

Parental Attachment and Identity Styles among Adolescents: Moderating Role of Gender

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The study was aimed to explore the relationship between parental attachment and identity styles among adolescents. Furthermore, gender differences were also investigated for both constructs. The study was done in two phases. The first, try-out phase was aimed to explore language and cultural appropriateness of the Identity Styles Inventory-4 (Berzonsky et al., 2011) and Parental Attachment Questionnaire (Kenny, 1987). The second phase of the study was designed to fulfill the research objectives. The try-out phase indicated that instruments were culturally and linguistically appropriate. The main study was carried out with a sample of 252 adolescents. The results showed that instruments were internally consistent and reliable. The results yielded that parental attachment was positively related with informational style, normative style, and commitment but was negatively correlated with diffuse-avoidant style. For gender differences, girls scored higher on parental attachment as compared to boys. For identity styles, girls scored higher as compared to boys on informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant style but for commitment differences were nonsignificant. When moderating role of gender was explored, significant moderation was seen only for emotional support to informational style link where boys were more inclined to share to show the trend.

Keywords: parental attachment, normative identity styles, informative identity style, diffuse-avoidant style, commitment, adolescents

Adolescence is seen as a transitional stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood that involves biological, social, and psychological changes. Adolescence is a time period in the life of an individual that is characterized by an

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opposition between parents and self (Christie & Viner, 2005). Conflict between parents and adolescents tend to increase in response to age, pubertal development, and ties with peers, an important peculiarity of this developmental stage (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998). Young adolescents compared to children seek out greater independence and become more proficient at asserting their own autonomy, but still rely on parents for reassurance and support (Graber, Archibald, & Brooks-Gunn, 1999).

Attachment refers to as the “tendency to seek closeness to another person and feel secure when that person is present” (Bowlby, 1982, p. 6). Attachment is a specific type of a large class of bonds referred to as affectional bonds (Ainsworth, 1989). Kenny’s (1987) model of parental attachment is actually an extension of the work done by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall’s (1978). Her notion view attachment as an enduring affective bond, which serves as a secure base in providing emotional support and fostering of autonomy. According to parental attachment model by Kenny, parental attachment is conceptualized as “perceived parental availability, understanding, acceptance, respect, and facilitation of autonomy, interest in interaction with parents in help-seeking situation, and affect towards parents, help-seeking behavior in situations of stress and satisfaction with the help obtained from parents” (p. 20).

Identity is assumed to provide individuals with a sense of continuity and consistency. Identity formation has traditionally been viewed as the major developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). According to Berzonsky (1989), identity style generally refers to the social-cognitive strategy that individuals prefer to use to process identity-relevant information, make personal decisions, and negotiate identity relevant problems. Erickson’s notion lack support of empirical research methods, however, ample amount of research work on identity has followed Marcia’s identity status paradigm that has been criticized for viewing identity formation as an outcome and neglecting the underlying developmental process. To cater for this, Berzonsky proposed an alternative model of three identity-processing orientations i.e., informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant style. This model highlights the differences in how one processes and explores identity relevant information.

Adolescents with an *informational identity style* deliberately seek out and process self-relevant information before negotiating identity conflicts and forming *commitments*. As a result the commitment made is based on keen involvement, willingness to engage in high level self-exploration, and importantly they are not resistant to bring in change (Berzonsky, 1990). They have been found to display high levels of

cognitive complexity, decisional vigilance, need for cognition, problem focused coping, autonomy, cognitive persistence, and mature interpersonal relationships (Berzonsky, 2004a; Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Duriez, Soenens, & Beyers, 2004).

Adolescents with a *normative style* deal with identity conflicts and form commitments by internalizing and adopting prescriptions and expectations of significant others in a relatively automatic fashion. Therefore, strong adherence is there to the commitments made without engaging in large amount of self-exploration (Berzonsky, 1990). They possess a well defined sense of educational purpose, high levels of conscientiousness, cultural conservatism, need for structure, and need for cognitive closure, and low on measures of openness to values, actions, and fantasies (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992; Dollinger, 1995; Soenens, Duriez, & Goossens, 2005). They stress collective self-components e.g., family and religion (Dollinger et al., 2005).

On the other hand, adolescents with a *diffuse-avoidant identity style* procrastinate and delay dealing with identity conflicts and personal problems as long as possible. These individuals have neither engaged in self-exploration nor made a commitment to an identity (Berzonsky, 1990). They have been found to display pre-decisional panic and rely on maladaptive practices in decisional situations (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996). This style has been related to maladaptive coping mechanisms (Soenens et al., 2005). Such people are seen to be prone to the feelings of shame (Lutwak, Ferrari, & Cheek, 1998) and display conduct disorders and hyperactivity problems (Adams et al., 2001). In terms of the Big Five, individuals with diffuse-avoidant style, have been shown to score high on neuroticism and low on agreeableness and conscientiousness (Dollinger, 1995).

Commitment refers to “differences in the strength or clarity of the self-relevant standards, goals, convictions, beliefs, and the like that one holds” (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 132). According to Erickson (1968), one must undergo the process of internalization for identity formation to be successful. This internalization entails adherence made to unique and integrated set of commitments and choices reflecting who one is. The commitments made by an individual give direction to the life and contribute to sense of adjustment.

The tendency of human beings towards deviance is present at all developmental stages yet adolescence is the most vulnerable and sensitive period for an individual to adopt a negative identity and dysfunction (Sandhu & Tung, 2004). Erikson (1968) said that

adolescents form the identity not by imitating others, as younger children, rather they modify and synthesize earlier identifications into “a new psychological structure, greater than sum of its parts” (Kroger as cited in Paplia, Olds, & Feldman, 2002, p. 3). To form identity adolescents must ascertain and organize their abilities, needs, interests, and desires that can be expressed in a social context (Paplia et al., 2002).

Reich and Seigel (2002) asserted that individuals with a secure attachment to their parents characterized by sensitivity, warmth, and consistency, would be best equipped to engage in the exploration and commitment involved in identity formation. Papini (1994) similarly stated that adolescents with a secure sense of attachment to their parents also have the sense of a safe foundation from which to meaningfully explore life alternatives and make commitments to life directions. On the other hand, those who do not have a secure attachment will be less likely to face the potential risks involved in either exploring or committing to identity options. Similarly, cross-cultural research also has revealed positive associations between secure parental attachment and identity development among middle and late adolescents (Matos, Barbosa, DeAlmeida, & Costa, 1999; Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002).

Looking for gender differences, Kenny and Donaldson (1991) indicated that college women described themselves as significantly more attached to their parents in comparison with college men. In addition, prominent differences were found particularly for emotional support where women described its higher levels (Kenny, 1994). However, for identity styles inquiry of gender differences has led to mixed findings. A vital fact is that though Berzonsky (1992) did find a significantly greater inclination among girls to adopt informational style and greater tendency to adopt diffuse-avoidant style among boys, but in another study significant differences were nonexistent (Berzonsky, 1993). Likewise, boys were seen to be higher on diffuse avoidant style, girls on commitment and gender differences were not significant for informational and normative style (Berzonsky, 2008). Similarly, Smits et al. (2008) indicated greater tendency among boys to exhibit informational and diffuse-avoidant identity style. In line with this, a study particularly devoted to explore gender differences found significant differences only for normative style where girls were higher than boys (Khodarahimi & Cothran, 2009).

Researchers have investigated mutual influences and the reciprocal nature of the parent child relationship during adolescence (Buhl, 2007; Kenyon & Koerner, 2009; Wheeler, Wintre, & Polivy, 2003). There has been growing interest in how dynamics within the

family influence the development and successful consolidation of the young adult identity (Beyers & Goossens, 2008; Schwartz, Pantin, Prado, Sullivan, & Szapocznik, 2005). The importance of attachment patterns during adolescence has been highlighted by plenty of research work (Duchesne, Ratelle, Poitras, & Drouin, 2009; Kafetsios, 2004; Nickerson & Nagle, 2005; Williams, & Kelly, 2005; Zimmermann & Becker-Stoll, 2002), where it is witnessed that establishing secure attachments give rise to positive and healthy outcomes (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Mikulincer & Selinger, 2001).

Identity also is a widely studied topic, which has proved its relevance to the parent-child relationship (Berzonsky, 2004b; Berzonsky, Branje, & Meeus 2007; Matos et al., 1999; Meeus et al., 2002; Smits, et al., 2008; Soenens, et al., 2004; Young & Lichtenberg, 1996). According to the Erickson's (1968) psychosocial theory, the task of each stage of development has to be resolved for the successful transition to the next stage. Therefore, the attachment related tasks that are the part of earlier stages of development have to be dealt in a healthy manner for the progress and healthy development of identity.

In Pakistan also a lot of work has been done on identity (Abbas, 2002; Awan 2004; Gilani, 2005; Hayaud Din, 2005; Inaam, 2006) and attachment (Ali, 2008; Azam, 2006; Iqbal, 2007; Safdar, 2002; Yaseen, 2006) that had a different focus. It would be a different approach to study the relationship of parental attachment and identity styles and would be beneficial in terms that how parents can play their part in the successful transition of adolescents to the next stage during a time when parental association become weak and ties with peers begin to dominate (Laursen et al., 1998). The investigation will answer that how nature of parental attachment facilitates healthy identity processing style, resulting in a stable, coherent, and integrated sense of being that will give rise to a healthy society on the whole.

It would be of significance to know how parental attachments in a Pakistani perspective are linked to the phenomenon of adopting different identity styles as we usually see that prevailing attachment patterns that are loaded on emotionality and strictness particularly during adolescence, it seems to hinder self-sustained identity formation (Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserie, & Farah, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Over reliance on parents is the crux that holds back the individuation process to take place. Having seen that different identity styles are associated with diversified outcomes where informational and normative styles give rise to healthy individuation process but diffuse-avoidant style generates maladaptive identity related outcomes. Having different gender role attitudes is seen as a pretty much prevalent practice. As parents traditionally foster gender

specific roles among children, so it was expected to find gender based differences in relating parental attachments to identity styles. The following hypotheses were formulated to study identity styles and parental attachment among adolescents:

1. Parental attachment will be positively related with informational identity style, normative identity style, and commitment among adolescents.
2. Parental attachment will be negatively related with diffuse-avoidant identity style among adolescents.
3. Adolescent girls will have high parental attachment as compare to adolescent boys.

Method

Sample

The sample of 252 adolescents was taken from four colleges/universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Among participants ($N = 252$), 118 were boys and 134 were girls. Their age-ranged from 16 to 20 years ($M_{age} = 17.79$, $SD = 1.38$). The participants were chosen through convenient sampling. Informed consent was taken before proceeding further. Following demographics were catered in the study.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Sample (N = 252)

Demographic variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Boys	118	46.8
Girls	134	53.2
Educational degree under study		
Matric	17	6.7
Intermediate	114	45.2
Graduation	121	48
Residential City		
Islamabad	125	49.6
Rawalpindi	127	50.4
Mother's Education		
Uptill Intermediate	145	57.5
Graduation above	107	42.5
Father's Education		
Uptill Intermediate	67	26.6
Graduation	104	41.3
Masters and Above	81	32.1

Table 1 shows the different demographic features of sample. Among 252 participants, 118 are boys while 134 are girls with different educational degrees. Moreover, Table indicates the residential cities of the participants and education of their parents.

Instruments

Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ). The scale was developed by Kenny (1987). It is a 55 item questionnaire that assesses perceived parental availability, understanding, acceptance, respect, and facilitation of autonomy; interest in interaction with parents; and affect towards parents during visits, help-seeking behavior in stressful situations, and satisfaction with help obtained from parents. The PAQ contains three domains i.e., 27 items measure Affective Quality of Attachment and the score on this subscale range from 27 to 135; 14 items for Parental Fostering of Autonomy with score range from 14 to 70; and 14 items for Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support and score on this subscale range from 14 to 70.

It is a five point rating scale where response categories are *not at all*, *somewhat*, *a moderate amount*, *quite a bit*, and *very much*, the scoring of these categories is 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. The scoring was opposite for 25 reverse items. The maximum score on the scale is 275 and minimum is 55. High scores on Parental Attachment Questionnaire indicate high parental attachment.

Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained for the present sample were .85 for Affective Quality of Attachment, .68 for Parental Fostering of Autonomy, .69 for Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support, and .87 for the overall scale. High reliability values are indicative of internal consistency of the scale. Item total correlations were also computed that revealed significant positive correlations for the items of PAQ with the total score on PAQ. It ranged from .15 ($p < .05$) to .57 ($p < .01$).

Identity Styles Inventory (ISI-4). Revised version of ISI-4 was used in the study which was developed by Berzonsky et al. (2011) for which permission was taken from the author. It measures four dimensions of identity that include the three identity processing styles, 7 items measure Informative Style with score range 7-35; 8 items measure Normative Style and score range is 8-40; 9 items for Diffuse-Avoidant style with score range 9-45; and 10 items for Commitment with score range 10-50.

It is also a five point rating scale where categories range from *not at all like me* designated as 1 to *very much like me* designated as 5.

The rest of the items are scored in between these extremes. Cronbach alpha reliability values obtained from the present research sample were .73 for Informational Style, .68 for Normative Style, .67 for Diffuse-Avoidant Style, and .73 for Commitment. Alpha coefficients represent that scale is reliable and internally consistent measure.

Item total correlations were computed for Identity Styles and Commitment with the respective total of the subscale that yielded significant positive correlations. For Informational Style it ranged from .44 to .66 ($p < .01$), Normative Style ranged from .29 to .59 ($p < .01$), Diffuse-Avoidant Style ranged from .34 to .51 ($p < .01$), and for Commitment it was from .23 to .67 ($p < .01$).

Procedure

Before carrying out the main study, a try-out phase was done to determine the cultural and language appropriateness of the instruments utilized in the study and to inquire about the appropriate age level to carry out the second phase of research. For this expert opinion was taken from five experts. The try-out phase of the research was conducted with a sample of 10 adolescents. Experts suggested that both inventories were culturally and linguistically appropriate to use with Pakistani adolescents. Moreover, they suggested it would be difficult to use the scales with the age of less than 16 years adolescents. In line with the suggestions of expert opinion, participants of 16-20 years age group showed no difficulty for the understanding of questionnaires.

The main study was conducted in the twin cities i.e., Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The participants were approached after taking the permission from authorities of the educational institutions they were studying in. After taking the informed consent, the participants were briefed about the purpose of study and were assured that the information provided by them would be kept confidential and would only be used for research purpose. Then the participants were handed over PAQ and ISI-4 to mark their level of parental attachment and the choices for identity processing orientation. In addition, they were asked to fill in the demographic information sheet. For this, verbal instructions were also provided along with written directions to fill in the questionnaires. At the end participants and authorities of institutes were heartily thanked for their support and cooperation.

Results

The present research was aimed to study the relation between parental attachment and identity styles. Furthermore, gender differences were also looked into. The results of the present investigation are as follows:

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-subscale Correlations of PAQ and ISI-4 (N = 252)

Variables	<i>M(SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.AQA	105.55(14.73)	-	.53	.50	.93	.17	.13	-.27	.36
2.PFA	46.94(7.38)		-	.33	.73	.01	.01	-.23	.25
3.PRPES	54.17(7.06)			-	.70	.25	.32	-.09	.25
4.PAT	206.66(24.01)				-	.19	.18	-.26	.37
5.IS	28.07(4.51)					-	.34	-.18	.40
6.NS	27.06(4.85)						-	-.14	.20
7.DAS	26.95(5.45)							-	-.51
8.C	37.10(7.08)								-

Note. AQA = Affective Quality of Attachment; PFA = Parental Fostering of Autonomy; PRPES = Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support; PAT = Parental Attachment Total; IS = Informational Style; NS = Normative Style; DAS = Diffuse-Avoidant Style; C = Commitment.

Values .13 to .14 are significant at $p < .05$. Values from .17 to .93 are significant at $p < .01$.

Table 2 shows that the subscales of PAQ are positively correlated with each other ($p < .01$). Informational style, normative style, and commitment subscales of the ISI-4 have significant positive correlations with each other, but all have significant negative correlations with diffuse-avoidant style.

The results in Table 2 show that the total score on parental attachment has positive correlations with informational style, normative style, and commitment subscale, whereas the relationship with diffuse-avoidant style has come out to be negative. This supports the proposed hypotheses no. 1 and 2 i.e., parental attachments will be positively related with informational identity style, normative identity style, and commitment, whereas parental attachment is negatively

related with diffuse-avoidant identity style. For PAQ subscales, however, the relationships of Parental Fostering Autonomy with informational style and normative style; and Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support with diffuse-avoidant style are nonsignificant.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviation and t-values on PAQ and Its Subscales between Boys and Girls (N = 252)

Scales	Boys (n = 118)	Girls (n = 134)	t(250)	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M(SD)	M(SD)		LL	UL	
AQA	103.27(16.42)	107.55(12.8)	2.32*	-7.91	-.65	-.30
PFA	46.55(7.44)	47.28(7.34)	0.79	-2.57	1.10	-.10
PRPES	52.69(7.47)	55.48(6.43)	3.18**	-4.51	-1.06	-.40
PAT	202.52(26.34)	210.31(21.19)	2.60**	-13.70	-13.78	-.33
IS	27.29(4.51)	28.75(4.41)	2.60**	-2.57	-.36	-.33
NS	26.23(4.75)	27.79(4.84)	2.58**	-2.76	-.37	-.33
DAS	26.08(5.01)	27.71(5.72)	2.38*	-2.97	-.28	-.30
C	37.94(6.95)	36.37(7.14)	1.77	-.18	3.33	.22

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; AQA = Affective Quality of Attachment; PFA = Parental Fostering of Autonomy; PRPES = Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support; PAT = Parental Attachment Total; IS = Informational Style; NS = Normative Style; DAS = Diffuse-Avoidant Style; C = Commitment.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3 is showing that mean scores of girls are higher on each subscale of parental attachment as compared to boys. The differences, however, are nonsignificant for Parental Fostering of Autonomy. This supports the hypothesis no. 3 of the present research i.e., adolescent girls will have high parental attachment as compare to adolescent boys. In addition, Cohen's d is indicating a minor effect size of gender on parental attachment and its dimensions. Highest effect is seen for Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support. Likewise, it is shown that gender differences exist for different identity styles i.e. informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity styles. Girls

were found to be higher on informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity styles with respect to boys. However, the differences were nonsignificant for commitment. Moreover, Cohen's *d* values indicate minor effect size of gender on identity styles and commitment.

Moderation Effects of Gender between Parental Attachment and Identity Styles

In order to look at the moderating role of gender on different relationships found, hierarchical regression analysis were done. Moderation effects demonstrate that whether relationship between two variables vary as a function of moderating variable. In other words, under different levels of moderating variable the relationship is different or not.

Moderation effect does not hold true when β of interaction term (independent variable X the moderator variable; in the present research it is parental attachment and gender) come out to be nonsignificant. Same was the case with many of the relationships studied that are mentioned here in present research. When moderating role of gender was observed with informational identity style, the result on affective quality of attachment was $\beta = -.017$ ($p = .928$); parental fostering of autonomy was $\beta = -.036$ ($p = .859$); and on parental attachment overall was $\beta = -.092$ ($p = .630$). When moderating role of gender was observed with normative identity style, the results on affective quality of attachment ($\beta = -.315$), parental fostering of autonomy ($\beta = -.020$), parental role in providing emotional support ($\beta = .022$), and parental attachment overall ($\beta = -.176$) were found to be nonsignificant.

Similarly, when moderating role of gender was observed on diffuse-avoidant identity style, results on affective quality of attachment ($\beta = -.339$), parental fostering of autonomy ($\beta = -.376$), parental role in providing emotional support ($\beta = -.115$); and parental attachment overall ($\beta = -.40$) were found to be nonsignificant. Likewise, moderation effect of gender for commitment on affective quality of attachment ($\beta = .002$), parental fostering of autonomy ($\beta = .062$), parental role in providing emotional support ($\beta = -.157$), and parental attachment overall ($\beta = .030$) were also found to be nonsignificant. Diffuse-avoidant style indicated nonsignificant *t*-values for boys ($t = .45$; $p = .66$) and for girls ($t = 1.26$; $p = .21$). The only significant moderation effect of gender is tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for PRPES and Gender on Informational Identity Style (N = 252)

Predictors	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE	β	t	P
Step 1							
Gender			1.07	.56	.12	1.91	.058
PRPES	.07		.14	.04	.22	3.57	.000
Step 2							
Gender			1.08	.56	.12	1.93	.055
PRPES			.38	.12	.59	3.11	.002
PRPES*Gender	.09	.02	-.16	.08	-.39	2.05	.041

Note. β = Standardized Regression Coefficient; PRPES = Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support; PRPES *Gender = Interaction term of Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support and Gender.

Table 4 indicates the moderation effect of gender on the relationship between Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support and Informational identity style. It is evident from the results that gender significantly moderates this relationship since the interaction term of parental attachment and gender comes out to be significant.

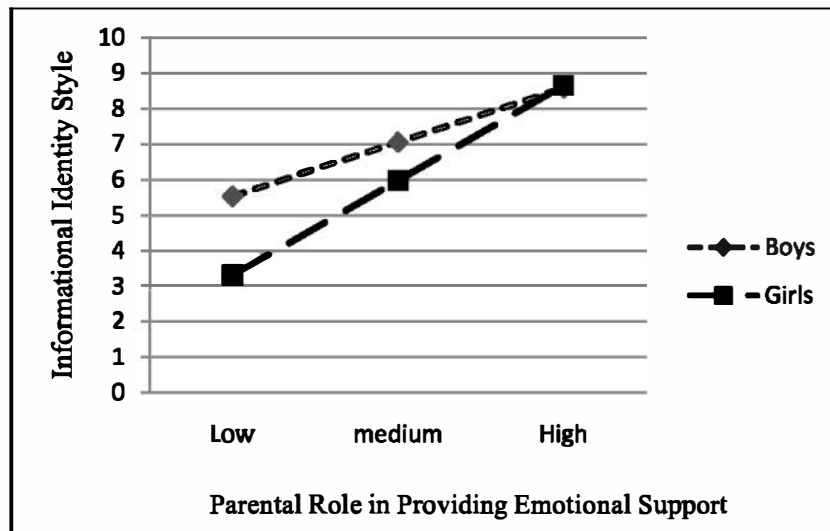


Figure 2. Moderation by Gender in relating PRPES and Informational Identity Style

Figure 1 shows the mod-graph where it is indicated that the strength of relationship between Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support and Informational identity style is significantly higher for boys as compared to girls. In addition to this when significance of slopes was computed it was $t = 3.94$ ($p < .001$) for the group of boys and for girls it came out to be $t = 3.09$ ($p < .01$) indicating that the relationship holds more strongly for boys than for girls.

Discussion

Developing an integrated sense of self is a major land mark of adolescent period of life where ties to significant others (especially parents) have a remarkable impact. Hence, present research investigated the relationship between adolescent parental attachment and identity styles following the notion of psychosocial theory of personality development and the delineation of attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Erikson, 1968). To study the phenomenon of parental attachment inter-scale correlation was computed which depicts that in line with Kenny's proposition (as cited in Kenny, Griffiths, & Grossman, 2005) significant positive correlations between different domains were found. It means that Affective Quality of Attachment, Parental Fostering of Autonomy, and Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support all contribute to the overall Parental Attachment.

To empirically test the identity styles model, interscale correlation was computed that yielded significant positive correlations between commitment and informational style, commitment and normative style, and significant negative relation with diffuse-avoidant style with all other identity style was observed. Plenty of research has documented this relation (Berzonsky, 2008; Berzonsky, 2004b; Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Berzonsky, Macek, & Nurmi, 2003; Luyckx et al., 2007) and therefore provides the evidence for identity style model itself proposed by Berzonsky (1989). Berzonsky (2008) has found identity commitments and identity achievement being related to an informational identity style. Normative individuals hold rigidly organized identity commitments that they defensively strive to preserve and maintain. Finally, a diffuse-avoidant identity processing style is used by uncommitted adolescents classified as having a diffused-identity status (Schwartz, Mullis, Waterman, & Dunham, 2000).

The results of the present study stipulate that the phenomenon of parental attachment is related to the different identity styles one adopt

during the course of identity development. It was hypothesized that parental attachment will be positively related with informational identity styles, normative identity styles, and commitment among adolescents. Bowlby (1969) proposed that the bond established between infants and their parents serves a protective function and provides children with a sense of security. The secure base provided by caregivers allows individuals to investigate their environment with confidence, knowing that they can return to a have security during times of threat (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Therefore, secure parental attachments have been conceptualized as providing a source of security and support for independent strivings during a period characterized by multiple life changes (Kenny, 1987). Erikson's (1968) psychosocial approach to identity stressed the importance of the role of people surrounding adolescents in recognizing, supporting, and thus helping to shape adolescent's identity.

The findings for this hypothesis are indicative of the proposed notion where significant positive relation of parental attachment has been found with informational style. Similar to our findings Smits et al. (2008) found Information-Oriented Identity Style was positively predicted by perceived parental support, as nurturant parenting would foster an open and flexible exploration of identity-relevant information. Specifically, this finding confirms the idea derived from attachment theory that high-quality parenting contributes to children's sense of self and others which, in turn, provides them with the self-confidence that is necessary to explore the world (Benson, Harris, & Rogers, 1992).

Identity styles are at least partly rooted in underlying the family context, which is thought to contribute to the formation of identity in general and to the development of one's identity style in particular (Grotevant, 1987). Findings of present research are parallel to this phenomenon where normative style was found to be positively related with parental attachment. Consistent with this, Berzonsky et al. (2007) indicated that for early adolescents positive parent-adolescent relations, including open, trusting communication, and a willingness for adolescents to disclose information to their parents, all had significant positive correlations with a normative style. In addition, high normative scores were found to be associated with parental warmth, reasonable demands and expectations, family cohesion, and a balance of individuation and emotional closeness within the family (Berzonsky, 2004b; Fullinwider-Bush & Jacobvitz, 1993; Mathis & Adams, 2004). Knitting together the parenting and identity literature, it was found that parental attachment had a significant positive relation with identity commitments. In a similar fashion, the

conception of secure attachment had been related to commitment to values and beliefs and that may, therefore, support identity structure (Mackinnon & Marcia, 2002).

In line with the proposition, significant negative correlation was found between parental attachment and diffuse-avoidant identity style. Congruent to this finding, low level of parental tracking, communication, and disclosure were associated with a diffuse-avoidant identity style (Berzonsky et al., 2007). In addition, permissive parenting was directly related with a diffuse-avoidant approach as parental permissiveness fails to provide youth with consistent rules and guidelines and it minimizes the extent to which youth are encouraged to develop and exercise the self-control and self-discipline necessary to cope effectively with personal problems and identity issues. Authoritarian practices were also associated with diffuse-avoidance (Berzonsky, 2004b). Having found positive relation of parental attachment with healthy styles and a negative relation with unhealthy style of dealing with identity related information, the study contribute to parenting literature offering recommendation to deal adolescents tactfully and not to confuse emergence of autonomy with rejection of parental relationship. They are needed to be there to support for the formation of self-sustained personality and negotiate identity related problems that they might confront. Parents need not to focus only on compliance of what they demand that is mostly exercised in our scenario, but to mutually resolve the issues. Therefore, such findings ponder attention towards family level psychological interventions.

Capturing the conception of parental attachment, it is much recognized that secure attachment is believed to promote cognitive development because children with a secure base explore and examine their environment more than children who are insecure (Joffe, 1980). It was also emphasized that parental warmth and acceptance is vital to promote active social-cognitive processing among adolescents, while a lack of it promotes passive orientations (Berzonsky, 2004b). Green and Campbell (2000) showed that students who were securely attached to parents (i.e., low avoidance of intimacy and low attachment anxiety) were more interested in exploratory activities.

Though, it has been observed that informational and normative styles are positively related to parental attachment but the aspect of fostering of autonomy yielded nonsignificant relationship that can be explained by lack of autonomy fostering in our culture i.e., in our culture adolescents are not directed towards autonomous lines. Rather checks and balances are there that are established by parents in comparison to the western culture. Similarly, for diffuse-avoidant

style and parents emotional support the relationship did not come out to be significant which highlights the characteristics of our people where parents usually exercise the aspect of emotional support even if children have inapt tendencies.

Next, with reference to gender differences, results of present investigation revealed harmonious outcomes to the proposed idea where a marked difference was shown, girls being higher than boys. These results are replication of what Kenny and Donaldson (1991) found working on a sample of college students, where college women described themselves as significantly more attached to their parents across all three dimensions of attachment, in comparison with college men. Also similar findings were reached by Kenny (1994), where this trend was observed particularly for emotional support as is the case for current findings where among all the dimensions the value expressed by emotional support was higher than others. Ali (2008) also found similar results where girls were higher on parental attachment than boys.

Referring to the cultural aspects in this realm it can be said that girls being overly protected by the parents would felt greater parental attachments than boys. Moreover, the result for fostering of autonomy did not come out to be significant and can be explained in such manner that though in our culture autonomy is fostered more among boys as compared to girls but the sample of present study might be depicting a lack of difference for having taken from educational institutions where enlightened and liberal thinking would be there among parents.

Gender differences were also studied for identity styles, the results revealed that significant differences were there between the two groups on informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant style, where girls were higher than boys. For commitment, however the differences were nonsignificant. Findings of informational and normative styles are in agreement with Sandhu and Tung's (2006) conclusion that girls seem to outperform boys in traditionally male-dominated areas of identity formation. Similarly, Berzonsky and Ferrari (1996) found that women were significantly more likely to engage in avoidance of decisional situations, the characteristic of diffuse-avoidant style, as compared to men especially in cultures like ours where girls are given less decisive roles particularly at this age level. However, for commitment the differences are nonsignificant as similar to Khodarahimi and Cothran (2009). Although distinct gender-role socialization prevails in our culture, but girls and boys are capable of making equitable and consolidated commitments for having distinct but compatible opportunities.

In addition to this, when moderation effects of gender were explored to explain the relationships between parental attachment and different identity styles, significant moderation effects were found only for the relationship between parental role in providing emotional support and informational identity style indicating the importance of emotional component of attachment more for boys as compared to girls that serves to contribute into a healthy style of dealing with identity relevant information (see Figure 1). Traditionally emotion seeking tendencies are greater among girls as compared to boys and that in turn serve to yield positive outcomes (Choquet, Hassler, Morin, Falissard, & Chau, 2008) but for the present scenario girls are already high on both emotional support and informational identity styles. Therefore, findings ponder attention that there are more chances among boys to foster healthy identity processing styles if emotional support is lent to them. The nonsignificant moderation effects for the other relationships, thus, indicate that associations of parental attachment to different identity styles are not affected as a function of gender of an adolescent. Such, a change might be because of the increased awareness created by media among both parents and adolescents have minimized the discrimination exercised in parenting girls and boys. Relationships among most of the variables came out to be significant along with the gender differences but moderation effects came out to be nonsignificant. This can be justified by having significant main effects for parental attachment and gender in first place.

Conclusion

The present study addressed the phenomenon of identity formation from a new paradigm of identity styles which has rarely been studied earlier in Pakistan, within an attachment framework using the concept with regard to parents. Both attachment and identity frameworks were approached by weaving together the underlying conjectures of psychosocial theory of personality development and the attachment theory i.e., how the bonding with parents and the resulting schemata influence the task of dealing with identity related issues during the adolescence. In line with expectation, positive associations have been observed among informational style, normative style, and commitment and all had negative association with diffuse-avoidant style. Moreover, the findings on gender difference indicated that girls scored higher on all dimensions of parental attachment as compared to boys. With reference to identity styles, however, again girls outperformed boys on all styles but for commitments differences were

nonsignificant. Gender though was thought to be a potential moderating variable did not have impact on association between parental attachment and identity styles except more of emotional support was seen to be crucial for foster informational style among boys than for girls.

Limitations and Suggestions

Although present study was done with utmost input there are certain limitations that are noteworthy. Primarily due to time constraints the sample was restricted geographically as the sample was taken from twin cities of Pakistan only. It is possible that there was insufficient power to detect smaller effect changes because of geographical restrictions. So further studies should utilize sample with diversified locations in order to verify the generalizability of the findings. Another important point is that sample only comprised of literary participants having better opportunities and exposures to synthesize their identities but a large segment of our population that is illiterate or for that matter is deprived of an enlightened social outlook would definitely yield a different profile. So there is a need to study those populations as well. Secondly, as per observations of experts identity style inventory is needed to be indigenized for the measurement of construct by adolescents of less than 16 years of age. Lastly, the assumption was made that weak parental attachment predisposes individuals to passive styles of dealing with identity related information. Although the notion that insecure attachments contributes to ill-patterned identity formation is supported both by identity and attachment literature, it is difficult to determine whether they are actual predictor of unhealthy identity processing orientations or not. Hence, there may be many other factors contributing to the relationship.

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