to control emotions as compare to females. Some studies (Naghavi, Redzuan, Asgari & Mirza, 2012; Koen, 2009; Ghorbani, Bing, Watson, Davison, & Mack, 2002) reported that females are more emotionally intelligent as compared to males and more aware of their emotions, they have greater empathy and have better interpersonal skill than males. Having low emotional intelligence makes a person run away from taking responsibility of his feelings, he feels inadequate, and has a blaming attitude and experiences disappointment in social adjustment (Hein, 1996). Different factors can influence emotional intelligence of children and parental attachment is one of them and it is one of the most important elements in the emotional development of children (Richberg & Fletcher, 2002).

Significance of the study

The present study is designed to assess the level of emotional intelligence of students and the influence of parental attachment on its development. The parent – child attachment plays a significant role in the development of a healthy and emotionally stable personality of children (Bretherton, 1992). It also influences emotional intelligence and emotional adjustment which is the basic requirement for stable social and family relationships as well as a successful life.

Research Objectives

In the light of the above mentioned literature review, following objectives were formulated for the present study;

- To assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and parental attachment.
- To measure gender differences in parental attachment among university students.
- To measure gender differences in emotional intelligence among university students.

Method

Research Design

The present study is an empirical quantitative correlation and comparative survey research design in which the relationship between emotional intelligence and parental attachment of university students was found out and gender differences were evaluated for both of the variables.

Participants

The participants ($N=200$) of the study comprised of university students (males $n=100$; females $n=100$). The age range of the participants was between 18 to 24 years. Data was collected through simple random sampling from the students of Bachelors of University of Sindh, Jamshoro. The Participants belonged to the department of Psychology, Sociology, English, Pharmacy, Muslim History, Political Science, Philosophy, Chemistry, Computer

Science, Commerce, Gender Studies and International Relations. Participants belonged to different socio-economic classes from lower middle class to upper middle class.

Measures

Two standardized instruments were used in the study are mentioned below.

Kenny's Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ). It is a self-report inventory which consists of 55 items and has three subscales which are (a) Affective Quality of Relationships (27 items), (b) Parental Fostering of Autonomy (14 items) and (c) Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support (13 items). It is a reliable instrument as the alpha reliability co-efficient of this scale is $r=.88$. All items on the scale are rated on a 5-point Likert-like scale (1= Very Much to 5= Not at All). Some items are reverse scored to avoid response set bias (Kenny, 1987).

Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI). It was developed by Khan and Kamal (2010). It is a standardized self-report measure to assess the level of emotional intelligence of respondents. The alpha reliability co-efficient of this scale is $r=.91$. It consists of 60 items and three subscales which are Emotional Self-awareness, Emotional Self-regulation and Interpersonal Skill. All items are scored on a five-point rating scale ranging from 5 (Always) to 1(Never).

Procedure

First of all, permission was taken from the Directors, Chairpersons of different departments of University of Sindh, Jamshoro to collect the data. Before administering questionnaires, rapport was built with respondents and then their consent was taken through informed consent form. They were instructed to fill-up all questionnaires and were further briefed that there is no right and wrong answer of any statement and they can ask any query about any item at any time. They were requested to give responses on all items. The questionnaires were administered in their respective classes and Participants took an average of 15-20

minutes to fill-up the questionnaires. After collection of the data, the results were analysed.

Results

To attain the objectives of the study Pearson Product Moment Correlation was computed between emotional intelligence and parental attachment.

Table 1

Pearson Moment Correlation between emotional intelligence and parental attachment and its subscales (N=200)

Scales	PAT	AQR	PFI	PSS
EQ	.42**	.93**	.29*	.64**

Note. *p.> .05, **p.> .01 EQ= Emotional Intelligence, PAT= Parental Attachment, AQR= Affective Quality of Relationships, PFI= Parents as Facilitators of Independence, PSS= Parents as Source of Support

Findings revealed a significant relationship between parental attachment and emotional intelligence. All three subscales of parental attachment scale are positively correlated with the emotional intelligence. This indicates the direct influence of parental bonding with the emotional intelligence of children. For the testing of second and third hypothesis independent sample t-test performed and the results are mentioned below in the following tables:

Table 2

Independent Sample Test showing the comparison of parental attachment and its subscales based on gender (N=200)

Variables	Male		Female		t	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		
PAT	176.26	18.80	201.18	16.92	6.96**	1.42
AQR	89.14	13.74	106.26	11.40	6.77**	1.33
PFI	43.78	4.84	46.76	5.43	2.87*	0.57
PSS	42.70	5.45	46.80	5.57	3.71*	0.74

Note. df=198, *p <.05, **p> .01 PAT= parental Attachment, AQR= Affective quality of relationships, PFI= Parents as facilitators of independence, PSS= Parents as source of support

Table 2 is indicating differences between male and female university students based on their parental attachment and its subscales. T-values are indicating significant differences on parental attachment scale and its all subscales. Females perceived more parental attachment than male participants. Female participants also perceived their parents as facilitator of independence and social support as compared to males.

Table 3

Independent Sample Test showing the comparison of emotional intelligence based on gender (N=200)

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Emotional Intelligence	201.02	28.35	192.26	18.51	1.25	0.15

Note. df=198

Results of table 3 are indicating non-significant differences in the emotional intelligence of male and female participants.

Discussion

The study aimed to find out the relationship of parental attachment with emotional intelligence of university students and the findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the said variables. Previous studies also support the findings of the present study by indicating that secure parental attachment is a significant predictor of emotional intelligence (Saltali, Deniz, & Hamarta, 2009; Samadi, Kasaei & Pour 2013). Karen and Gerhardt (2013) conducted a study to measure the impact of secure attachment with emotional and social intelligence. Findings revealed that secure parental attachment is linked with the development of social skills, emotional intelligence and resilience in children.

Findings of the study also revealed significant gender differences in the emotional intelligence. These results are also in-line with the previous studies (Shin, 2011; Flicking et al., 2016).

In the current study, gender differences were found based on their parental attachment, and female students perceived more parental attachment than male students. These results are also consistent with the previous studies (Haigler, Day, & Marshall, 1995; Wilkinson, 2006).

Emotional intelligence is an important trait which shows emotional maturity and stability in the mood and temperament of individuals. Parental attachment promotes more emotional maturity in the children. Emotional stability helps to develop good social relationships which are important for better life and work adjustment. Parents play an important role in the socialization of children and it helps them to develop stable relationships and to succeed in life.

Parenting has significant influence on the psycho-social development of children. Its impact is observed from childhood till the rest of an individual's life. Positive and good parental attachment strengthens the emotional stability and maturity in children. In the developmental process, adolescence is an important stage of development when there is high emotionality due to physiological changes, but those who are emotionally stable, they pass through this stage more successfully as compared to those with less emotional control. Secure and warm bonding with parents helps the children to develop into positive and emotionally intelligent individuals.

Emotional intelligence is useful in every aspect of life. It is more important than traditional academic intelligence to be successful in today's life. Emotional control helps to maintain stable social relationships with others. Emotionally stable individuals are able to manage their emotions, understand others and interact with others more meaningfully and appropriately. It provides foundation of healthy and mature relationships with others in all walks of life from family to workplace and from peers to other social relations. Emotionally intelligent individuals are more successful and satisfied in life as compared to those who are low in emotional intelligence. Adolescents who are high in

emotional intelligence, can become not only productive and successful at work or what they do but also help others to lead a more fulfilling life.

Future Recommendations

In the light of above mentioned findings it is recommended that future researchers should study students belonging to different colleges and other educational institutions as the participants of the current study were limited to university students only. Moreover, it would be beneficial if further investigations can compare other demographic variables like socioeconomic status, parent education etc.

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