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**The Effect of Parenting Style of Parents on the Attachment Styles
of Undergraduate Students**

Zarina Akhtar, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Present study was aimed to investigate the effect of parenting styles of parents on the attachment styles of undergraduate students. 200 students with age ranging from 15 to 18 years were selected as sample by cluster sampling technique. All the students filled and returned the questionnaire. After data clearing the final sample consisted of 179 respondents. Parental Authority Questionnaire was used to measure the parenting style of father and mother. Adult Attachment Scale was used to diagnose attachment style of student. Pearson's correlation was applied to analyze the collected data. Results showed there was significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style of parents and anxious attachment style of students. There was significant relationship between permissive parenting style of father and mother with avoidant and anxious attachment style respectively. Authoritative parenting style has no significant relationship with any attachment style.

1. Introduction

Parenting is a process through which a person exhibits a specific, warm and affectionate behavior towards their infants. Parenting by Weiten and Lloyd (2004) is associated with two dimensions, parental acceptance and parenting control. Parental acceptance is accepting their child and parenting control is strictness of parental standards. In parental acceptance the parents take care of their baby's food, sleep and other basic needs. Later on when child grows the parental control is employed. In the result of parental acceptance the child since infancy feel strong bonding with them. It is reflected by smiling, crying and cooing. This response

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of child is termed as infant attachment. Although the attachment is a universal phenomenon, it is not developed automatically. It is the result of parent-infant relationship.

The variations in parenting dimensions are defined as parenting styles. Baumrind (1967), (1971), (1978) has studied the specific parenting style as the interaction of parental acceptance and parenting control. She classifies this interaction in to main three parenting styles as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. These different behaviors of parents affect the child's attachment pattern, which was defined as attachment styles. The attachment styles are typical ways of interacting in close relationships. Ainsworth, et al. (1978) identify three attachment styles; secure, anxious and avoidant. Hazan and Shaver (1990) described the relationship of adult attachment style is similar to the attachment pattern in infancy. The youngest infant develops secure attachment style with their parents/caregivers. Some infants showed anxious and some avoidant attachment. The question is how the infant develop any of the attachment style? Hazan and Shaver (1987) said warm response seems to promote secure attachment. A cold rejecting style is associated with avoidant attachment and inconsistent response reflected in the result of anxious attachment style. Albert, Trommsdorff and Mishra (2004) determine the style developed at infancy stage continues to adolescence.

The adolescence is the age of doing new experiences. This is the age when child is more anxious in developing new relations with peers, teachers, relatives and spouses. The adolescent's behave in the way what they has experience and learnt during childhood. At this age parents' strong relationship is suggested as the parents' are the persons' who introduce them with home environment similarly parents' should stand with children while introducing the out of home environment, so they should progress in safe hands. Gadeyne, Ghesquiere, & Onghena (2004) concluded parenting is considered to be an important determinant which affects the whole life of a child. In fact, it is one of the hardest tasks to describe the parents' efforts as every parent would hope to succeed in parenting. Parenting style is one of the variables which have been studied extensively for human development. It can be said that the way the parents take care of their child impact the child's personality development and the ways of interacting with social and close relationships.

1.1. Parenting styles

The three parenting styles defined by Baumrind (1971) are mostly used in literature. Authoritative Parenting Style is distinguished by setting high goals for their children. These parents are very sensitive and involved in their child's activities; responsive to their needs; they encourage verbal conversation and allow their children to question parental requests. Authoritative parents are willing to negotiate with their children. They set less restriction when their children are grown up and become mature.

Authoritarian parenting style has low acceptance and high control on their children. They are highly demanding and controlling. They use physical punishment or threats for the wrong doings. They think that the child should obey all the orders or commands without asking any question. These parents always showed rigid behavior and high control even when the child grown up to mature. They are emotionally at distant with their children and may be rejecting. The permissive parents make few demands exhibiting non-controlling behavior and use minimal punishment. They give high level of freedom to their children and do not restrict their behavior unless it physically harms them.

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1.2. Attachment Styles

The way people interact with others or make relations is called attachment style. Ainsworth, et al., (1978) described three attachment styles: secure, anxious and avoidant. The people possessing secure attachment style trust others. They feel comfort with mutual dependence. They are comfortable in making close relations. They warmly welcome if others make close relationship with them. Their relation stay long. They describe their parents as behaving warmly towards them and towards each others.

The people exhibiting anxious attachment style think that others are reluctant to make close relations with them. They have fear of rejection. They think others don't want to stay with them. Their close intimate relationship and complete dependence scares other peoples. Their relationship based on fear and abandonment. Their relationships have short duration. The anxious adults describe relationship with their parents as less warmth then secure adults and feel that their parents had unhappy marriages.

The people having avoidant attachment style are uncomfortable being close to others. They found difficult to trust others. They can not allow themselves to depend on others. They get nervous when others make close relations with them. Avoidant adults describe their parents as less warm. They see their mothers as cold and rejecting.

Different research studies were conducted to investigate the impact of parenting on child's personalities. Parenting styles were studies with different variables all over the world. Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (1991) investigated parenting styles has been shown to be related to children and adolescents' academic achievement. Baldwin, McIntyre, & Hardaway (2007) seen the optimism in child's personality is the reflection of the parenting style. Similarly Strage & Brandt (1999) found confidence, Gonzalez & Wolters (2006) concluded motivation and Gadeyne, Ghesquiere, & Onghena (2004) explores the externalizing problem behavior and attention problems is affected by parenting style.

Kerka (2000) has conducted research to study the effect of parenting and career development. The finding of the study was: parenting style effects the career development. It was further emphasized that the focus from the individual's may be shifted to the family. The reason may be the individual is the reflection of their family.

A research study was conducted by Neal and Horbury (2001) on 53 undergraduates who were grew up in a two parent home to study the effect of parenting style on person's perception of their own relationship qualities and their perception of how other people relate to them interpersonally. The findings showed that the persons with authoritarian or permissive parents have higher self-intimacy abilities than those respondents with authoritative parent. The other finding depicted that a person with authoritative parents has positive perception of other's intimacy ability than those with either an authoritarian or permissive parenting style.

Adam, Gunnar and Tanka (2004) said parent's emotional characteristics have independent effect on parent behavior and it predicts the parenting style. Albert, Trommsdorff and Mishra (2004) conducted a research parallel in Germany and India. The findings of their study showed Indian mothers are more authoritarian then German mothers. German mother

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possesses permissive parenting style while the Indian mothers exhibit authoritative style. Indian mothers and their children showed more avoidance style than their German counterparts. They gave reason for this finding that they assessed attachment as a general construct. The attachment towards family may have different results. The second reason was the cultural differences in eastern and western culture where parenting styles are defined and perceived differently.

Yahaya and Nordin (2006) studied the relationship between self concepts, motivation and parenting styles effected students' achievement. They found that authoritative parenting style seems very suitable to be practiced because it is proven to have very good impact on the achievement.

Turner, Chandler and Heffer (2009) analyzed that authoritative parenting continues to influence the academic performance of college students. One different finding was found by Hall [19]. He analyzed that the stability and functioning of girl's marital life positively related with father's parenting in childhood and his relationship with the mother of child. So the parenting style affects the child's life in many ways.

Rai, Pandey and Kumar (2009) studied perceived parental rearing style and personality among Khasi adolescents. The findings of their study reveal that father's parenting style is different for male and female child. He has significantly more rejecting behavior for male child and emotionally warmth for female child. No difference in parenting of father was found on the factors of over protection and favoring subjects. No significant difference in parenting style of mothers was found for their boys and girls children.

Önder, Kırdök and Isık (2010) conducted a research study. They relate the high school student's career decision making pattern across parenting styles and parental attachment levels. The findings showed the child of authoritative and authoritarian parents is more decisive than the child's of neglectful and permissive parents. It was further concluded that the parent's authoritative style is positively associated with exploration of self and environment in adolescence. They further said that neglectful and permissive parents do not support their child in their career decisions.

Another study was conducted on Malaysian students by Lin and Lian (2011). They study relationship of parenting style and coping capabilities of secondary school students. Malaysian fathers and mothers were perceived at similar level of authoritarian parenting where as mothers are perceived more authoritative than fathers. It was concluded that authoritarian style of both father and mother and authoritative parenting style of mothers correlates with adolescent coping capabilities.

Keller (2008) investigated if parents are very protective and authoritarian then children are less creative. The reason he described was the children of authoritarian parents become vigilant and always striving to fulfill their duties to follow the instructions of parents and to minimize shortfalls. These children will follow the rules and satisfying the obligations not pursue aspirations or engage them in risky behavior. Their style will be prevention focus and they were less creative.

After reviewing the literature it was found that parenting style was studied with different variables in different context; but the relationship of parenting style and attachment style of adolescent was not discussed. So there was a need to study this demission of parenting styles and attachment styles. Present study was designed to find out the effect of parenting style of parents on the attachment styles of under graduate students.

1.3. Hypothesis for the study

Three hypotheses were designed to conduct the study:

- I.** Authoritative parenting style of father and mother has significant relationship with secure, anxious and avoidant attachment style.
- II.** Authoritarian parenting style of father and mother has significant relationship with secure, anxious and avoidant attachment style.
- III.** Permissive parenting style of father and mother has significant relationship with secure, anxious and avoidant attachment style.

2. Methodology

The population of the study was undergraduate students of two districts (Attock and Chakwal). The age of respondents lies between 15 to 18 years. The sample of 200 (100 male and 100 female) students was selected by using cluster sampling technique. 200 questionnaires were distributed to the sample students. 179 questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 90%.

2.1. Instruments

Two instruments: Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) were used to collect data. The PAQ was developed by Buri [24] to measure the parenting style by child's perspective. Two versions of PAQ were separately used to measure the parenting style of father and mother. Gender was changed in the questionnaire like father was changed to mother and he was changed to she to make it separate version of PAQ. AAS was constructed by Collins & Reed [25]. Both the instruments PAQ and AAS were translated from English in to Urdu Language through forward and back translation.

2.1.1. Parental Authority Questionnaire

The PAQ was consisted upon 30 statements. It was designed to measure the parenting style of parents in terms of authority and disciplinary practices exhibited from child's perspective. The statements were rated on 5-point likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. The 30 statements were divided in to three subscales i.e. authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. 10 statements for each subscale were summed up and the highest score indicate the type of parenting adopted. The statements of PAQ have good internal consistency. The value of alpha for original questionnaire was ranging from .74 to .87. The reliability coefficient for the present sample ranged from .72 to .80.

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2.1.2. Adult Attachment Scale

Adult attachment scale consists of 18 statements. It was designed to measure three dimensions of attachment scale i.e. secure, anxious and avoidant. The statements were rated on 5 point likert scale with the variation of 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. The original AAS has good internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha ranged from .78 to .87. The reliability coefficient for present sample ranged from .68 to .72. The high score on the sub-scale indicate the particular attachment style of an individual.

Both the instruments were finalized with the expert opinion of specialists of the field of education and psychology.

2.2. Data Collection

Five schools from each district (Attock and Chakwal) were selected randomly: One for pilot test and four for data collection. Permission was obtained from the heads of respective schools to conduct the study. The questionnaires were distributed to students in their free time to avoid disturbance in their studies during class. Average time required to fill the questionnaire was approximately 20 minutes.

3. Results

The data was analyzed in the light of hypothesis designed for the study. Pearson's Correlation was used to investigate the relationship between parenting style of parents and attachment styles of their children.

Table: 1 Correlation between Authoritative parenting style of father and attachment style of children

Attachment Styles	r	p
Secure	0.086	.251
Anxious		-0.071 .345
Avoidant	0.061	.415

Total number of respondents= 179

Table: 4 Correlation between Authoritative parenting style of mother and attachment style of children **Please check the Table number.**

Attachment Styles	r	p
Secure	0.015	.845
Anxious		-0.020 .795
Avoidant	0.109	.148

Total number of respondents= 179

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Table 1 and 2 highlights no relationship exists between authoritative parenting style of father and mother and attachment styles of their children. The hypothesis I is rejected and it is said that no relationship found between authoritative parenting styles and secure, anxious and avoidant attachment styles for this sample.

Table: 3 Correlation between Authoritarian parenting style of father and attachment style of children

Attachment Styles	r	p
Secure	0.053	.478
Anxious		0.373** .000
Avoidant	0.204**	.006

** Significant at $p > .01$ Total number of respondents= 179

Table: 4 Correlation between Authoritarian parenting style of mother and attachment style of children

Attachment Styles	r	p
Secure	0.008	.912
Anxious	0.254**	.001
Avoidant	0.158*	.035

* Significant at $p > .05$ ** Significant at $p > .01$ Total number of respondents= 179

Table 3 and 4 indicates significant relationship between authoritative parenting style of father and mother with anxious and avoidant attachment style. Where as no relationship is found with secure attachment style. The value of $r = 0.373$ in table 3 and 0.254 from table 4 showed the significant moderate relationship between authoritarian parenting style and anxious attachment style. The hypothesis II is accepted and it is stated that the relationship exists between authoritarian parenting style and anxious attachment style.

Table: 5 Correlation between Permissive parenting style of father and attachment style of children

Attachment Styles	r	p
Secure	0.160*	.032
Anxious		0.169* .024
Avoidant	0.288**	.000

* Significant at $p > .05$ ** Significant at $p > .01$ Total number of respondents= 179

Table: 6 Correlation between Permissive parenting style of mother and attachment style of children

Attachment Styles	r	p
Secure	0.196**	.009

Anxious		0.371**	.000
Avoidant	0.192**	.000	

*Significant at p>.05 **Significant at p>.01 Total number of respondents= 179

Table 5 and 6 reflects that permissive Parenting style of father and mother has significant relationship with secure, anxious and avoidant attachment styles. The value of r(0.288) in table 5 shows the permissive parenting style of father has relatively strong relationship with avoidant attachment style then other significant relations. The value of r(0.371) in table 6 indicates relatively strong relationship between permissive parenting style of mother and anxious attachment style of child when compared with other attachment styles.

4. Discussions

Present study was designed to investigate the effect of parenting style of parents on the attachment styles of students. The first hypothesis was: authoritative parenting style has relation with secure, anxious and avoidant attachment styles. The values of “r” in table 1 and 2 showed no significant relationship was found. A negligible relation of authoritative parenting style of father is found with secure attachment style. And similar result was found for authoritative parenting style of mothers with avoidant attachment style. Further authoritative parenting style has slight negative relation with anxious style. It can be said that authoritative parenting style of father leads to secure attachment style. Along with it the child with authoritative parenting style do not possesses anxious attachment style.

In the light of finding hypothesis I is rejected and it can be stated that authoritative parenting style has no relationship with secure, anxious and avoidant attachment style for this sample. This finding does not support the finding of Karavasilis, Doyle, and Markiewicz (2003). They found positive association between authoritative parenting style and secure attachment style. Further it also not supports the findings of Rohner (1975) research. He said warm and accepting behavior of parents does not elevate aggression in children and adults.

The second hypothesis was authoritarian parenting style of father and mother has significant relationship with attachment styles. This hypothesis was supported by the findings. The result of table 3 and 4 indicates significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style of father and mother with both anxious and avoidant attachment styles respectively. The value of r (0.373) from table 3 and the value of r (0.254) from table 4 highlighted that authoritarian parenting style of father and mother has relatively moderate significant relationship with anxious attachment style when compared with other styles. This finding some what supports the findings of Gilani and Altaf (2005) and Rohner (1975). They concluded in their article that authoritarian parenting style develop extreme attitude in the children.

The authoritarian parents has low acceptance and high control on their children and the person with anxious style thinks that others are reluctant to make close relations with them. They have fear of rejection. This finding is very logical. The parent’s low acceptance is reflected in fear of rejection from students’ personality. The children with avoidant attachment style describe their parents as less warm to each other and they had unhappy marriages. This perception of students gives seed for thought to parents. If they have less warm relationship with each other, they may have many reasons but for the child’s healthy

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personality they may sit together and resolve their conflicts. This finding supports the findings of Coh, Cowan, Cowan and Pearson (2008) they said parents' attachment styles affects the child attachment style. Insecure parents provide less structure in instruction with children as compared to secure parents.

The third hypothesis of the study was permissive parenting style of father and mother has relationship with attachment style of their children. This hypothesis was also supported by the findings of table 5 and 6. The table values reflected that permissive parenting style of father and mother has significant relationship with all three attachment styles. The value of r (0.288) indicates that permissive parenting style of father has relatively moderate relationship with avoidant attachment style as compared to others. This finding supports the findings of Karavasilis, Doyle and Markiewicz (2003) as their study reflect that permissive parenting style predict avoidant attachment style. The value in table 6 indicates permissive parenting style of mothers has relatively moderate significant relation with anxious attachment style when compared with others. This finding also support the findings of Albert, Trommsdorff and Mishra (2004) as they concluded Indian mothers' having permissive parenting style their children prefer avoidant attachment style.

The permissive parents are not much involved in their child's activities. They give high freedom to their children which confuse them. When they possess avoidant style it shows their cold and rejecting behavior towards father. The reason may be the father remains out of home for their job and earning. The children during their infancy to childhood do not see their father directly concerned with their activities. They feel them alone with their decisions. In the result they don't have habit to share their feelings and problems with their father so they showed avoidant style.

Although the majority of mothers' remains at home even then their permissive style showed relationship with anxious style. The previous finding of table 4 i.e. authoritarian parenting style of mother also leads to anxious style. It means no matter the mothers' style is authoritarian or permissive the children showed anxious style. It can be said that either mothers' showed strict behavior or have less or no concern with children activities. The child possesses the same style. In other words the child want to see their mothers' fully attentive and involved in their activities. They need her full attention.

The other reason of these findings may be the age of the students. The sample was of age between 15 to 18 years. The focus of the adolescents at this is mostly out of home. They are more anxious. So they possess avoidant or anxious attachment style.

5. Conclusion

This study was aimed to explore the relationship between parenting styles of parents and attachment styles of students. Authoritative parent style has no significant relationship with any of secure, anxious and avoidant attachment style. Authoritarian parenting style has significant relationship with anxious attachment style. Permissive parenting style of father has significant relationship with avoidant attachment style. Permissive parenting style of mother has significant relationship with anxious attachment style. The findings of the present study provide some insights to parents, psychologists and researchers in promoting adolescent's psycho-social development and well-being.

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Keeping in view all the findings it was recommended to parents; that they may resolve their own conflicts. They have to sit together and give proper time to their children activities. They may learn to cooperate with each others and combine various elements of their unique parenting styles. It is also recommended for future research studies that parents' age, educational level, socio-economic status, family size, parental background may also be focused to study the relationship of parenting styles and attachment styles of adolescents.

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