

## Impact of Parental Attachment and Emotional Intelligence on Academic Achievement Among University Undergraduates

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### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship among perceived parental attachment, emotional intelligence, and academic achievement among university students. The sample consisted of 500 participants, evenly divided by gender (250 males and 250 females), aged between 21 and 23 years. Data was collected through simple random sampling from three universities in Jamshoro: The University of Sindh, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, and Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences. To assess parental attachment and emotional intelligence, two scales were administered: The Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ; Kenny, 1987) and the Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI; Khan & Kamal, 2010). Academic achievement was measured through participants' Grade Point Average (GPA) as reflected in their university mark sheets. The findings indicated that parental attachment significantly predicts both emotional intelligence and academic achievement. When students view their parents as facilitators of independence and sources of emotional support, it positively influences their emotional intelligence and academic performance. Parental support contributes to emotional stability and self-regulation, which, in turn, facilitates academic success. The results emphasize the importance of encouraging parents to foster a strong attachment with their children to promote emotional stability and support their educational achievements. By strengthening this bond, parents can help their children become more emotionally resilient and successful in their academic pursuits.

**Keywords:** Parental Attachment, Emotional Intelligence, Academic Achievement, University Students

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Theoretical Perspective of Parental Attachment

Freud (1926) was the first theorist who focused on parent-children relationship. According to Freud, bonding of children along mothers is unique and continues throughout life as the indicator of future relationships (Thompson & Ross, 2008). Object Relation Theory was the first theory on parental attachment given by (Klein, 1921). Object relations describe as emotional connection between oneself and another person or object. According to object relation theory, kinship development results in inborn drives to develop and maintain relationships. Attachment begins when a person is emotionally bonded with another person. John Bowlby, (1969) was the first

psychologist to start extensive research on parental attachment. According to Bowlby's attachment theory, attachment describes psychological relatedness that forms between parents and their children, and it lasts to extended time period and also it is basically a bond or relationship a person feels towards another person when the other person is not present (Becker & Pickard, 2011). According to Gladstone and Parker, (2005), Bowlby first explained attachment theory in 1969, to explain how infants are emotionally attached to their parents. According to him, infants form subjective working models of self-like such as (lovable or unlovable), (reliable, trust) to others which develop future interpersonal relationships. Parents who are rejecting will develop in children a feeling of insecurity which impacts on their personality. Earlier insecure relationships with parents develop separation anxiety in children which forms difficulty in future relationships, understanding of individuals and develop risk of psychopathology in children. Warm and continuous relationship with parents results in mental health and well-being in overall lives of children (Thompson & Ross, 2008). According to Bowlby, Parents who are emotionally responsive, providing comfort towards their children develops strong attachment along parents which influence on their future life. Parents who are unavailable, disturbed the attachment formation will be low (Pickard et al., 2011). According to (Griffiths, et al., 2005), Parents who give secure attachment to their children will be better positive view of oneself and hopeful as well as seen others as supportive and trustful.

## **1.2.Theoretical Perspective of Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence was first proposed by Edward Thorndike, termed as social intelligence in 1920, with the goal of explaining social competent behavior of individuals (Chapin, 1942). Though previous researchers concentrate only on non-cognitive elements however as a result of different studies it is revealed that emotional part is also important compared to non-cognitive components. Psychological and non-affective are one and the other factors of intelligence such as emotional, personal, and social are important, non- cognitive skills are also crucial to assessed by ones to become successful in onwards (Wechsler, 1940). Robert Thorndike suggested social intelligence in backward time of thirties (Thorndike & Stein, 1937). Afterwards, the work of early researchers leaves behind before 1983 although Howard Gardner starts to work on multiple intelligence. In type of intelligence both social and subjective skills are crucial that are assessed by intelligence quotient or in other combine tests (Gardner, 1983). In 1990's, non-intellectual capacities helping individuals to become successful in their personal and professional life.

Early theories such as Thorndike and Gardner (1937) have much interest in current experts in new pioneers in the area of emotional intelligence. Every framework of models describes emotional intelligence from two perspectives such as ability and mixed model. Ability models suggest emotional intelligence as real type of cognitive ability as well as pure intelligence. As with comparison, mixed models of emotional intelligence associate cognitive ability along personality attributes like positivity and prosperity (Mayer, 1999). Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer were the initials who performed study on emotional intelligence in the 1990's (Salovey& Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence described as collection of skills such as control, manage, as well as applying emotions in taking decisions (Birney, et al., 2010). Emotional intelligence describes children's social intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Children who are emotional intelligent feel and show emotions in understanding others, which guides them in dealing with different challenges (Bar-On, 2006). Three basic theoretical framework of emotional intelligence exist. The initial model proposed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer understands emotional intelligence as kind of real intelligence called as mental ability. Emotional intelligence describes as skills to understand, to control and show emotions, to understand feelings, to appropriately to express emotions as to promote cognitive and emotional wellbeing (Salovey & Mayer, 1997). Emotional

intelligence was proposed as “the sum of skills that people use for affective understanding (Mayer, et al., 2000).

### **1.3. Relationship of Emotional intelligence and Academic Achievement**

A transition period in youth can cause increased level of external and internal problems, decrease their level of intrinsic motivation, self-confidence and academic expertise and less in academic performance (Achenbach, et al., 1991; Barber & Olsen, 2004; Goodenow, 1993; Harter, 1996; Kazdin, 1993; Wentzel, 1998).

Parents should inform with knowledge and skills of their children properly and also to their needs and development of their children (Dehyadegary, 2012).

Ancestors’ assumptions also influence children’s intrinsic motivation as compared to controlling parents who discourage their children from developing intrinsic motivation (Gottfried, et al., 1994). Parents who encourage freedom, those children develop internally motivated and participate in group activities and have better ability to self-control at themselves as compared to controlling parents who develop extrinsic motivation (use reward and punishment) to their children rather than intrinsic motivation (Grolnick, et al., 2009). Such parental practices can reduce fear of failure and face challenges afterwards (Dweck, 2010).

Several studies (Bar-on, 1997; Goleman, 1995 & Pool, 1997) have revealed that emotional quotient is basic component of academic achievement as well as physical health. Affective skills have particular of its advantage well with others in all areas of life as compared to those who have no control over their sentimental growth. Emotional intelligence includes mutual and affective abilities which are important for successful performance in educational institutions. Emotional intelligence not only brings psychological wellbeing by making students good at interpersonal skills and stress control but also increases creativity, which increases academic success. Negative correlation was found between emotional intelligence and academic achievement scores among Iranian undergraduates (Azimifar, 2013). Emotional intelligence can influence undergraduate’s academic performance (Akmal, et al., 2013). Emotional intelligence perceives as important factor of academic achievement (Fayombo, 2000).

### **1.4. Objectives of the study**

1. To determine the relationship between parental attachment, emotional intelligence and academic achievement.
2. To determine parental attachment as predictor of academic achievement and emotional intelligence.
3. To analyze the correlation between emotional intelligence and affective quality of relationship with parents.
4. To analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and perception of parents as facilitators of independence.
5. To analyze the correlation between emotional intelligence and perception of parents as source of emotional support.

### **1.5. Hypotheses**

1. There would be significant positive correlation between parental attachment, emotional intelligence and academic achievement.
2. The parental attachment would be a significant predictor of emotional intelligence and academic achievement.
3. There would be significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and affective quality of relationship with parents.

4. There would be significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and perception of parents as facilitators of independence.
5. There would be significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and perception of parents as source of emotional support.

### 1.6. Significance

Current research determines relationship between parental attachment, emotional intelligence and academic achievement of university students. Very few research has focused on the relationship of parental attachment with the emotional intelligence of University students. It would be interesting to know the level of emotional quotient (EQ) of students to guide them properly to be emotionally balanced and mature and to be more successful in their lives ahead. Therefore, present study was designed to analyze the correlation among perceived attachment emotional intelligence and academic achievement of university undergraduates. Findings of the current research would be helpful for psychologists, and teachers to understand the factors affecting emotional control of university students. Additionally, findings will provide guidance to parents about the nature of their relationship with children to develop them into competent and more socially adjusted personalities. Findings will be helpful for university students to gain insight about the importance of emotional intelligence for successful life ahead.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Design

This research was empirical co-relational research with quantitative research design. The parental attachment and emotional intelligence were assessed through the standardized questionnaires. In this study parental attachment, emotional intelligence and academic achievement were assessed.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	250	50%
Female	250	50%
Total	500	100%
Age		
19-23	364	72%
24-28	136	27%
Total	500	100%
Residence		
Urban	203	40%
Rural	297	60%
Parents Alive		
Both	250	50%
Only mother	150	30%
Only Father	100	20%
Total	500	100%
Education of Parents		
Educated	350	70%
Uneducated	150	30%
Total	500	100%

## 2.2.Participants

The sample of the research was comprised of five hundred University students including both genders (males=250; females=250). Data were collected from three universities of Jamshoro namely, University of Sindh, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology and Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences. Simple random sampling techniques were used to collect data. The sample included undergraduate students from third year and last year. The age range of the sample was 21 to 23 years.

Name of University	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
UOS	70	110	180	36%
MUET	110	50	160	32%
LUMHS	70	90	160	32%
Total	250	250	500	100%

## 2.3.Measurements

To collect the data three measures were used in the study:

### 2.3.1. Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ)

It was developed by Kenny (1987). It is a self - report inventory consists of 55 items and has three subscales which are (a) affective quality of relationships (b) parental fostering of independence (c) parental role in providing emotional support. It is a reliable instrument, the Cronbach' alpha of this questionnaire is  $r=.88$ . It was back translated into Urdu for the present study. The alpha coefficient of the translated version came  $r=.87$ , which determines the reliable status of the scale. All items on the scale are graded on a 5- dot scale. Score 1 is minimum score assigned to "not at all" and 5 is maximum score assigned to "very much".

### 2.3.2. Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI)

This scale was developed by Khan and Kamal (2010). This scale measures emotional intelligence as a trait of individual. The emotional intelligence scale is standardized tool that analyzes the level of emotional intelligence of participants. The Cronbach' alpha of this range is  $r=.95$ .

### 2.3.3. Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement of the respondents was measured through their mark sheets of previous class. The GPA was taken from the mark sheets, and it was used to ascertain the academic achievement of the respondents. These scores are used as criteria of academic achievement of students. This method is also used in different studies to assess the academic achievement of students (Sue & Zane, 1985; Suresh, 2015).

## 3. Analysis of Data

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics in terms of correlation coefficient and regression analysis were performed. To fulfill the assumptions of linear regression analysis linearity and normality of the data was assured. The probability level of 05 was taken as significant level for hypotheses testing. t-tests were used for analyzing gender differences as additional variables.

**Table 2.** Reliability Coefficients of The Parental Attachment Scale and The Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
PAQ	.88***	55
SRMEI	.95***	60

$df = 198, ***p > .001$

(PAQ=parental Attachment Questionnaire; SRMEI= Self Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence)

To assess the relationship of parental attachment with emotional intelligence and academic achievement Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

Following table 3 is presenting the Mean and standard deviation of the variables and table 4 is displaying the correlation coefficient of variables.

**Table 3.** Means and Standard Deviations of The Parental Attachment, Its Subscales and Emotional Intelligence

Scales	Mean	Sd
PAQ	192.76	21.67
AQR	100.98	14.64
PFI	47.27	7.71
PSES	44.50	5.65
EI	204.80	28.66

**Table 4.** Correlation Coefficient of The Scores Of Participants (N=500) on Parental Attachment, Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement

Scales	PAQ	EQ	A.Ach
PAQ	—	.467***	.246**
EI			.167**
A. Ach			

$df = 498, ***p < .001, **p < .01$

(PAQ= parental attachment questionnaire, EI= emotional intelligence)

Table 4 indicates a positive moderate relationship ( $r=.467, p < .001$ ) of parental attachment with emotional intelligence and academic achievement ( $r = .246$ )

**Table 5.** Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Parental Attachment Influence on Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement

Predictor	R	B	SE	T	P
1. Constant			.005	14.37	.000
EQ	.497	.438		11.08	.000
A.ach	.211	.193		4.38	.000
R Squared	.247				
Adj. R squared	.244				
F	139.9				
df	2, 497				

Linear regression analysis in table 4 indicates parental attachment as a significant predictor of emotional intelligence and academic achievement (EQ  $B = .438$ ; A.ach  $B = .193$ ). R-squared value indicates that parental attachment explains 24.7% variance in the emotional intelligence and academic achievement of students.

**Table 6.** Correlation Coefficient of The Scores Of Participants on Emotional Intelligence and Affective Quality of Relationship Subscale of Parental Attachment Questionnaire

Variables	Mean	SD	R
AQR	100.988	14.644	
			.496***
EI	204.80	28.663	

$df = 498$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

(AQR= Affective Quality of Relationship, EI= Emotional Intelligence)

Table 6 represents correlation coefficient between emotional intelligence and affective quality of relationship subscale of parental attachment questionnaire. Findings show a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of relationship with parents ( $r = .496$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It shows that quality of relationship with parents has positive influence on emotional intelligence of students.

**Table 7.** Correlation Coefficient of The Scores of Participants on Emotional Intelligence with Parents as Facilitator of Independence.

Variables	Mean	SD	R
PFI	47.27	7.711	
			.184**
EI	204.80	28.66	

$df = 498$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

(PFI= Parents as Facilitator of Independence, EI= Emotional Intelligence)

Table 7 indicates the relationship between emotional intelligence and parents as facilitators of independence. Results show positive influence of emotional intelligence with perception of parents as facilitators of independence ( $r = .184$ \*\*,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 8.** Correlation Coefficient of Emotional Intelligence and Parents as Source of Emotional Support.

Variables	Mean	SD	R
PSES	44.506	5.650	
			.253***
EQ	204.80	28.663	

$df = 498$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

(PSES=Parents as Source of Emotional Support, EQ= Emotional Intelligence)

Table 8 shows correlation coefficient between emotional intelligence and parents as a source of emotional support. Findings indicate a positive association of emotional intelligence with parents as a source of emotional base ( $r = .253$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 9.** Mean, Standard Deviation and T-Tests of The Male (N=250) And Female (N=250) Participants on Subscales of Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire.

EQ	Male		Female		<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Subscales	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
ESRS	83.792	21.731	91.972	18.162	4.567	0.029
ESAWS	71.652	9.341	73.904	10.954	2.473	0.074
IPSK	44.272	6.0531	43.980	7.752	0.469	0.008

*df*= 498, \*\**p*<.01; \**p*<..05

(*ESRS*= Emotional Self-regulation skills, *ESAWS*=Emotional Self-Awareness Skills, *IPSK*= Interpersonal skills)

Table 9 is presenting the t-test values of the scores of male and female participants on the emotional intelligence. Findings are indicating significant gender differences on the subscales of emotional self-regulation skills (Mean male=83.792, Mean female= 91.972,  $t=4.567$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and on interpersonal skills (M male= 44.272, M female= 43.98,  $t=0.469$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Females have more emotional self-regulation skills and emotional self-awareness skills than males.

#### 4. Discussion

Current results revealed positive relationships of parental attachment, emotional intelligence and academic achievement. These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies (Algre, 2008; Cahyono & Julom, 2015). Findings of present study revealed positive association among protected attachment with parents and emotional intelligence. These results are consistent with previous studies (Robinson et al., 2016). Parental attachment found has positive effects on affective skills and educational accomplishment of undergraduates. This result is in line with previous findings (Gemeay, et al., 2014). In this investigation, parental attachment was found as a predictor of academic achievement. The outcomes are consistent with the findings of different studies (Tella, 2003; Voorhis, 2001). Additionally, findings of present study revealed significant gender differences in perceived parental attachment and level of emotional intelligence. Findings suggested that girls possess better emotional attachment with parents as compared to boys. Females appeared more emotionally intelligent than boys. These results are also consistent with previous studies (Baharudin, et al., 2012; Butalid et al., 2013; Naghavi & Redzuan, 2011). Attachment to parents has significant effects on children's positive personality as well as affective perception. For children both parents are important and having perception of secure and positive bonding with parents makes them more confident and emotionally stable. Maternal attachment influences skills such as self-regulation, self-awareness and motivation (Cahyono & Julom, 2015), on the other hand attachment with father influences empathy, independence and social skills in the children.

Parenting influences the lives of children throughout their life. In university life individuals face many challenges and at the same time they are passing through the developmental stage of adolescence. It is the most important stage when there are high emotionality and young adolescents feel that their emotions are stronger than others in a persistent manner. Parental guidance and their

bonding remain helpful to make them emotionally stable, to develop positive social relationships and to remain more successful in academic, social and professional life (Nanu, 2015).

Emotional intelligence and positive parental bonding is important for social survival, and for better adjustment in life. Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and Emotional Quotient (EQ) both are interrelated to each other. Hence, Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is not enough ability to be successful in life (Goleman, 2001). But emotional intelligence influences many areas in life such as mental health, performance at school or work, physical health, and also affects social and family relationships. Besides academic success emotional stability and self-control are important for prosperous life ahead. An individual who has good academic achievement can be perceived as intelligent, but without emotionally mature behavior he/she cannot develop stable relationships with others in different dimensions of life ranging from personal-social to vocational or job and peer relationships. Parental attachment promotes the development of emotional stability. Hence parents must try to nurture their children in a way that they turn into emotionally intelligent and positive personalities. Parents mostly focus more on academic achievement rather emotional intelligence in children. Skill to manage emotions positively depends on the consistency and quality of an individual's emotional experiences in early life. If emotions are valued and understood, these become valuable assets later in life (Segal, et al., 2018).

Emotional intelligence and positive parental bonding is important for survival and responsible for better adjustment in life successfully. The personality of an individual is a combination of cognitive, social and emotional traits. In every field of life various forms of human behavior have, but in general, an individual having good academic achievement can be understood as intelligent, with socially approved behavior identified as healthy personality, whereas a person who sometimes or never loses temper is described as more emotionally stable individual. But at times it is observed in daily life that people who are very active and facing various challenges and unhappiness in their lives, as compared to those individuals who are not more creative but have a very successful and happy life (Farooq, 2003). By these observations, researchers and scientists who have worked on human behavior have taken interest in studying human behavior from different perspectives to understand the success and failure, and to identify reasons for understanding satisfied and successful life rather than intelligence and one of the answer considered in the form of Emotional Intelligence in which parenting is the most influential and important factor in an individual personality throughout in their life (Goleman, 1995).

Parental attachment can help us in the learning of sentiments and feelings of oneself and others too. If emotions are valued and understood, these become important assets later in life.

#### **4.1.Limitations of the study**

Following are limitations of the study:

1. Although the range of patterns for this research was suitable but still it is felt that sample size should be more to get further representative sample of university students at Jamshoro.
2. In this research, only urban and rural residences were analyzed. The information about the existing socio-economic classes was not taken, which could increase the insight into the present problem.
3. In present study, academic achievement was measured by their GPA written in their mark sheets, as indicator of academic achievement. In future studies any academic achievement inventory can be used by researchers.

#### **4.2.Implications of the study**

Following are implications of the study:

1. Workshops and seminars should be arranged for students to inform them about the importance of emotional intelligence for success in their lives ahead.
2. Parents and teachers should maintain positive relationships with children which will influence their emotional regulation and academic success positively. .
3. There is need to guide parents to raise emotionally stable children, which are emotionally intelligent, self-controlled and mature.
4. Psychologists can do more work to better the affective skills of undergraduates in the university level also by applying different techniques such as meditation and counseling practices.

### 4.3.Suggestions for future research

Following are recommendations and suggestions:

1. Future research can focus on demographic variables such as socioeconomic status, urban versus rural residence and education of parents as predictor of parental attachment, emotional intelligence as well as academic achievement.
2. In the present research, only one district of Jamshoro was selected as a sample. For further study, other districts of Sindh including public and private universities may be focused.
3. In future, mixed method studies may be used for getting more in-depth knowledge and information about the issue.
4. In the present study, the only quantitative method was used. In future, mixed methods may be used for getting more in-depth knowledge and information about the topic.

### 5. Conclusion

In accordance with the results, it is concluded that parent-child relationship plays a vital role in the development of capable and emotionally balanced personality of individuals. It also affects emotional intelligence of children which is basic factor for their effective learning and successful socio-interpersonal life. Perception of secure and healthy relationships with parents and friends is helpful for having high self-esteem, balanced emotional and social adjustment. Parents and teachers must try to develop emotional intelligence in children besides educational learning. Emotionally stability is important for academic achievement too, as it tends to develop persistence and discipline in individuals. Thus, emotional control should be focused more on during childhood by parents to make them more competent and skilled beside effective learners. Male children need to be more emotionally intelligent to be successful in the future whereas girls need to be less dependent for successful adjustment.

Parents should understand the importance of their bonding or relationship with their children, which is valuable to make their children emotionally stable and mature. Emotional intelligence is important for self-controlled, mature and better adjusted individuals. So, it should be nurture from first years of life. When both parents and teachers cooperate with each other, it will be helpful to make student personality more mature and emotionally balanced.

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