

## **Adult Attachment and Fear of Intimacy among Adolescents: Moderating Role of Social Anxiety**

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### **Abstract**

*This correlational study designed to explore the role of social anxiety as a moderator in the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy among adolescents. Another purpose was to inspect the contribution of sociodemographic variables in adult attachment, fear of intimacy and social anxiety. Data collection was done by using purposive sampling technique. A sample consisted of (N = 420) adolescents' boys (n = 210) and girls (n = 210), early adolescents (n = 140), middle adolescents (n = 140) and late adolescents (n = 140). For such purpose data were collected from different schools and colleges and also from the University of Sargodha. Data were collected by using Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), fear of intimacy scale (FIS) and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS). Results revealed that a significant relationship was present between adult attachment and fear of intimacy among adolescents. Results depicted that there was a significant negative correlation between adult attachment and fear of intimacy. Findings also showed that social anxiety significantly moderated the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy among adolescents. Results indicated that girls score higher on adult attachment than boys, whereas, boys score higher on fear of intimacy and social anxiety. Based on these findings adolescents who owned secure attachment patterns have less fear of intimacy and less social anxiety caused in them while those who have avoidant or insecure patterns will be at higher risk of social anxiety and lack intimate relationships.*

**Keywords:** *Adolescents, Adult attachment, Attachment Styles, Fear of Intimacy, Social Anxiety, Sargodha.*

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### **Introduction**

Adolescence can be viewed as the transitional phases from childhood-adulthood and can generally portray the ages from thirteen to twenty. This period of life could be a time of both confusion or exploration. These transitional phases can raise the matters of both self-identity and independence. Mostly adolescents and their friends face hard choices considering drugs, alcohol, sexuality, school work and social life. As leading towards adulthood, adolescence journeys tend to show natural increment in the importance of friends, peer groups, appearance and romantic interests for a brief period.

Development of personal competence and social skills are two influential aspects of adult functioning. For the development of these aspects, adolescents' relationship with their parents, peers, friends, and romantic partner plays a vital role. Adolescence, a period of noteworthy change as the possibility of attachment ends up being all the more compared with the adolescent, never again being just a receiver of care from guardians, yet likewise a supplier (Allen, 2008).

The changes are emotional, appearing during adolescence in the attachment relationship among parent and child. Concerning the developmental changes during adolescence inspection of attachment is essential to understand probably the distinctive and conflicting behaviors towards the main figure of attachment. Similarly, adolescents, who for a long period had been with their parents were going to be little fundamental, showing clear longer attachment behaviors with their romantic partners (Hazan et al., 2004). Consequently, adult attachment styles are probably going to be added to the improvement and maintenance of psychological wellness issues, for example, anxiety disorders. Brumariu, Obsuth, and Lyons-Ruth (2013) inspected the nature of interpersonal connections among adolescents suffering from social anxiety. The findings showed that adolescents having social anxiety displayed high levels of insecure attachment with family, friends and intimate partners. Social anxiety leads to insecure and avoidant attachment patterns which further induces fear of intimacy.

Late work recommends that teenagers who date, especially the individuals who encounter worry in their sentimental relationship, report larger amounts of depressive manifestations than their peers who won't date (Davila et al., 2004). In this manner, it is expected that negative communications with a sentimental accomplice would trouble to adolescents and inspire sentiments of gloom or social anxiety. In addition, discouraged youths may pick more negative sentimental accomplices (Daley & Hammen, 2002).

Additionally, adolescents' relationships with peers seem to be influential in order to organize sense of personal identity and raised their independence level from influences of the family (Jorgensen & Dusek, 1991). Therefore, aspects that inhibit or prevent interpersonal operations of adolescents represent a vital and diverse region for development. In this association, social anxiety can be regarded as an essential aspect to examine among adolescents in accordance with the intimacy and attachment styles. These attachment styles vary in individuals some may have secure style or some may carry insecure patterns. While avoidant patterns are also present in some. In order to have close and effective relationships one could have secure attachment styles which are established in childhood with one's parent or care-giver. Those lacking secure styles can become less intimate too others feel insecure while interacting with others in any social situation and causing social anxiety.

In Pakistan, very few researches are present on the combination of study variables. On adolescents, not much work finds, lacking documented work on the combination of current research constructs. In contrast to this mostly studies on the adult attachment that has been conducted on people occupied with continuous sentimental relationships and very few on non-sentimental relationships. One research in Pakistan carried out on intimate relationships in university students. This research was designed to analyze the expressions of sentimental committed relationships among university students concerning Pakistani cultural context (Gulzar et al., 2016). Therefore, current research's primary concern is to fill this knowledge gap by examining attachment styles among adolescents committed or non-committed and a comprehensive influence of both in social settings for Pakistan cultural context.

## **Literature Review**

### **Adult Attachment**

Bowlby, in his great works composed of the attachment framework, as the inclination of individuals to make enduring affectionate bonds towards specific people (Bowlby, 1973). While early work concentrated

to a great extent on newborn child and parent relationships (Ainsworth, Blehar et al., 1978). Later years have received an interest attachment forms in adolescents' relationships both close associate and intimate. Adult attachment accords with the attachment theory in adult relationships included emotional relationships, friendship and adult sentimental relationships. The attachment does not need to be complementary. Attachment patterns among individuals may not be mutual instead varied. According to attachment theorists, the capability of pursuing care gives an account of an order of natural behaviours, which is known as the attachment behavioral system (Cassidy, 2000).

The attachment theory offers a promising theoretical structure to understand the peer, marriage, sentimental and other human relationship (Kamenov & Jelić, 2005). Attachment theory regarded as a mental model that efforts to explain the motions of both short-term and long-term interpersonal affairs among human beings. Yet, the attachment theory has not been specified as a broad relationship's theory. It tends to just a particular point of view, how people react inside connections when harmed, isolated from friends and family, or seeing a danger. (Waters et al., 2005).

### **Attachment Styles**

The theory of attachment was stretched out to adult sentimental relationships by Phillip Shaver and Cindy Hazen in the late 1980's. In adults, four styles of attachment have been recognized which are secure, anxious-preoccupied, fearful- avoidant and dismissive-avoidant. The four styles generally compare to newborn child characterizations: secure, insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, and disoriented/disorganized. Adult attachment styles, all things considered, undifferentiated from infant youngster attachment styles, rely upon pre-adult emotional or comfortable attachments. Additionally, other adult attachments like, with guardians, parents, friends, companions can act, for understanding to attachment functions amid adulthood, yet likewise, centres around emotional accomplices as they appear the principal figures of attachment for adults (Doherty & Feeney, 2004). After some time, the estimation and conceptualization of adult attachment styles have been refined.

Bartholomew's (1990) demonstrated four adult attachment styles characterized as mixes of the positive or negative working models of self and other people as the central measurements of attachment (Figure 1). A positive model of self, infers oneself as deserving of adoration and consideration, while a negative model suggests that one-self is unworthy. Moreover, a positive model of others, infers that others are viewed as accessible and minding, while, a negative model of others suggests that others are viewed as dismissing. The modern view is that attachment styles are consistent opposing discrete classifications and reflect two domains: anxiety and avoidance (Hazen et al., 2006). The anxiety domain depicts fear of abandonment and dismissal and is accepted to express low confidence and a negative self-perspective. The avoidance domain portrays the level of trust and stands up to get close with others.

There are four types of attachment styles with two domains i.e., anxiety and avoidance (Hazen et al., 2006).

**Secure attachment.** (Autonomous) The secure style depends on a positive model of self and other people. It reflects low reliance and low avoidance (Hazen et al., 2006).

**Preoccupied attachment.** (Anxious) The preoccupied style, having a negative model of self however a positive model of others. This style reflects high reliance and low avoidance (Hazen et al., 2006).

**Dismissive avoidant attachment.** (Dismissing) The dismissive avoidant style depends on having a positive model of self, however, a negative model of others. This attachment style reflects low reliance and high avoidance (Hazen et al., 2006).

**Fearful avoidant attachment.** (Unresolved) The fearful-avoidant style depends on the inverse, that is, a negative model of both self as well as other people. Such attachment style reflects high reliance and high avoidance (Hazen et al., 2006).

The secure, as well as preoccupied, are both agreeable within the sight of others, however, their level of reliance on others' accessibility is unique. The two avoidant classes, the dismissing and the fearful, both tend to maintain a strategic distance from warm relationships yet vary in their reliance on others' acknowledgement. By differentiate, the frightful desire closeness yet encounter an absence of trust and dread of dismissal, which influences them to maintain a strategic distance from warm connections in which they might be helpless against misfortune or dismissal (Bartholomew, 1990).

		<b>(Self) Anxiety</b>	
		<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>(Other) Avoidance</b>	<b>Low</b>	Secure	Preoccupied
	<b>High</b>	Dismissive Avoidant	Fearful Avoidant

Figure 1. Four attachment styles defined by level of anxiety and avoidance

Figure 1 depicts that the individuals with secure styles have low levels of both anxiety and avoidance. Whereas preoccupied individuals have low levels of avoidance and high level of anxiety. Those having dismissive avoidant patterns have low levels of avoidance and high level of anxiety. While fearful avoidant individuals have both high levels of avoidance and anxiety.

### **Fear of Intimacy**

A critical segment of sentimental/ romantic relationships is intimacy and has been connected to mental prosperity as well as the physical well-being of a person (Hook et al., 2003). Moreover, intimacy is the sharing of delights, harms and the dread of being harmed (Vangelisti & Beck, 2007). Fear of intimacy can be regarded as the constrained ability of a person, due to anxiety transferring feelings and reflections of self-importance with another person who is deeply worthy and is supposed to involve the mental procedures within one person (Sherman & Thelen, 1996).

Close intimate associations have been referred to as the most essential hotspots for singular satisfaction and feeling of importance throughout everyday life (Pielage et al., 2005). Conversely, inadequacies in closeness have been related to sadness, bring down confidence, nervousness, and less social fulfilment (Pielage et al., 2005). Social learning theory perceives a significant demonstration from the family and groups (Stocker & Richmond, 2007) though, the theory of attachment displays the possibility that the interior working models created during adolescence impact the relationships later on. Researchers have discovered that the ability to shape accomplice relationships is impacted by former encounters, particularly that one's happen inside parent and child association with theories of social learning and attachment giving hypothetical systems to this relationship.

In a wide range of studies, it is examined that attachment styles mirror an essential part in one's life. Secure attachment style builds up comfortable associations with companions or sentimental partners while if these styles are disturbed one can lack closeness and build up a fear to get close to others which can be the primary source to be a victim of social anxiety.

### **Social Anxiety**

Social anxiety (social phobia) defined by The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR, 2000) as an extraordinary dread of negative assessment from other people as well as an

endless interest and self-question surround one's social capacity as well as social execution. Fear or anxiety surrounds at least one social circumstance in which the individual is presented to a conceivable investigation by others. The individual feels dread that he or she will show side effects of anxiety or act in a way that will be assessed negatively (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

People with high social anxiety may dread and feel constrained to restrain the advancement of closeness in their relationships for various self-defensive and relationship-defensive reasons. Exceptionally socially restless people tend to fear dismissal (Davila & Beck, 2002).

### **Problem Statement**

There exists a significant relationship among all the variables. When adult attachment patterns are functioning well then there will be more closeness in one's relationships. As closeness is more so the level of fears of being rejected or ignored lower down and induces a sense of social support. In this way social interaction fear and performance avoidance also reduced which is the major cause of social anxiety.

When styles of attachment are in the problematic situations, they will lead towards a lack in closeness with the parental figures and create dismissal feeling in an individual, which can contribute to a great fear of intimacy. This fear grows with the passage of time and is unable to develop intimate relationships with a romantic partner.

As a result, social anxiety induced in a person plays a critical role in violating one's relationships either with parents or sentimental partners. Adolescents who have better quality love relationships likewise have better quality friendships and higher social capability which enhance their relationships and lower the levels of social anxiety (Kuttler & La Greca, 2004).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The fundamental target of the present research was to analyze the role of social anxiety as a moderator in the relationship of adult attachment and fear of intimacy among adolescents. To accomplish this goal, following objectives were formulated.

- To determine the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy and among adolescents.
- To explore the role of social anxiety as a moderator in the relationship of adult attachment and fear of intimacy and among adolescents.

### **Hypotheses**

**H1:** Adult attachment is negatively correlated to fear of intimacy.

**H2:** Social anxiety significantly moderated the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy such that the negative relation between adult attachment and fear of intimacy will be stronger for adolescents high on social anxiety.

**H3:** There were significant gender differences among all the study variables.

**H4:** There were significant age differences among adolescents with respect to all study variables



## Theoretical Framework

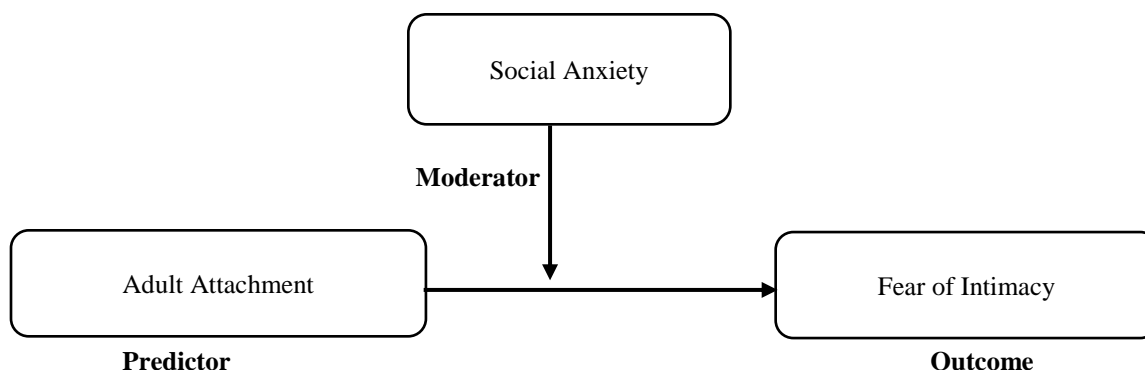


Figure 2: Theoretical framework of the study

Figure 2 depicts the relationships between the variables that have been revealed through the research study. It depicts that adult attachment has significant negative correlation with fear of intimacy. While social anxiety significantly moderated the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy.

## Method

### Research Design

The present study was organized using a correlation survey research design. Correlational research is concerned about building up connections between at least two factors in a similar population or between similar factors in two populations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

### Sample

The population of the current study was adolescents of Sargodha District, Pakistan. Sample of ( $N = 420$ ) adolescents from different schools, colleges and university of Sargodha students was used for data collection. Data collection was done by using purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted ( $n = 210$ ) boys and ( $n = 210$ ) girls. Age range of the sample was 13–20 years. Sample was comprised of three subgroups i.e. Early adolescents ( $n = 140$ ), middle adolescents ( $n = 140$ ) and late adolescents ( $n = 140$ ) from university students of Sargodha, different colleges and schools of Sargodha.

### Instruments

Self-report instruments that provide the best operationalization of the variables of the present study and those, are psychometrically strong were selected for the study. A booklet of questionnaire included the following scales:

#### Demographic data sheet

A questionnaire was designed to obtain the participants' demographic information including age, gender, education, institute and family system.

### **Adult attachment scale (AAS)**

Adult attachment scale was developed by Collin & Read in 1990. It is widely used self-assessed measures of attachment behavior. It measures the adult attachment styles. It contains 18 items and the response format includes a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1= not at all characteristics to 5= very characteristics. It comprises three subscales: Depend, Close and Anxiety. The Close subscale involves item no. 1, 6, 8, 12, 13 and 17. The Depend subscale involves item no. 2, 5, 7, 14, 16 and 18. The Anxiety subscale involves item no. 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 15. It has 7 reversed scored items that includes item no. 2, 7, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18. This scale carries good internal consistency of .69 for Close, .75 for Depend, and .72 for Anxiety.

### **Fear of intimacy scale (FIS)**

This scale was developed by Descutner & Thelen in 1991. It measures the anxiety of an individual about close, dating relationships. It contains 35 items and it has a 5-point Likert type format with responses from 1= not at all characteristic of me, 2 = slightly characteristic of me, 3= moderately characteristic of me, 4= very characteristic of me, 5= extremely characteristic of me. This scale has two-parts part A and B. Part A: Imagine you are in a close dating relationship. Part B: Apply to your past relationships. It has 15 reversed scored items that include item no. 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 29 and 30. This scale was found to have excellent internal consistency (alpha of .93) and good construct validity.

### **Liebowitz social anxiety scale (LSAS)**

This scale was developed in 1987 by Liebowitz. It is a questionnaire whose goal is to measure the range of social interaction and performance situations that individuals with social anxiety may fear and/or avoid. It includes 24 items. Each item comprised a given situation, the rate of anxiety (0 to 3 = none, mild, moderate, severe) and the rate of avoidance (0 to 3 = never, occasionally, often, usually). It comprised two subscales: social interaction and performance situation. Social interaction consisted of 11 items (5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24). Performance situation consisted of 13 items (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21). The overall score accounts for six additional scores: fear of social interaction, fear of performance situation, total fear, avoidance of social interaction, avoidance of performance situation and total avoidance (Baker, Heinrichs, Hofmann, & Hyo-Jin, 2002). The scale has good internal consistency (alpha of .96). For fear of total interaction .89, for fear of performance .81, for total fear .92, for avoidance of social interaction .89, for avoidance of performance .83, for total avoidance .92 (Liebowitz, 1987).

### **Procedure**

Sample of the study was students from high school, college and university. Before data collection proper permission was taken from the administration of all schools, colleges and Sargodha University. Permission letter was provided by the Psychology Department, University of Sargodha. All the participants were approached personally, some in the form of groups and were briefed about the research purpose. Some students were taken from school and colleges after taking permission from administration. Participants were given a briefing about the nature of the study. They were told that they have the right to withdraw from the research anytime. All the participants were assured that data collection will be just used for research purposes. They were clarified about the maintenance of their confidence. Afterwards, informed consent was taken from all the participants and a testing booklet consisting of demographic form, Adult Attachment Scale, Fear of Intimacy Scale, and Social Anxiety Scale was handed over to the participants. Detailed instructions were given in order to fill out each questionnaire in the testing booklet. The questionnaire took about 25-30 minutes to complete. All the participants were thanked for their precious time and full cooperation.

A total of five hundred participants were approached, however the response rate was 420. Rest questionnaires were either incomplete or not filled properly. Thus, the percentage of response rate was 84%.

### Proposed Statistical Analysis

Different statistical techniques were implemented on the data using SPSS. Correlation analysis, t-test, Anova and regression analysis was performed in the current study.

### Results

Table 1. Sociodemographic Variables of the Study

Characteristics	N	%
Age Groups		
Early adolescents	140	33.3
Middle adolescents	140	33.3
Late adolescents	140	33.3
Gender		
Boys	210	50
Girls	210	50
Family system		
Nuclear	243	57.9
Joint	177	42.1
Education		
Matriculation	140	33.3
Intermediate	140	33.3
Bachelors	140	33.3
Institute		
School	140	33.3
College	140	33.3
University	140	33.3

Table 1 reveals adolescents belonging to different age groups were the same in number ( $n = 140$ , 33.3%). Both boys and girls were the same in number ( $n = 140$ , 33.3%). Majority of adolescents belonged to the nuclear family system ( $n = 243$ , 57.9%) compared to the joint family system ( $n = 177$ , 42.1%).

Table 2 postulates psychometric properties of study instruments used in the present study. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for adult attachment scale was .92 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated that internal consistency is high. The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for depend subscale was .76 which indicated satisfactory internal consistency. The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for close subscale was .81 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated that internal consistency is high. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for anxiety subscale was .76 which indicated internal consistency is satisfactory. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for fear of intimacy scale was .94 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated that internal consistency is high. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for social anxiety scale was .92 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated that internal consistency is high. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for fear of social interaction subscale was .81 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated internal consistency is high. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for fear of performance subscale was .82 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated internal consistency is high. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for social anxiety fear subscale was .89 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated high internal consistency. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for avoidance of social interaction subscale was .73 which indicated satisfactory internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha value for avoidance of performance subscale was .72 which indicated satisfactory internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha value for social anxiety avoidance subscale was .83 ( $> .80$ ) which indicated internal consistency is high.



Table 2. Psychometric Properties for Scales

Scales	Subscale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's $\alpha$
AAS	CLO	25.65	3.41	10-30	.81
	DEP	25.98	3.04	15-30	.76
	ANX	26.12	2.83	13-31	.76
	Total	77.75	8.86	50-90	.92
FOIS	Total	70.02	19.14	39-140	.94
LSAS	FOSI	15.13	3.67	11-28	.81
	FOP	17.83	4.04	12-35	.82
	SAFT	32.95	7.30	23-61	.89
	AOSI	14.27	2.69	11-25	.73
	AOP	17.33	3.03	13-27	.72
	SAAT	31.60	5.22	24-49	.83
	Total	64.56	11.57	47-103	.92

Note. AAS=Adult Attachment Scale, CLO= Close, DEP= Depend, ANX= Anxiety, FOIS=Fear of Intimacy Scale, LSAS= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, FOSI= Fear of Social Interaction, FOP= Fear of Performance, FOSA= Fear of Social Anxiety, AOSI= Avoidance of Social Interaction, AOP= Avoidance of Performance, AOSA= Avoidance of Social Anxiety.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 AAS	420	77.75	8.86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 DEP	420	25.98	3.04	.96**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 CLO	420	25.65	3.41	.96**	.88**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4 ANX	420	26.12	2.84	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 FOIS	420	70.02	19.14	.94**	.87**	.84**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6 LSAS	420	64.56	11.57	.74**	.72**	.74**	.64**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7 FOSI	420	15.13	3.67	.51**	.49**	.51**	.44**	.59**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8 FOPS	420	17.82	4.04	.58**	.57**	.59**	.50**	.68**	.89**	-	-	-	-	-	-
9 SAF	420	32.96	7.30	.59**	.57**	.60**	.50**	.63**	.90**	.79**	-	-	-	-	-
10 AOSI	420	14.27	2.69	.62**	.60**	.63**	.53**	.69**	.95**	.94**	.95**	-	-	-	-
11 AOPS	420	17.33	3.03	.22**	.20**	.21**	.20**	.27**	.78**	.65**	.48**	.59**	-	-	-
12 SAA	420	31.60	5.22	.26**	.25**	.26**	.22**	.34**	.85**	.54**	.74**	.70**	.66**	-	-
				.26**	.25**	.26**	.23**	.34**	.90**	.65**	.67**	.70**	.90**	.92**	-

Note. AAS=Adult Attachment Scale; CLO=Close; DEP=Depend; ANX=Anxiety; FOIS=Fear OF Intimacy Scale; LSAS= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale; FOSI=Fear of Social Interaction; FOPS= Fear of Performance Situation; SAF= Social Anxiety Fear; AOSI= Avoidance of Social Interaction; AOPS; Avoidance of Performance Situation; SAA=Social Anxiety Avoidance.

\*\* $p < .01$

Table 3 revealed that adult attachment has significant negative correlation with fear of intimacy ( $r = -.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ), social anxiety ( $r = -.51$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and it's all subscales i.e., social interaction fear ( $r = -.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ), performance situation fear ( $r = -.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ), social anxiety fear ( $r = -.62$ ,  $p < .01$ ), social interaction avoidance ( $r = -.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), performance avoidance ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ), social anxiety avoidance ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

< .01). Whereas, it is significantly positively correlated to its subscales i.e., close ( $r = .96, p < .01$ ), depend ( $r = .96, p < .01$ ) while negatively correlated with anxiety ( $r = -.94, p < .01$ ). Fear of intimacy has significant positive correlations with social anxiety ( $r = .59, p < .01$ ) and it's all subscales i.e., social interaction fear ( $r = .68, p < .01$ ), performance fear ( $r = .63, p < .01$ ), social anxiety fear ( $r = .69, p < .01$ ), social interaction avoidance ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ), performance avoidance ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ), social anxiety avoidance ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ). While it is negatively correlated to adult attachment ( $r = -.74, p < .01$ ) and its subscales i.e., close ( $r = -.74, p < .01$ ), depend ( $r = -.72, p < .01$ ) while positively correlated to anxiety ( $r = .64, p < .01$ ). Social anxiety is significantly positively correlated with fear of intimacy ( $r = .59, p < .01$ ). Whereas, it is significantly positively correlated to all its subscales i.e., social interaction fear ( $r = .89, p < .01$ ), performance fear ( $r = .90, p < .01$ ), social anxiety fear ( $r = .95, p < .01$ ), social interaction avoidance ( $r = .78, p < .01$ ), performance avoidance ( $r = .85, p < .01$ ), social anxiety avoidance ( $r = .90, p < .01$ ). Moreover, social anxiety is significantly negatively correlated to adult attachment ( $r = -.51, p < .01$ ) and its subscales i.e., close ( $r = -.51, p < .01$ ), depend ( $r = -.49, p < .01$ ) while positively correlated with anxiety ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ).

Table 4. Mean Comparison of boys and girls on Adult Attachment, Fear of Intimacy and Social Anxiety

Variables	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i> (418)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
AAS	75.30	10.75	80.20	5.45	5.89	.001	.57
FOIS	77.15	22.77	62.88	10.64	7.93	.001	.79
LSAS	67.19	12.39	61.94	10.04	4.77	.001	.47

Note. AAS=Adult Attachment Scale; FOIS=Fear OF Intimacy Scale; LSAS= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale.

Table 4 revealed significant mean differences on adult attachment with  $t(418) = 5.89, p < .001$ . Findings showed that girls exhibited higher scores on adult attachment ( $M = 80.20, SD = 5.45$ ) compared to boys ( $M = 75.30, SD = 10.75$ ). The value of Cohen's *d* was 0.57 ( $< .80$ ) which indicated large effect size. Findings revealed significant mean differences on fear of intimacy with  $t(418) = 7.93, p < .001$ . It showed that boys exhibited higher scores on fear of intimacy ( $M = 77.15, SD = 22.77$ ) compared to girls ( $M = 62.88, SD = 10.64$ ). The value of Cohen's *d* was 0.79 ( $< .80$ ) which indicated large effect size. Findings revealed significant mean differences on social anxiety with  $t(418) = 4.77, p < .001$ . It showed that boys exhibited higher scores on social anxiety ( $M = 67.19, SD = 12.39$ ) compared to girls ( $M = 61.94, SD = 10.04$ ). The value of Cohen's *d* was 0.47 ( $< .50$ ) which indicated medium effect size.

Table 5. Mean, Standard Deviation and One-Way Analysis for Early, Middle and Late Adolescents on Study Variables

Variables	Early adolescents		Middle adolescents		Late adolescents		<i>F</i> (2,417)	$\eta^2$	Post-Hoc
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
AAS	80.35	5.35	81.60	5.78	71.31	10.53	76.59***	.27	2>1>3
FOIS	66.25	9.74	61.07	9.78	82.73	25.61	63.48***	.23	3>1>2
LSAS	63.64	9.36	59.51	10.21	70.54	12.20	38.21***	.15	3>1>2

Note. AAS=Adult Attachment Scale; FOIS=Fear OF Intimacy Scale; LSAS= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale.

\*\*\* $P < .001$ .

Table 5 shows mean, standard deviation and *F* -values for early, middle and late adolescents on all study variables including adult attachment, fear of intimacy and social anxiety. Results indicated significant mean differences on adult attachment with  $\{F(2,417) = 76.59, p < .001\}$ , fear of intimacy with  $\{F(2,417) = 63.48, p < .001\}$  and on social anxiety with  $\{F(2,417) = 38.21, p < .001\}$ . Findings revealed that middle

adolescents exhibited higher level of adult attachment as compared to early and late adolescents. The value of  $\eta^2$  was .27 ( $< .50$ ) which indicated small effect size. The Post-Hoc Comparisons indicated significant between group mean differences of each group with other two groups. Results indicated that late adolescents exhibited higher level of fear of intimacy as compared to early and middle adolescents. The value of  $\eta^2$  was .23 ( $< .50$ ) which indicated small effect size. The Post-Hoc Comparisons indicated significant between group mean differences of each group with other two groups. Results further indicated that late adolescents exhibited higher level of social anxiety as compared to early and middle adolescents. The value of  $\eta^2$  was .15 ( $< .50$ ) which indicated small effect size. The Post-Hoc Comparisons indicated significant between group mean differences of each group with other two groups.

Table 6. Moderation of social anxiety between adult attachment and fear of intimacy

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	B	SE	B	$\beta$	SE
Constant	70.0***		.59	68.86***		.64
Adult attachment	-11.36***	-.60***	.68	-10.13***	-.53***	.73
Social anxiety	5.53***	.29***	.68	5.39***	.28***	.67
Adult attachment x Social anxiety				-2.30***	-.14***	.56
$R^2$		.61			.63	
$\Delta R^2$					.02	

Note.  $N=420$   
\*\*\* $p<.001$ .

Table 6 shows the moderation of social anxiety between adult attachment and fear of intimacy. In Model 1, the  $R^2$  value of .61 revealed that the predictors explained 61% variance in the outcome with  $F(2, 417) = 325.72$ ,  $p < .001$ . The findings revealed that adult attachment ( $\beta = -.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and social anxiety negatively predicted fear of intimacy ( $\beta = .29$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In Model 2, the  $R^2$  value of .63 revealed that the predictors explained 63% variance in the outcome with  $F(3, 416) = 231.037$ ,  $p < .001$ . The findings revealed that adult attachment ( $\beta = -.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ), social anxiety ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and adult attachment x social anxiety negatively predicted fear of intimacy ( $\beta = -.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The  $\Delta R^2$  value of .02 revealed 2% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with  $\Delta F(1, 416) = 16.87$ ,  $p < .001$ . Findings show that social anxiety moderated the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy.

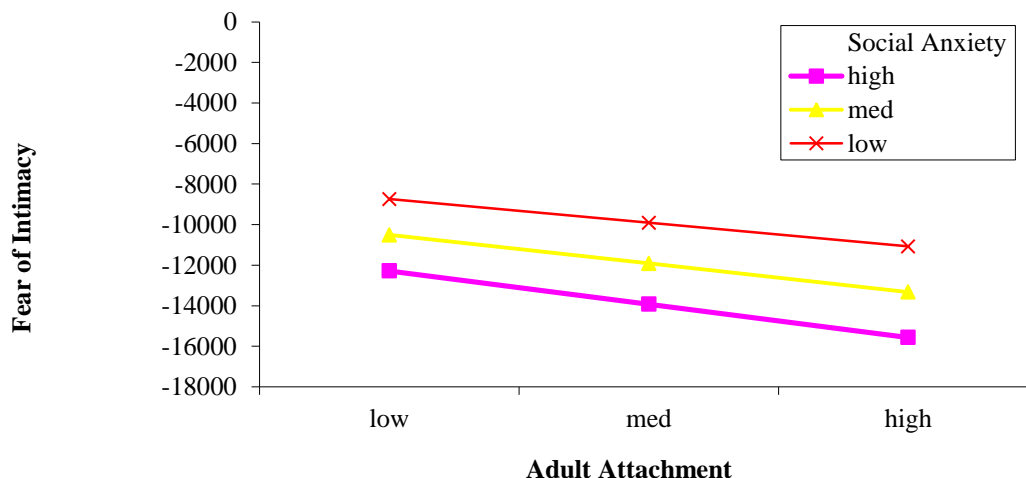


Figure 3. Mod-Graph with moderating effect of social anxiety between adult attachment and social anxiety.

**Moderator**

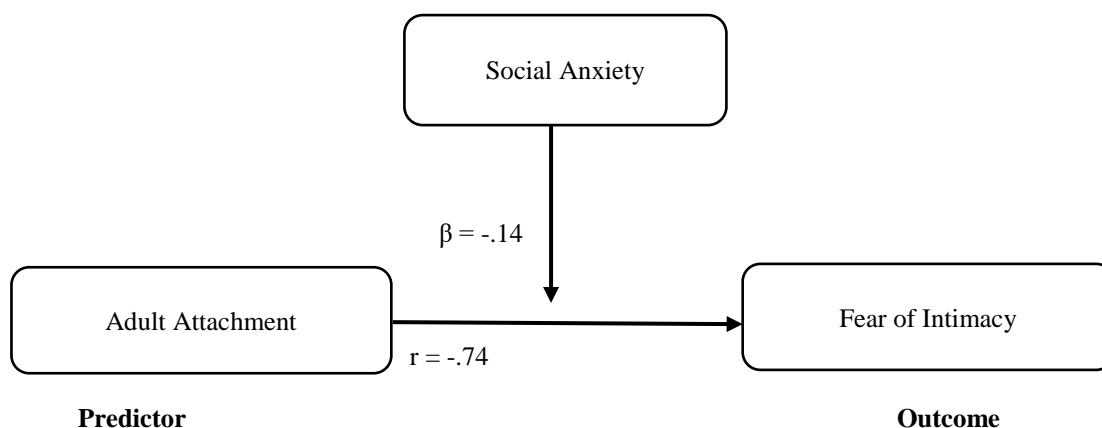


Figure 4. Outcome model of the results

Figure 4 depicts the relationships between the variables that have been revealed through the research study. It depicts that adult attachment ( $F = 76.59$ ) has significant negative correlation with fear of intimacy ( $F = 63.48$ ). While social anxiety ( $\beta = -.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ) negatively moderated the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy.

## Discussion

The intention of the current proposal was to provide a deeper comprehension of the relationship between the adult attachment and fear of intimacy among adolescents belonging to different age groups. It also aimed to explore the moderating role of social anxiety in the relationship of adult attachment and fear of intimacy. Attachment formation is viewed as a developmental procedure that proceeds a long way beyond the infancy and early adolescence (Allen et al., 2007). During adolescence, portrayals of the attachment relationships might be persistently changed as people develop new intimate relationships (Simpson et al., 2007). Furthermore, a study reported that exploring the past parent- child dyad, early relationship associations patterns depending on different attachment styles, with parents have likewise been seen as important for future associations with the peer (Sroufe, 2005), and in addition later sentimental partners (Doyle et al., 2009).

Initially, for assessing the relationship among variables, correlational analysis was carried out. First hypothesis postulated that adult attachment is negatively correlated to fear of intimacy. Findings of the current study supported the first hypothesis. There was a significant negative relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy. Subscales close and depend also showed a significant negative correlation with fear of intimacy while anxiety subscale was significantly positively related to fear of intimacy.

Results are in accordance with the past research literature. One study has demonstrated a connection amongst attachment and intimate relationships (Neal & Frick-Horbury, 2001). Another study explores that adolescents owning secure attachment patterns don't have intimacy fear because they seemed to be deserving care for themselves. They had closed attachments with others as well as depend on others which reduces the level of anxiety in them, and also see others as responsive and trustworthy. These people encounter large amounts of intimacy, without falling individual self- governance, inside their emotional and sentimental relationships and will approach their sentimental or emotional partners for enthusiastic or instrumental help. Secured adolescents normally show intimated self-disclosure and are sympathetic when their romantic partners expose themselves in front of their partners (Collins & Feeney, 2004).

The second hypothesis was that social anxiety would significantly moderate the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy. Findings of the current study supported the second hypothesis. The findings revealed that adult attachment and social anxiety negatively predicted fear of intimacy (see table 6). Findings show that social anxiety moderated the relationship between adult attachment and fear of intimacy. Research shows that these early attachments assume an essential part in forming the expectations and desires a child builds concerning the responsiveness and trustworthiness of significant other individuals (Fraley, 2002). These expectations build up an internal working model for how the individual will collaborate with others and have deciding impacts on attachments and working all through life (Lee & Hankin, 2009). Early attachments depicting how well an individual will maintain intimate relationships later on can be influenced by factors like social anxiety.

The third hypothesis predicted that there was a significant gender difference among all the study variables. The result findings were in accordance with the hypothesis (See Table 4). Results indicate that females scored high on adult attachment in contrast with male participants. Gender differences in attachment have been accounted for in a few examines (Toth et. al., 2013), while others have discovered gender differences to be irrelevant to attachment (Macfie et. al., 1999). With one remarkable special case (Pierrehumbert et. al., 2009), inquire about discovering gender differences have used little (Toth et. al., 2013) or high hazard sample (Carlson et al., 1989). The gender differences found in the present investigation were very articulated, paying little mind to how attachment was estimated, i.e., considering the substance versus the structure of the attachment behavior and story. Young men were twice as regularly sorted as avoidant (anxious), contrasted with young ladies.

The fourth hypothesis postulated that there would be significant age differences among adolescents with respect to all study variables. Findings of the current study supported the sixth hypothesis. Findings revealed that middle adolescents exhibited higher levels of adult attachment as compared to early and late adolescents while late adolescents exhibited higher levels of fear of intimacy as compared to early and middle adolescents. Findings further indicated that that late adolescents exhibited higher levels of social anxiety as compared to early and middle adolescents.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The first restriction would respect the generalizability of the investigation. Information was gathered just from students of the school, college and the University of Sargodha because of the time imperatives and constrained assets. In this manner, the outcomes have constrained generalizability. Data ought to likewise be gathered from different populations to upgrade the generalizability of the research.

This research would not provide deep information like qualitative research because it was quantitative research. So, the data assembled was not enhanced and broad. For future researchers, suggested that qualitative data must also be gathered in addition to quantitative data.

Convenient sampling technique was used in the present study. It is proposed that by using random sampling technique data must be gathered from participants. The sampling technique used in this study was convenient purposive sampling. In this way, it can emerge questions for the representativeness of the sample. Future researchers won't just depend on survey research. Or maybe, it is suggested that they should utilize a multi-technique approach.

Social desirability can be a potential threat to the internal validity of the research because all the scales were self-reported measures.

It was a survey research, so it doesn't guarantee the causality of dependent variables i.e., regardless of whether the members were happy with their lives due to their level of religiosity or there are some different elements which make one fulfilled. So, we can't depend on correlational information.



## Implications

Clinical, social and educational psychologists will use the findings. These findings will also help many researchers to work on the topic of attachment patterns, dread of closeness and social anxiety. The outcomes of the present study will be also productive for well-being analysts, instructors and instructive organizations. This will open new pathways of learning and mindfulness which would be productive for the health psychologists for managing individuals and helping the individuals who confront issues of fear of intimacy, social anxiety and furthermore managing attachment anxiety patterns.

The research can be utilized for tackling the issue of expanding nervousness while communicating with family, associates and sentimental partners and they can likewise be useful for spreading mindfulness in regards to significance of secure attachment designs. They can be useful in spreading mindfulness so that, Attachment instruction projects and mediations to lessen intimacy fear and social anxiety conduct in Pakistani populace are created and presented. Besides, the discoveries of the investigation may be utilized for beginning open data battles that underscore on decreasing social anxiety and expanding relationships.

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