

**INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLES AND OBSESSIVE LOVE
AMONG EMERGING ADULTS**

Sajid Iqbal Alyana*

Department of Psychology

National University of Medical Sciences Islamabad-Pakistan

Taiba Aslam, Beenish Fatima & Muqadass Gulzar

Department of Psychology Riphah International University,
Faisalabad Campus-Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The aim of current study was to examine the association between insecure attachment styles, and Obsessive Love among emerging adults. After detailed review of the literature it was hypothesized that Insecure attachment style would be predictor of obsessive love among emerging adults. A convenient sampling approach was used to choose the sample consisting of 200 male and 200 female emerging adults with age range of 18 to 25 years for this study from several educational institutes of Faisalabad. The variables under research were measured using the following scales: Revised Adult Attachment Scale (Collins, 1996), and Extreme Love Beliefs Scale (Doron et al., 2014) were used to assess the variables of attachment style and obsessive love respectively. SPSS version 26 was used to run descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis to test the hypotheses of the present research. The results reveal insecure attachment style as significant predictor of obsessive love among emerging adults. The implications and avenues for future research are suggested.

Keywords: *Emerging Adults, Insecure Attachment Styles, Obsessive Love*

* Correspondence Address: Sajid Iqbal Alyana, PhD; Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, National University of Medical Sciences Islamabad-Pakistan
Email: sajid.alayana@numspak.edu.pk

INTRODUCTION

Attachment is a firm emotional connection between a child and a mother or with the caregivers who frequently interact with the child (Papalia,2003; Goodwin,2003). The idea of attachment sees the importance and supremacy of the connection that parents established with their children, the relationship it self and the value of this relationship is associated with the positive development of the children (Erözkan, 2009). Parents' availability for a child in stressful circumstances is considered important in the provision of safe place and environment and helps the children to shape their beliefs and organize their expectations according to the environment (Bowlby, 1973 ; Ainsworth et.al.,2015). Bowlby, the father of attachment theory, initially he inclined his work and focused on the role of attachment of the family with children, and how the family work in the child's growth of personality (Bretherton, 1992). He indicated that, establishment and organization of attachment securities provides a sense of security to a child, but it also, infers that the child moreover experiences anxiety when secluded or separated from their caregiver. This anxiety basically helps to develop closeness among caregiver and the child (Flanagan, 1999).

Adult attachment styles are classified as secure, anxious-ambivalent and avoidance. Insecure attachment styles include those of fearful, ambivalent, avoidant, dismissing, disorganized, anxious, unresolved and preoccupied. researches have identified that any of these four attachment styles and most commonly researched attachment styles of anxious and avoidance are considered to be insecure attachment styles (Armour et al., 2011). Securely attached people make closed bonds and are comfortable in their relationships. They usually have favorable image of self and positive expectations from others. Anxious-ambivalent people although like close relationships however they are usually fearful of rejection. Such people harbor a negative image of them, but possess a positive attitude toward other people. Avoidant people more likely show negative expectations and attitudes toward others (Hazan & Shaver,1987; Troisi et.al., 2006). More-over detailed literature regarding attachment styles show that securely attached people enjoy closeness, capable to trust others and are not fearful of abandonment and rejection. On the other hand people having avoidant attachment style are usually not comfortable being closed in a relationship, do not show confidence upon others and usually do not report fear about being abandoned or excluded. The anxiously attached people on the contrary like close and intimate relationships and due to fear of abandonment and dismissal by the closed ones, they exceptionally depend upon others (cited in Gardner, 2007). Bowlby had

recommended that during adolescence, people are uncertain about their eligibility of getting love and care, and about trust and dependence on others. Such experiences usually take the shape of perception about one self and others which consequently form the behaviors throughout the life span as an internal working model (Scharfe, 2017).

The notion is that romantic love in adults is a course of attachment, the eminence of which is associated with the caregiver and individual's attachment (Bowlby 1969; Collins & Read 1990; Levy & Davis 1988; Shaver 1987). To understand adult love Hazan and Shaver (1987) used attachment theory. They found attachment styles of childhood and their association with love in adults. They described Secure adult attachment as trust and a need for closeness with no need to merge entirely with another. Such adults considered their self as worthy of care and for them the companion was valued and considered them to be receptive. Avoidant adults show distress with closeness and anticipate their partner to be insensitive. They have difficulty to trust and rely on others and so dismissed the significance of the relationship to keep emotions at low levels of intensity. Anxiously attached people, in contrary have very high need to merge with another. They usually become clingy and indigent, as the companion's approachability is ambiguous. They have very low self worth and often idealize their partners (Collins & Read 1990; Hazan & Shaver 1987).

Thus, people with different attachment styles have diverse approach in romantic love, accessibility, conviction capability of love partners and love inclination. Individuals with insecure attachment including avoidant and anxious attachment are highly sensitive and hyper vigilant towards the relationship with caregiver and therefore develop some signs of obsessive behavior in their relationships with partners later in adulthood (Mikolincer & Shaver, 2012). It can be seemed that in obsessive love person inclines to overoccupied with his love object, but least focus on maintaining the relationship and association with the love object (Fisher, 1992; Liebowitz, 1983). It was also specified that lovers become obsessive, and think more about their love object (Fisher, 2004). It is largely because person with such attachment styles considers it as a responsibility and duty to sustain the relationship, and due to fear of losing a person or a relationship they usually take a self-compliant and care taking attitude. In such circumstances they are unable to exercise their autonomy which consequently leads to an unsatisfactory relationship (Weiss & Sampson, 1986; Winnicott, 1960; Hutchison, 2006).

Alyana, Aslam, Fatima & Gulzar

Summing up, it can be inferred that these attachment styles have fundamental role in one's life and show significant impact on persons' relationships with other people after childhood (Goodwin, 2003; Roberson, 2006; Mikulincer, Florian & Tolmacz, 1990). However, there is dearth of studies in Pakistani cultural context on link between attachment styles and obsessive love as largely the studies are from Western culture. Hence, keeping this in view the present study intends to examine the predictive association between insecure attachment styles and obsessive love among emerging adults.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were selected through convenient sampling. 400 students (200 males & 200 females) were selected from different universities of Faisalabad. The age range of the participants was from 18 years to 25 years. Participants were conveniently selected on basis of the preestablished inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- Those attending universities were included.
- only unmarried individuals are included in the sample
- Participants with age range of 18 to 25 were included.
- Only university going students were taken as a sample.
- Participants who were younger than 18 or older than 25 were excluded.
- Married participants were excluded.

Measures

Demographic Sheet

Demographic sheet was used to obtain information related to participant's gender, age, birth order, family structure, place of residence, socioeconomic status, and marital status, as well as information about professions if applicable.

Revised Adult Attachment Scale

The Revised Adult Attachment Scale's initial English translation was made by Collins in 1996. It has 18 items including 10 positive and 8 negative items. Out of 18 items 6 items were distributed among every subscale of secure attachment,

dependent attachment, and anxious/anxious attachment. It employs a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting attributes I possess insufficiently and 5 denoting traits I possess in large quantities. The final score was the sum of the responses on the scale, with the negative statements being given a greater rating. Higher results on that component of the attachment questionnaire indicated a stronger level of attachment, whereas lower values indicated a weaker level of attachment. At $\alpha = .92$ and $\alpha = .88$, respectively, the Cronbach's alpha for all the subscales are high enough to indicate a sound internal consistency. In the current study the internal consistency of this scale is $.79$.

Extreme Love Beliefs Scale

Extreme Love Beliefs Scale (Doron et al., 2014) is a 10-point Likert scale with seven ratings, which assesses diverse approaches or views about love and relationships of people. Respondent need to read each statement carefully and decide to what extent they agree or disagree with it. For each statement there is a rating of 1 (disagree very much) and 7 (agree very much). There are no right or wrong answers. Participants decide if a given statement is characteristic of their way to look at things. This scale has a sound internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of $.79$ (Grace et al, 2016). In the current study the internal consistency was obtained to be $.86$.

Procedure

The proposal and all other necessary requirements have been reviewed, analyzed and approved by research board of department of psychology at Riphah International University, Faisalabad. All participants were briefed about the study's objectives. Participants who were willing to participate in the study and also fulfill the inclusion criteria were considered as sample. Revised Adult Attachment Scale and extreme love belief scale was administered followed by the demographic information sheet. All participants were thanked for their participation and researcher email address was provided to respond if there would be any concerns of the participants. All the scales were then scored according to standard scoring criteria.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistics were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the sample. Linear regression analysis was done to find the predictive association among the variables.

RESULTS

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	200	50.0
Female	200	50.0
Age		
18-21	243	60.75
22-25	157	39.25
Education		
Graduation	174	43.5
Less than Graduation	226	56.5
Employment status		
Employed	23	23.0
Unemployed	77	77.0
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	33.59	5.34

Table 4
Linear Regression Analysis with Attachment Styles as Predictor of Obsessive Love in Emerging Adults

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	R^2	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Constant	-.358	.13				
Insecure Attachment	1.303	.04	.83	.83	898.38	.00*

* $p < .05$

DISCUSSION

The results of this current study (Table 4) indicate a significant model of the study revealing the significant predictive association between insecure attachment and obsessive love in emerging adults. These results are supported by some of the previous researches and found that adults with insecure attachment style particularly anxiously attached people show obsessionality in providing nurturance in relationships (Fricker & Moore, 2002). Levy and Keith (1988) determined that the anxiously attached people showing more of a obsessive desire to merge with another. Obsessive love style is in pertinent with emotional dependency which a facet of anxious attachment orientation. This study elucidates that people with emotionally insecure personality features are engaged in possessive or stingy behaviors and envious attitudes and no responsible behavior (Alan-Cook, 2012; Mikolincir & Shaver, 2007).

Attachment theory can define how different attachment styles are established, particularly the obsessive love style and how identical the fundamental dynamics that are mutual to every person can be shaped by early experiences and result in different interpersonal styles. . The work of Arnold and Kenmasa (1995) also support the association of insecure attachment styles and obsessional love. Childparent attachment reflects in adulthood love relations having substantial effects on ones thoughts, feelings and behaviors of life (Botlani et al., 1389; Collins & Read, 1990; Salary et al., 1390). Ahmadi and companions (2013) described that anxious attached adult frequently apprehensive about their relationships and anxious about separation, dismissal and betraying of partner. They are very much reliant on inintimate relationships. These circumstances result in obsessive love in anxious attached person.

Based on the findings of this study it can be inferred that attachment styles of the children are hallmark for the personality growth in adulthood. These styles are significant contributions in the development and maintenance of the interpersonal relationships. Secure attachment ensures positive developments in the relationships and closeness. On the other hand insecure attachments are underlying the difficulty and uncertainty of trust and reliance or closeness in interpersonal domain. Such results can help in the dissemination of information to the parents through awareness programs. These findings can also serve as therapeutic bases for the mental health practitioners to address the issues in attachments or parenting. The study though highlighted one of the significant issues however there are certain limitations which need to be addressed in future researches in this field. The sample of the study comprised of students therefore generalizability of the findings remain doubtful. Blending of other important aspects or constructs with attachment can provide more comprehensive results and provide enriched information for the understanding of the problem. It employed only questionnaire based data however future researchers may combine qualitative aspects as well for better comprehension of the issue.

REFERENCES

- Ahmadi.V, Davoudi.I, Ghazaei.M, Mardani.M, Seifi.S. (2013). Prevalence of obsessive love and its association with attachment styles. *Social and Behavioral Sciences* 84, 696 -700.
- Ainsworth, M.D., Blehar, M. C, Waters, E., & Wall S.(2015). *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*. London: Taylor & Francis;
- Alan.T, & Cook.(2012). Individual Differences In Attitudes Toward Love. *Psychological Science*. California State University: Chico.s.1-61.
- Armour, C., Elklit, A., Shevlin, M. (2011). Attachment typologies and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety: A latent profile analysis approach. *European Journal of Psychotrauma*.2 (6018), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v2i0.6018>
- Botlati. S, Shahzeya. M, Ahmadi. A, Bharami. F.(1387). Effects of couple therapy evaluation based on attachment theory and sexual intimacy of Isfahan's couples. *Danesh & tandorosti Magazine*, 5, 439-471.

Pakistan Journal of Psychology

- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss*, Vol. 1: Attachment. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and Loss: Separation*. Vol. 2. New York: Basic Books;
- Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory: *John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth*. *Developmental Psychology*, 28,(5) 759-775.
- Collins, N. L. (1996). Working models of attachment: Implications for explanation, emotion, and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 810-832.
- Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and relationship quality in dating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(4), 644-663.
- Doron, G., Derby, D. S., & Szepeswol, O. (2014). Relationship obsessive compulsive disorder (ROCD): A conceptual framework. *Journal of Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders*, 3(2), 169-180.
- Erözkan, A. (2009). The relationship between attachment styles and social anxiety: An investigation with Turkish university students. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 37(6), 835-844.
- Fisher, H. (2004). *Why we love; the nature and chemistry of romantic love* .New York: Henry Holt & co
- Fisher, H. (1992). *Anatomy of love: The natural history of Monogamy, Adultery, and divorce* .New York: W.W.Norton &co.
- Flanagan, C. (1999). *Early Socialization: Sociability and attachment*. London and New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Fricker, J, & Moore. S., (2002). Relationship Satisfaction: The Role Of Love Styles And Attachment Styles. *Current Research In Social Psychology*, 7(11), 1-16.

Alyana, Aslam, Fatima & Gulzar

- Gardner, T. (2007). Adult attachment and the link to relationship satisfaction: *A review of the literature* (Master's thesis, Pacific University).
<http://commons.pacificu.edu/spp/30>
- Goodwin, I. (2003). The relevance of attachment theory to the philosophy, organization, and practice of adult mental health care. *Clinical Psychology Reviews*, 23, 35-56.
- Grace A. T., Indica, R. M. , Jeremy,T. , Clay, K. , & Alexander, C. O. (2016). OCEAN of Emotion: Charting the relationships amongst big five personality traits, extreme love beliefs, and relationship-centered rocd symptoms in an American Sample. Social Science Research Network
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 511-24.
- Hutchison, R., (2007).the Role of Unconscious Guilt in obsessive love relationships .*International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.
- Kanemasa. (2004). Social behavior and personality, love style and romantic love experincesin Japan.
- Liebowitz, M. R. (1983) .The Chemistry of Love .Boston: Little Brown.
- Levy, M. B. and E. D. Keith. 1988. "Lovestyles and Attachment Styles Compared: Their Relations to each other and to various Relationship Characteristics." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*,
- Mikulincer, M.,Shaver,P.R.(2012)..Anattachment perspective on psychopathology. *World Psychiatry*11, 11-15.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics, and Change. Guilford Press, New York, NY.
- Mikulincer, M., Florian, V., & Tolmacz, R. (1990). Attachment styles and fear of personal death: A case study of affect regulation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 273-80

Pakistan Journal of Psychology

- Papalia, D.E. (2002). *A Child's World: Infancy Through Adolescence*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Roberson, K.C. (2006) Attachment and care-giving behavioral systems in inter country adoption: A literature review. *Child Youth Reviews*, 28, 727-40.
- Salari. P, Nayeni Neya.A, Modares Gharavi.M, Rudsari.V, Vahiyari.F, & Zoghani.H. (1390). Examine the relationship between parental attachment to the amount of female sexual function. *Journal of Mental Health*, Year XIII, No. 52, Winter 1390, pp. 346
- Scharfe, E. (2017). Attachment Theory. *Springer International Publishing AG*. T. K. Shackelford,
- Troisi, A., Di Lorenzo, G., Alcini, S., Nanni, R.C., Di Pasquale, C. & Siracusano, A. (2006). Body dissatisfaction in women with eating disorders: Relationship to early separation anxiety and insecure attachment. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 68, 449-53.
- Weiss, J., & Sampson, H. (1986). *The psychoanalytic process: theory, clinical observation, And empirical Research*. New York : Guilford press.