

## Perceived Parental Attachment and Emotional Empathy among Adolescents

Anam Sharafat and Aisha Zubair  
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

The present research aimed at studying the impact of parental attachment on emotional empathy of adolescents. It was also intended to determine the role of varying demographics like gender and family system in relation to parental attachment and emotional empathy. The sample consisted of 300 adolescents (150 boys and 150 girls) of government schools with age range 14-17 years. Parental Attachment Questionnaire (Azam, 2006) and Emotional Empathy Scale (Ashraf, 2004) were used to assess parental attachment and emotional empathy, respectively. Results showed a significant positive correlation between parental attachment and emotional empathy. It was also found that girls tend to score high on parental attachment and emotional empathy. Similarly significant differences were observed along family systems. Results indicated that adolescents living in nuclear family system exhibited more parental attachment and emotional empathy than those living in joint family system. Practical implications of the study were discussed and suggestions for further research were made.

**Keywords:** parental attachment, emotional empathy, adolescents, government schools

Attachment is a profound and permanent emotional bond that connects one person to another person across time and space. Children's experiences with a primary caregiver form the basis for their mental representations or 'internal working models' of the self and others (Bowlby, 1969). As a result, children who have practiced warmth and consistency from their primary caregiver are expected to think of themselves as being warm and reliable and in order, they will develop a working model for others as capable, unflinching and warm. Most of the short-term longitudinal studies exposed that the infant effects functioning during preschool, middle childhood and even adolescence (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Further researches that focused on adult attachments have extended to include spousal relationships (Weiss, 2002). These studies concluded that adults who explain themselves as safe, ignorant, or unsure with respect to idealistic associations attribute their differences to parent-child associations in their families of source."

Parental attachment helps infant in developing strong relationships (Meins, 2003). It is also inferred that children who can easily create attachment with their tutor, they view themselves positively and have a lot of confidence which make them capable to explore academic activities and challenges (O'Conner & McCartney, 2006). Children with elated maternal attachment have displayed high self-esteem and also have more confidence to show their qualities. They are more motivated to seek knowledge, prefer to be academically challenged (Wong, Wiest, & Cusick, 2002). Similarly, elementary school children who experience secured attachment with their mother are considerably more accepted by their friends. They have more friends and their social circle is also extensive and felt less lonely as compared to insecure children (Kerns, Klepac, & Cole, 2001). Various

studies showed that maternal attachment with child exhibit positive relationships in the early stage and they are more likely to show competence in adulthood (Coleman, 2003; Lieberman, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999; Wartner, Grossmann, Fremmer-Bombik, & Suess, 1994).

Children who were studied in playgroup and have secure attachment with their parents established improved communal skills and school adjustment as compared to those who experienced insecure attachments (Sroufe, Carlson, & Schulman, 1993). Securely attached children establish good relationships with their friends and teachers (Henry, 1993). It has also been concluded that adolescents who exhibit secure attachment developed and maintained close relationships with their friends and teachers (Heide & Solomon, 2006; Levy & Orleans, 2000). Securely attached children are inclined to explore the situation when they are in danger and distress. To satisfy their needs of learning they also interact with the environment which is called mastery motivation (Wenar & Kerig, 2007). While children who experienced insecure attachment cannot get mastery motivation because of lack of confidence as they are avoided by their parents who direct to cognitive distortion and emotional growth. Findings of another study indicated that worth of parental attachment can influence violence, social pressure and self-worth. Results showed that higher parental attachment triggered low level of aggression, communal pressure and high level of self-esteem (Ooi, Ang, Funf, Wong & Cai, 2006). Therefore, it is concluded that insecure parental attachment is related with the enhancement of psychopathology (Yoo, Kim, Shin, Cho, & Hong, 2007).

However, factors related to the child's care and attachment seem to be less influential than the family characteristics such as income and parental education level and also type of family system, whether they live in nuclear or joint family system. It is a common observation that children from nuclear family system tend to be attached emotionally with both parents than that of joint family systems where parental responsibilities are diffused (Nizam, 2004).

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Aisha Zubair, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Email: [aishazubair@nip.edu.pk](mailto:aishazubair@nip.edu.pk)

The family systems and rearing practices in Pakistan effects the parental attachment. Usually parents are not able to give quality time to the children because of different worries including family conflicts, marital discord, economic problems etc. All these factors along with many others influence the development of secure parent-child attachment. In Pakistan, mostly authoritarian parenting style is used which results in less warmth in parent-child relation, controlling parental attitude and communication barrier between parents and children which weakness parental-child affective bonding or attachment.

### Emotional Empathy

Empathy is commonly defined as an emotional reaction which is extracted by and similar with another's emotional condition (Eisenberg & Fabes, 2002; Hoffman, 2000). Empathy is the ability of a person to sense the desires, ambitions, irritations, and other emotional motives of others like if these were his own without losing the separateness of one's own identity (Eisenberg, 2002). Empathy often may lead to other vicarious responses and it is important to differentiate among these various empathy-related reactions (Hoffman, 2000).

Empathy has been utilized by personality theorists extensively. For instance, a series of studies by Rushton, Fulker, Neale, Nias, and Eysenck (1986) have also suggested a very strong genetic base to empathy. Later, however, psychologists tried to understand the dispositional mechanisms underlying emotional empathy. They found that identification of the role of emotions in empathy has been increasing (Hannush, 2002, Perez-Albeniz & De Paul, 2003). According to Klein (2001), empathy builds on the basis emotional awareness. It has been argued that the more a person attends to his own feelings, the more he is likely to be adept at experiencing another's feeling experience builds on emotional awareness. Additional it is also suggested that the more a person attends to his own feelings, the more he is likely to be adept at experiencing another's feeling experiences.

It is interesting to note that the relevant theorizing in the literature is in essential agreement with the stereotype that women are more empathic than men. Included are theorists as diverse as Lozano and Etxebarria (2005), one relying heavily on biological, and the other on social structural in emphasis. According to Lafferty (2004), the family requires someone to perform (a) the expressive role-being responsive to the needs and feelings of others, so as to maintain the family as an intact, harmonious entity, and (b) the instrumental role-acting as the liaison between the family and other social institutions, related to occupational sphere. Females are traditionally entertained to obtain communicative qualities such as empathy, kindness, and generous and getting affect. Men are initially socialized expressively, but with age they acquire instrumental traits, such as mastery and problem solving.

Several studies have found considerable differences between men and women in emotional empathic tendency,

where women are more empathic than men (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1978; Hoffman, 2000; Kalliopuska, 1983; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972; Mehrabian & O'Reilly., 1980). For example, Hoffman (2000) differentiated between studies in which empathy was defined as an emotional response and studies in which researchers measured role taking. Eleven studies were included in his review (including sixteen samples). Females scored higher in all studies, and in six samples this finding was significant or marginally significant. Therefore, it is concluded that there is ample evidence to suggest that girls are more empathic than boys. On review based on a group of studies, employing self report measures of empathy concluded that girls scored higher on empathy than boys (Batson, Eklund, Chermok, Hoyt, & Ortiz, 2007).

Buri (1991) also compared two large high school student samples to evaluate possible gender differences. Boys scored significantly higher in Defense of Rights, Directiveness, and Confidence. On the other hand, the female students scored higher on Expression of Positive Feeling, Approval Need, Empathy, and somewhat surprisingly, on Perceived Social Approval, however; the two genders did not differ on Social Assertiveness. These findings are in keeping with studies of masculinity and femininity. Men usually express more self-confidence and dominance (i.e., directiveness); while women, on the other hand, are more nurturing and empathic. Thus the preceding review of research concerning gender differences in empathy support the prevailing gender-role stereotype that the females are more empathic than males.

Many authors suggested relationship between parental attachment and emotional empathy among adolescents (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). Both Bowlby and Ainsworth (1978) stressed that attachment has a strong impact on the human emotions. Barnett (2000) proposed that warmth and openness provided by the parents is related to the development of capacity for emotional empathy in adolescents. Pistole (1999) recognized empathy as an essential part of caregiving; likewise Strayer and Roberts (2004) found that children who are high in anxiety exhibited lower parent-child bond. Researches by Searle and Meara (1999) using the sample of adolescent students found that preoccupied children focused on emotions as compared to secure attached children. Warden and Mackinnon (2003) suggested that children perceiving high autonomy and closeness in their infancy found to be more skillful. The findings of Watts, Trusty, Canada, and Harvill (2000) also concluded those that who are more effective counselor have an ability to perceive their parent-child interaction than less effective counselor. De-Kemp, Overbeek, De-Wied, Engels, and Scholte (2007) observed that higher levels of affective empathy were associated with less delinquent and aggressive behavior. Further analyses showed that gender moderated the association between parental support and future delinquency and aggressive behavior; and girls displayed high levels of parental support associated with lower levels of antisocial behavior.

Adolescence is an era of transferring from the childishness of infancy into the development of maturity. Adolescence is also an age in which they can change their emotion and have a capability to functioning unconventionally. Establishing a sense of independence is as important a portion of the emotional transition out of childhood for most of the adolescents. In this stage adolescents can understand the feelings of others and also learn how to express their emotions. Thereby, resulting emotional awareness would be considered their ability that promotes smoother social relationships. Attachment plays significant part in the emotional, social development and modification. Children with safe attachment of the parents can easily handle with trauma and hindrance. This type of attachment supports the child to internalize the caregivers soothing tasks, control their own emotions and produce a sense of self-assurance (Wenar & Kerig, 2007). As compare to the children who have insecure attachment touch unhappiness and cannot handle or modification their emotions which can be the foundation of emotional difficulties, distressed relationship and instability.

Our society seems to be proceeding in a direction which ignored all empathetic concerns for others, and where people are busy in pursuing their self-oriented goals. But empathy is one step beyond this insensitivity and egocentricity. It seems that the roots of all social tensions and conflict resides in the lack of empathy, as it is the important part which provides a bond among the spirits of one individual and those of alternative. Empathy has a long been the focus of investigation and research in the West. However, it has been a neglected a topic of research in Pakistan. Thus, there has been felt need for a research exploring the phenomenon of emotional empathy in our culture, and how it could be related with parental attachment. Plentiful work is present in western in which parental attachment and emotions specifically empathy are intensely associated with each other. Adolescents who have secure attachment with their parents they have well-adjusted personality and also have positive emotions. Considering the above fact we can conclude that highlighting the gender differences studies in regard to this study is vital because there is a clear difference in the way boys and girls express their empathy.

Socialization practices in our culture are quite varied where boys are more tailored to resort on their own emotional resources. Whereas girls are likely to be more homely oriented and express elated parental attachment. In the context of given purpose, the major objectives of the study were to explore relationship between parental attachment and emotional empathy among adolescents. Moreover, to determine the role of varying demographics in relation to parental attachment and emotional empathy.

#### Hypotheses

On the basis of above mentioned objectives following hypotheses were phrased.

1. Parental attachment will be positively related with emotional empathy of adolescents.

2. Maternal attachment will be a significant predictor of emotional empathy.
3. Girls are more likely to display emotional empathy and parental attachment as compared to boys.
4. Adolescents living in nuclear family systems would display more parental attachment and emotional empathy as compared to those living in joint family system.

#### Method

##### Sample

Sample was acquired by employing purposive sampling technique. Participants were selected from government schools of Rawalpindi. The total sample of the adolescents ( $N = 300$ ) including both boys ( $n = 150$ ) and girls ( $n = 150$ ). Respondents were students of class 9<sup>th</sup> ( $N = 150$ ; boys = 75 and girls = 75) and 10<sup>th</sup> ( $N = 150$ ; boys = 70 and girls = 80). Age of the respondents ranged from 14 to 17 years ( $M = 15.5$ ). Most of the respondents were middle borns with 2-3 siblings. In this sample birth order was also considered, as no first born was included (Murphy, 2005). Parental occupation was controlled as only fathers were working whereas mothers were housewives.

##### Instruments

Two measures were used to assess constructs of the study.

**Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ; Azam, 2006)** was used to assess perceived parental attachment among adolescents. This questionnaire was originally developed by Kenny (1985). PAQ consisted of 110 items; with two versions, that is, Paternal Attachment Questionnaire and Maternal Attachment Questionnaire. Both versions have 55 items and three subscales each, that is Affective Quality of Relationship (27 items), Parents as Facilitators of Independence (14 items) and Parents as Source of Support (14 items). It's a 5-point rating scale and numerical weightage assigned to each category of response option as 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *somewhat*, 3 = *a moderate amount*, 4 = *quite a bit* and 5 = *very much*. The alpha reliability of Parental Attachment Questionnaire was .83 (Ali, 2008). In the present study alpha coefficients of Parental Attachment Questionnaire total (.87), Paternal Attachment (.77), Maternal Attachment (.87), Affective Quality of Relationship of Father (.70), Parents as Facilitators of Independence (.62), Parents as Source of Support (.56), Affective Quality of Relationship of Mother (.71), Parents as Facilitators of Independence (.61) and Parents as Source of Support (.58) were found to be adequate and reliable.

**Emotional Empathy Scale (EES)** was adapted by Ashraf (2004) consisted of 26 items. This questionnaire was originally developed by Mehrabian (1996). Responses were acquired on a 7-point Likert scale on which 1 = *strong disagreement*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *disagree to some extent*, 4 = *don't know*, 5 = *agree to some extent*, 6 = *agree* and 7 = *strong agreement* indicate the level to which each item describe them. To control the response bias, 17 items were positively phrased and 9 items were negatively worded, which were later reverse scored.

The EES was initially planned for use with adolescents and general adult population. There are three subscales of EES which were clearly interpreted in the light of Mehrabian and Epstein’s (1972) model of emotional empathy. A total of 14 items fall in the first factor and was labeled as Tendency to Moved by other’s Emotional Expressiveness. Seven items constituted the second factor and termed as Emotional Responsiveness. The third factor consisted of 5 items and conceptualized as Susceptibility to Emotional Contagion. Overall the 26 items of the scale representing the three dimensions in it (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). The alpha reliability of Emotional Empathy Scale was reported as .85 (Ashraf, 2004). In the present study, alpha coefficients of Emotional Empathy Scale (.78), and subscales of Tendency to Moved by other’s Emotional Expressiveness (.64), Emotional Responsiveness (.45), Susceptibility to Emotional Contagion (.59) were found to be satisfactory.

**Procedure**

Official permissions were acquired from the administrative heads of the school and the concerned academic staff was informed about the purpose of data collection. The participants were approached during the school hours. They were assured that the data collected would be used only for research and academic purposes. After having their informed consent, respondents were provided with the questionnaires. Along with the written instructions, verbal explanations were also narrated. Later respondents were thanked for the provision of valuable data.

**Results**

Pearson Correlation and t-analysis were conducted to analyze the data in accordance to proposed predictors. Pearson correlation was tabulated for Parental Attachment Questionnaire, Emotional Empathy Scale and their subscales.

Table 1

*Pearson Correlations for Study Variables (N=300)*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
MA	148.13	24.55	-	.63**	.62**	.33**	.51**	.91**	.85**	.72**	.91**	.20**	.17**	.00	.02
PA	146.13	22.14		-	.86**	.78**	.73**	.58**	.48**	.51**	.89**	.25**	.12*	.04	.02
AQR (F)	71.68	11.66			-	.51**	.42**	.62**	.42**	.47**	.81**	.22**	.09	.02	.03
PFI (F)	36.60	8.08				-	.43**	.25**	.34**	.26**	.60**	.27**	.05	.22	.03
PSS (F)	37.84	7.80					-	.45**	.37**	.48**	.68**	.10	.17**	.06	.03
AQR(M)	72.29	13.67						-	.65**	.46**	.84**	.10**	.13*	.08	.04
PFI (M)	38.54	8.32							-	.52**	.75**	.21**	.16**	.08	.00
PSS (M)	37.29	6.90								-	.67**	.25**	.15**	.07	.01
PAQ	291.35	41.89									-	.25**	.17**	.01	.03
EES	163.28	59.43										-	.00	.17**	.19**
TME	69.48	12.63											-	.32**	.62**
ER	35.27	6.31												-	.56**
13.SEC	26.05	6.57													-

*Note.* MA= Maternal Attachment; PA = Paternal Attachment; AQR (F) = Affective Quality of Relationship of Father; PFI (F) = Parents as Facilitators of Independence of Father; PSS (F)= Parents as Source of Support of Father; AQF (M) = Affective Quality of relationship of Mother; PFI (M) = Parents as Facilitators of Independence of Mother; PSS (M) = Parents as Source of Support of Mother; EES= Emotional Empathy; PAQ = Parental Attachment.TEE =Tendency to moved by other’s Emotional Expressiveness; ER= Emotional Responsiveness; SEC= Susceptibility to Emotional Contagion.

\**p* < .01, \*\**p* < .05

Table 1 showed significant positive correlation between parental attachment and emotional empathy. It was also observed that correlation between parental attachment, emotional empathy and its subscales showed highly significant positive correlations among all subscales of parental attachment, paternal attachment and maternal attachment with each other as well as emotional empathy (*p* < .01). However there was non-significant correlation of TME with AQR (F) and PFI (F). Moreover, ER and SEC were non-significantly related with MA, PA, AQR (F), PFI (F), and PSS (F), AQR (M), PFI (M) and PSS (M).

**Regression Analysis**

Step-wise regression analysis was done to determine the impact of Parental Attachment and its Subscales on Emotional Empathy.

Table 2

*Step-wise Regression for Variables Predicting the Emotional Empathy (N= 300)*

Variables	B	SEB	B	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	F
<i>Step I</i>						
Constant	62.70	22.20				
Paternal Attachment	.68	.15	.256***	.67	.67	20.98***
<i>Step II</i>						
Constant	54.89	23.59				
Paternal Attachment	.568	.19	.212**			
Maternal Attachment	.74	.17	.284**	0.70	.03	10.96***
<i>Step III</i>						
Constant	53.03	23.50				
Paternal Attachment	5.11	2.32	1.90*			
Maternal Attachment	4.77	2.35	1.97*			

Parental Attachment 4.61 2.35 3.25 0.82 .12 8.66\*\*\*

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 2 showed regression analysis with parental, paternal and maternal attachment as predictor variable and emotional empathy as criterion variable. Results indicated that parental, paternal and maternal attachments are significant positive predictors of emotional empathy among adolescents. Moreover, overall parental attachment explained 82% variance, while paternal attachment explained 67% variance and maternal attachment explained 70% overall variance in emotional empathy.

Gender differences were determined by employing t-analysis in relation to Parental Attachment, Emotional Empathy Scale and its Subscales.

Table3

*Gender Differences along Variables of the Study (N=300)*

Scales	Gender				t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	Boys (n = 150)		Girls (n = 150)				LL	UL	
	M	SD	M	SD					
EES	144.94	45.77	181.94	65.50	5.72	.00	24.49	50.17	.65
TEE	68.60	12.83	70.36	12.40	1.20	.22	1.10	4.62	.13
ER	32.90	4.87	37.64	6.69	6.99	.00	3.40	6.06	.81
SEC	24.07	6.46	28.04	6.08	5.47	.00	2.53	5.39	.63
PA(T)	285.88	47.70	296.83	34.43	2.28	.02	20.40	1.49	.26
PA	145.76	26.14	146.50	17.33	.28	.00	5.78	4.30	.30
MA	143.60	25.85	152.65	22.36	3.24	.03	14.53	3.55	.37
AQR(F)	68.72	13.22	74.64	8.97	4.53	.00	8.48	3.35	.52
PFI (F)	38.78	9.31	34.43	5.90	4.82	.00	2.57	6.11	.55
PSS(F)	38.26	7.65	37.42	7.95	.92	.15	.94	2.60	.10
AQR(M)	67.44	14.58	77.14	10.73	6.55	.00	12.60	6.78	.75
PFI(M)	38.26	8.52	38.83	8.12	.61	.99	2.47	1.30	.06
PSS(M)	37.91	7.27	36.68	6.58	1.53	.33	.34	2.81	.17

Note. MA= Maternal Attachment; PA = Paternal Attachment; AQR (F) = Affective Quality of Relationship of Father; PFI = Parents as Facilitators of Independence; PSS = Parents as Source of Support; AQR (M) = Affective Quality of Relationship of Mother; PFI = Parents as Facilitators of Independence; PSS = Parents as Source of Support; PA(T) = Parental Attachment (Total) ; EES= Emotional Empathy; TEE =Tendency to Moved by other’s Emotional Expressiveness; ER= Emotional Responsiveness; SEC = Susceptibility to Emotional Contagion

Table 3 indicated differences between boys and girls on emotional empathy and parental attachment. Results showed significant difference along parental attachment, emotional empathy and its subscales. It was found that girls showed more emotional empathy ( $p < .00$ ) emotional responsiveness ( $p < .00$ ), and susceptibility to contagion ( $p < .00$ ) as well as parental attachment ( $p < .02$ ), paternal attachment ( $p < .00$ ), maternal attachment ( $p < .03$ ), affective quality of relationship of father ( $p < .00$ ), parents as facilitators of independence of father ( $p < .00$ ) and affective quality of relationship of mother ( $p < .00$ ).

However, non-significant differences were found in tendency to moved by other’s emotional expressiveness, parents as source of support (father), parents as facilitators of independence (mother) and parents as source of support (mother).

Differences across family systems were determined by employing t-analysis in relation to Parental Attachment, Emotional Empathy Scale and its Subscales.

Table 4

*Differences across Family System along the Study Variables (N =300)*

Scales	Family system				<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95%CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Joint ( <i>n</i> = 165)		Nuclear ( <i>n</i> = 135)				<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
EES	155.70	51.99	172.53	66.45	2.46	.01	30.28	8.26	.28
TEE	67.27	13.66	72.17	10.68	3.39	.00	7.72	2.05	.39
ER	33.87	5.96	36.97	6.32	4.35	.00	4.49	1.69	.50
SEC	24.79	6.55	27.60	6.28	3.75	.00	4.27	1.33	.43
PA(T)	287.96	36.88	295.50	47.11	1.55	.12	17.08	2.00	.17
PA	143.64	17.53	149.17	26.48	2.16	.03	10.55	.50	.24
MA	147.31	23.41	149.12	25.92	.63	.52	7.42	3.80	.07
AQR(F)	71.70	10.45	71.65	13.03	.03	.97	2.61	2.71	.00
PFI (F)	34.76	6.44	38.85	9.25	4.49	.00	5.87	2.29	.51
PSS(F)	37.16	7.30	38.66	8.33	1.65	.09	3.27	.28	.19
AQR(M)	73.06	12.67	71.34	14.80	1.08	.28	1.40	4.84	.12
PFI(M)	37.70	8.33	39.56	8.21	1.93	.05	3.75	.03	.22
PSS(M)	36.54	7.20	38.21	6.54	2.07	.03	3.24	.08	.24

*Note.* MA= Maternal Attachment, PA = Paternal Attachment, AQR (F) = Affective Quality of Relationship of Father, PFI (F) = Parents as Facilitators of Independence, PSS (F) = Parents as Source of Support, AQR (M) = Affective Quality of Relationship of Mother, PFI (M) = Parents as Facilitators of Independence, PSS (M) = Parents as Source of Support, EES= Emotional Empathy, PA(T) = Parental Attachment Total; TEE =Tendency to Move by other's Emotional Expressiveness; ER= Emotional Responsiveness; SEC= Susceptibility to Emotional Contagion

Table 4 showed differences across family system in relation to emotional empathy and parental attachment. It was found that adolescents living in nuclear family system showed more emotional empathy ( $p < .00$ ), tendency to moved by other's emotional expressiveness ( $p < .00$ ), emotional responsiveness ( $p < .00$ ), and susceptibility to emotional contagion ( $p < .00$ ) as well as parental attachment ( $p < .03$ ), parent as a facilitators of independence of father ( $p < .00$ ), parent as a facilitators of independence of mother ( $p < .00$ ) and parents as source of support of mother ( $p < .03$ ). However, non-significant differences were observed in relation to overall parental attachment, maternal attachment, affective quality of relationship (father), parents as social support (father) and affective quality of relationship (mother).

### Discussion

Correlation analysis indicated that there was positive relationship between parental attachment and emotional empathy among adolescents. These findings were supported earlier evidence provided by Dunkle and Friedland (1996) that there was a reciprocal relationship between parental attachment and emotional empathy among adolescents. Individuals with secure parental attachment might be more forcefully concentrated on emotions. It was also previously observed that belief of attachment theory, ignorance and

nervousness could both have destructive effects on emotional empathy and the negative effects for avoidance would be stronger (Pistole, 1999). Wenar and Kerig (2007) also indicated there was a strong positive relationship between attachment and emotional empathy. Moreover, children who have insecure attachment experience sorrow in the lack of caregiver and they can't manage or alter their emotions which cause the emotional problems, disturbed relationships, and social maladjustment.

Maternal attachment is a significant predictor of emotional empathy. As previous studies showed that children who are more attached with their mother have ability to experience high emotional empathy as compared to those who attached with their fathers. Various studies showed that children who had strong maternal attachment displayed high self-esteem; they are considerably more accepted by their friends and have more ability to understand other's feelings. (Wong, Wiest, & Cusick, 2007)

Findings indicated that there was significant difference between boys and girls on emotional empathy. It was found that girls displayed more emotional empathy as compared to boys. Several studies have found significant differences between men and women in emotional empathetic tendency, where women are more empathetic than men (Eysenek & Eysenek, 1978; Hoffman, 1977; Kalliopuska, 1983; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Hoffman (1977) differentiated between studies in which empathy was defined as an emotional response and studies in which researchers measured role taking. Eleven studies were included in his review including sixteen samples. Females scored higher in all studies and this finding was marginally significant. Past work has shown that women are relatively more empathically accurate than men when female gender roles are made salient before an empathic accuracy task (Klein & Hodges, 2001; see Ickes et al., 2000 for a comprehensive meta-analysis), suggesting that social roles and contexts may influence observed female advantages in empathy.

There is a significant difference in the scores of boys and girls on all the subscales of Emotional Empathy Scale. Girls scored high not only on the overall Emotional Empathy Scale but also tend to reflect more on Emotional Responsiveness and Susceptibility to Emotional Contagion. Earlier evidences also indicated that there is a longest cultural stereotype that females incline to be more empathic than males are. For many years, this stereotype has been upheld by theory and research in fields is diverse as psychoanalysis, social development, personality and feminism psychology (Maratha, 2000).

Findings showed that girls expressed more paternal attachment and maternal attachment along with the affective quality of relationships with parents, parents as facilitator for independence and parents as source of emotional support than boys. Earlier studies found that most of the girls and their mothers described that daughter have confident, close and sincere relationship with their parents, which can't alter over the degree level (Montemayor, Kandel, & Lesser, 1988). Previously it was found that individuals showed optimistic self-perception counted high rating on the secure parental attachment (Kenny, Griffiths, & Grossman, 2005). Girls showed high positive self-image than boys and also score high on secure parental attachment as compare to boys.

The results findings supported that girls would score high on affective of relationships as compared to boys. As in early adolescence many biological changes occur in individual, which could impact the effective quality of relationship among adolescents and their parentages. Boys interrupt their mother more than fathers and mothers also interrupts adolescent more. During adolescents, boys influence the family final decision while mother loss their influence. Boys interrupt fathers less but father interrupts sons more there is a dominance-submission display. That's why boys rate their parents less on effective quality of relationship than girls (Hill, 1988).

Findings indicate that girls scored high on parents as facilitator for independence than boys. As in our culture boys are more outgoing and they are mostly influence by other than the parents specially their friends. Occasionally, to have their peer approval they disobey their parents. Likewise throughout adolescents, parental attachment is less influential than the peer attachment (Laible & Carlo, 2000). Findings of the present study showed that boys scored low on emotional empathy than girls.

It has been illustrated by research findings that girls are scoring high on parents as source of support than boys. As in our culture girls are considered to be more dependent on their parents in comparison to boys. It could lead to the assumption that girls perceived their parents as more supportive than boys. Studies showed that girls perceived their parents as more supportive which is beneficial for them as compared to boys (Landman-Peeters, Hartman, Pompe, & Boer 2005).

Findings showed that there are significant difference between joint and nuclear family system. Emotional empathy

is more exhibited by those adolescents who are nourished in nuclear family system. Nuclear system is increasing in our society not only in physical sense but in social sense as depicted by extended family system (Ahmad, 2002) but even if they are living in nuclear family there were greater chances that they were influence by lot of other factors like moral values, social norms which inhibits them from showing undesirable behavior as participants belong to collective society. There is significant difference between parental attachment and emotional empathy of adolescents living either in nuclear family or joint family system.

### Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the relationship between parental attachment and emotional empathy. The sample was taken from the government schools. Findings indicated significant relationship between emotional empathy and parental attachment. In addition it was also found that gender and family system plays an important role in the perceived parental attachment and emotional empathy among adolescents.

### Limitations and Suggestions

Few potential drawbacks were inherited in the present study. For instance, respondents included students from the government schools only which would have restricted the generalizability of the results. Therefore, inclusion of public and private sector schools would provide wider understanding about the constructs. Secondly, findings were interpreted only on the basis of gender and family systems. It would be more appropriate to include other related demographics such as parental education, parental occupation, and personality dispositions which would enhance our in-depth understanding about the variables of the study. Thirdly, in the present study quantitative measures were used to assess the variables which may limit the response variations of the participants. However, employing qualitative measures such as interview and focus group discussions would permit the respondents greater liberty in sharing their perceptions regarding parental attachment and emotional empathy. Finally, inclusion of cross sectional design would offer broader and detailed picture of the phenomena.

### Implications

The research findings showed that parental attachment is very important in the determining the adolescent's behavior thus parental trainings should be conducted to enhance the parenting skills focusing on parent-child interaction and attachment. Better attachment with parents would make adolescents less vulnerable to anxiety, depression and other pathological issues. As the findings indicated that low and insecure parental attachment have disastrous impact on the emotions of their children thus findings would be beneficial in providing counseling services to the parents who can prevent the psychological problems of their children. Parenting skills should be implemented that parents become more equipped to deal with the psychological needs of their children. The research findings

would further contribute those children who are better attachment styles so as to induce sustainable and healthy interpersonal relationships in adulthood. Mental health professionals can provide proper counseling to children if they are able to understand their parental attachment styles and can train parents to better help their children. Another important implication is that awareness in adolescents through seminars, group meetings and pamphlets etc. about attachment and its consequences can be raised in adolescents especially those at risk and it can help them in establishing more secure relationships.

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