

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTACHMENT STYLES, SELF-EFFICACY, AND COPING MECHANISM AMONG ADOLESCENTS OF SIALKOT-PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to explore relationship between attachment styles, self-efficacy and coping mechanism among adolescents.

**Design of the Study:** Correlation Study (Predictive).

**Place and Duration of the study:** This study was conducted from September, 2020 till February, 2021 in Sialkot.

**Sample and Method:** A random sample of 400 students, aged between 12 to 16 years (mean age=14, SD= 6.23) were selected from different private and government academic institutions. A self-developed demographic sheet was administered along with Attachment Style Classification Questionnaire General Self-Efficacy Scale and Coping Scale. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and linear regression analysis were used.

**Results and Conclusion:** It was revealed that adolescents with secure attachment style have significant positive correlation with level of self-efficacy and coping among adolescents. Further, negative relationship of anxious attachment style and avoidant attachment style was found with coping mechanism and self-efficacy ( $p<0.05$ ). Further regression analysis has also indicated the change that independent variable brings in the dependent variables. Effective attachment style can contribute greatly to enhancing the self-efficacy and coping among adolescents. This is also helpful in general population.

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**Keywords:** Attachment Styles; Self Efficacy; Coping Mechanism; Adolescents

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a challenging and exciting period of one's life that demands significant physiological, cognitive, psychological and social changes (Zhao et al., 2015) and distinguishes childhood behavior from adulthood behavior that affect the personality and adjustment in later life (Flett & Hewitt, 2013; Wilson & Deane, 2012).

Attachment has been viewed as a deep and persistent emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1973) and children seek nearness to the affection figure (including both parents) especially when they are upset or feel insecure (Bowlby, 1969). Early experiences of connectedness influence coping skills in positive manner, enhance stress management, emotional control, and psychological well-being (Ditzen et al., 2008; Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2007; Maunder et al., 2006). It also determines the patterns and habits of forming and maintaining relationships in adolescents (Tavakolizadeh, et al., 2015) According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1980, 1969) an infant considers an attachment figure as secure, when it is as a source of comfort, help and more responsive and separation with that figure cause distress.

Children with anxious attachment experience greater levels of distress and seem comfortable in adopting negative coping mechanism (i.e., attempting to punish the parents for leaving) (Ciechanowski et al., 2003) and further exhibiting clingy and dependent behavior, but when they interact with their parents, they will reject the attachment figure (Ainsworth, 1973). Children with avoidant attachment showed no or minimal stress during separation from the parents but resultantly either they ignored the parents or avoid the parents (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment theory reveals an internal representation of one self and others that allows an individual to cope with relationships and stressor throughout life (Bartholomew, 1990; Main et al., 1985; Bowlby, 1980). Satisfactory relationship depends on both parents and child's ability to meet the other's secure attachment and secure individuals demonstrate a healthy balancing relationship between autonomy and child (Feeney, 2005).

If attachment figures are not understanding, reassuring, caring or available, insecure relationships will take place (Kobak et al., 2000). Even when a person reaches adulthood, relationship bonding and ability to develop healthy relationships is influenced by early experiences (Zayas et al., 2011) that affects the level of self-efficacy of a person to deal with the life events with full potential

(Tavakolizadeh, et al., 2015). And according to Bandura (1999) self-efficacy has great impact. Self-efficacy refers to people's opinion about their competency to perform particular goals (Bandura, 1999).

Individuals who are anxious experience intense anxiety, higher need for support, and frequent failures to gain the support to cope with stressors (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Parents show an important role in determining children's behavior, personality traits and coping strategies that prolong with growing age from childhood to adulthood (Beyers & Goossens, 2008). According to Mallinckrodt and Wei (2005) high levels of attachment show high level of self-efficacy and is positively correlated with higher coping strategies (Lopez & Gormely, 2002). Some similar studies have indicated that secure attachment style is negatively correlated with psychological distress (Cusimano & Riggs, 2013) and positively linked with better self-efficacy (Wright & Perrone, 2010). On the contrary, high avoidance attachment is negatively correlated with poor resources to maintain healthy relations and poor coping strategies (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Schottenbauer et al., 2006). There is negative relationship between self-efficacy with anxious, insecure and avoidant attachment style (Narimani et al., 2008).

Present research focuses on exploring the association of attachment style with self-efficacy and coping mechanism of adolescents. This will be helpful for them to identify what type of attachments style they possess and what style is more appropriate in enhancing their self-efficacy to meet future challenges and to deal these matters effectively. As we know, Pakistan has a culture that promotes collectivism and it is shaped by effective attachment within families in the early training period of a child and in later stages of life as well as this is evident by so many practical examples of our Islamic personalities. So early effective relationship practices within a family determines efficacy in a person to build and utilize effective and appropriate ways for developing better relationships and to deal with other challenges that come in one's life at any stage. This research will also be beneficial for parents to review their own relationship pattern as well for making their young children psychologically sound and beneficial for themselves and for society as well.

## METHOD

### ***Sample:***

A random sample of 400 adolescents (girls 201, boys 199) was taken from five different academic institutes (including private and government schools) of Sialkot i.e.: Government High Secondary School, Islamia School, Allama Iqbal Public Girls High School, Classic School and Creative School System. This sample was selected by including every 2<sup>nd</sup> student in the sample. Their age range was 12-16 years and below age 12 and above 16 were excluded from the study. Those were included who have minimum level of education of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and below 5<sup>th</sup> grade were excluded. They belong to low, middle, and high socioeconomic status with nuclear and joint family setup.

### ***Measures***

#### 1. Demographic Sheet:

It consists of age, sex, level of education, socioeconomic status, family setup, and job status of father

#### 2. Attachment Style Classification Questionnaire (Finzi et al., 2012)

It consists of 15 items with 5 point likert type scale. It has three factors, i.e.; secure (I usually believe that others who are close to me will not leave me) anxious/ambivalent (I'm sometimes afraid that no one really loves me) and avoidant (I find it uncomfortable and get annoyed when someone tries to get too close to me). The alpha reliability for the anxious, avoidant and secure attachment subscales are .80, .70 and .85 respectively.

#### 3. General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerasalem, 1995)

It's a self- report measure consisted of 10 items with 4 point likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true). High scores reflect high self-efficacy while low scores reflect the low range. Alpha reliability of this scale was 0.93, and for male and female was .47 and .63 respectively.

4. Coping Scale (Hamby, Grych & Banyard, 2013)

It comprises 13 items, reflecting both appraisal and behavioral methods of coping. It is a 4 point type of likert scale ranging from 4 (mostly true about me), to 1 (not true about me). Higher scores indicate higher levels of coping. Internal consistencies (coefficient alphas) for the pilot and main samples are 0.88 and 0.91, respectively.

***Procedure***

At first permission was taken from authorities of different academic institutions including Government High Secondary School, Sialkot, Islamia School, Sialkot, Allama Iqbal Public Girls High School, Sialkot, Classic School, Sialkot and Creative School System Sialkot. Then participants were approached and informed consents were obtained from them. Then demographic sheet, along with other study scales i.e.; Attachment Style Classification Questionnaire (ASCQ), General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) and Coping Scale were administered. For data analysis, descriptive statistics was used to compute the percentages and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis for relationship among variables were used through SPSS-21.

**Ethical Considerations**

In present study, permission was obtained from the authorities and from authors of scales, before going for data collection. Participants were assured about confidentiality, right to withdraw from study at any stage of participation.

## RESULTS

The following tables show the demographic characteristics and results of the current study:

**Table 1**

*Summary of Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Variables of Sample (N=400).*

Variables	Categories	f	%
Gender	Female	201	50.3
	Male	199	49.8
Age	12 years	80	20
	13 years	80	20
	14 years	80	20
	15 years	80	20
	16 years	80	20
	Primary	03	0.8
Education	Secondary	224	56.0
	Matric	173	43.0
	Joint	198	49.5
Family System	Nuclear	202	50.5
	Low	13	03.3
Socio Economic Status	Middle	324	81.0
	High	63	15.8
	Government Job	38	9.5
Job Status of Father	Private Job	81	20.3
	Business	175	43
	Other	106	26.5

**Table 2**

*Relationship Between Attachment Style and Self-Efficacy (SE) among Adolescents*

Variables	N	r
Secure Attachment and Self Efficacy	400	.213**
Anxious Attachment and Self Efficacy	400	-.102*
Avoidant Attachment and Self Efficacy	400	-.172**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Note:** The results indicated that secure attachment style is positively related with level of self-efficacy while anxious and avoidant attachment styles are negatively associated with SE.

**Table 3**

*Linear Regression Analysis of Subscales of Attachment Style and Self-Efficacy (N=400)*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.213 <sup>a</sup>	.14	.13	8.39
2	-.102*	.11	.10	6.24
3	-.172**	.12	.11	7.31

a) Predictors: (Constant), Secure attachment, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment. \*P< 0.01, \*\*P<0.05

**Note:** Analysis indicates that secure attachment style brings 14% change in the dependent variable while anxious and avoidant attachment styles bring 11% and 12% change in self-efficacy.

**Table 4**

*Relationship Between Attachment Styles and Coping among Adolescents (N=400).*

Variables	N	r
Secure attachment and coping	400	.254**
Anxious attachment and coping	400	-.111*
Avoidant attachment and coping	400	-.174**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Note:** Results showed positive association between secure attachment and coping strategy while negative relationship of anxious and avoidant attachment styles were found with coping mechanism.

**Table 5**

*Linear Regression Analysis of Attachment Styles and Copy (N=400).*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.254 <sup>a</sup>	.16	.15	8.79
2	-.111*	.08	.09	6.14
3	-.174**	.13	.12	7.21

a. Predictors: (Constant), Secure attachment, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment. \*P< 0.01, \*\*P<0.05

Note: Analysis indicates that secure attachment style brings 16% change in the dependent variable while anxious and avoidant attachment styles bring .08% and 13% change in the dependent variable.

## DISCUSSION

In the current study, impact of attachment style on self-efficacy and coping mechanism has been investigated. Results analysis indicates that adolescents with secure attachment style have significant positive correlation with self-efficacy and coping abilities (table 2 & table 4) while anxious and avoidant attachment have negative relationship with SE and coping (table 2 and table 4). Analysis further shows that secure attachment brings 14% change in SE and 16 % change in coping strategies (table 3 and table 5).

Findings of current study validate our hypotheses and are also consistent with the previous researches that secure attachment is positively correlated with self-efficacy and coping among adolescents and anxious/avoidant attachment are negatively linked with self-efficacy and coping. Mikulincer and Shaver (2016) found that secure attachment with parent and peers determines high level of self-efficacy and self-esteem. On the contrary, high avoidant attachment is negatively with poor resources to maintain healthy relations and poor coping strategies (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Schottenbauer et al., 2006).

Various possible reasons can be behind this study findings. One possible reason that is explained by psychodynamic theory that the way caregivers or parents interact and show attachment with their children has greater impact on their personality and behavior. If they see the relationship secure, they tend to be self-efficient and show good coping in the stressful conditions too as our findings have indicated (table 2 & table 4) and if relationship is ambivalent or insecure, the child will become fearful, anxious, avoidant and with low self-esteem. Previous researches also are consistent with this theory and also for the current findings as early experiences of connectedness influence coping skills in positive manner, enhances stress management, emotional control, and psychological well-being (Ditzen et al., 2008; Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2007; Maunder et al., 2006).

If we talk in perspective of our culture, although, it is based on moral and humanistic principles and talk about collectiveness and being connected with each other but practicality is going to be low. Due to evident economic conditions, parents are under financial stress and more involved in earning for

their children. This has reduced the quality time that parents used to spend with their children, by showing great concern for their emotional needs, love, comfort and belongingness. This situation is unfortunately creating a sense of detachment and insecurity that led to other problems in later stage of life. According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1980, 1969) an infant considers an attachment figure as secure, when it is a source of comfort, help and more responsive and separation with that figure cause distress. It also determines the patterns and habits of forming and maintaining relationships in adolescents (Tavakolizadeh, et al., 2015)

### ***Conclusion***

It is concluded from the finding that attachment style in adolescents are associated with self-efficacy and coping style.

### ***Limitations and Recommendations***

Current study was conducted on adolescents with age range of 12-16 years; investigators in the future can conduct a research on individuals with age above 16 years. Additionally, larger sample is needed from more academic institutes for generalization of results for future research.

This study has examined the impact of attachment styles on self-efficacy and coping. That indicates the importance of attachment styles and particularly secure attachment as an important factor for enhancing the self-efficacy and coping strategies among adolescents. This research is helpful in creating insight related to the better attachment style that is helpful in enhancing level of self-efficacy, and coping among adolescents. This research is also beneficial for the general population.

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