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Attachment Styles and Interpersonal Problems in University Students Living in Hostels: Mediating Role of Emotional Reactivity and Cutoff

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Abstract: The current study investigated the mediation effect of emotional reactivity and cutoff between attachment styles and interpersonal problems. The gender differences were also determined. A sample of (N = 200) students living in hostels of two universities of Lahore was used. There were (N = 100) female in the sample. The average age of the participants was 22.3 (SD = 1.46). The results of the study showed a significant relationship between close attachment style, emotional reactivity and cut-off, and with subscales of interpersonal problems like too much aggressive, too much caring, too much dependent, socially inhibited, hard to be involved, and hard to be supportive. Similarly, anxious and dependent attachment style showed significant relationship with emotional reactivity and cut-off and with subscales of interpersonal problems of hard to be sociable, hard to be assertive, hard to be supportive, hard to be involved, too aggressive, much caring, too open and too much dependent. The mediation analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) revealed that emotional reactivity and cut-off showed partially significant mediation between attachment styles and interpersonal problems. Women showed more interpersonal problems as too open and too much caring compared to men living in hostels. The findings of the study have significant implications in the social structure of relationships in hostels, particularly in South Asian cultural context.

Keywords: Attachment style, emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, interpersonal problem.

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Introduction

Hostel is a platform where students get a vision for socialization (Mimrot, 2012). When students live in a hostel, they interact with other students with different characteristics even with same age range and try to adjust with them (Thakkar et al., 2016). Students while living far from their families for particular time period, get some long-lasting experiences during their stay at hostels. It teaches the students to live autonomously, and how to co-operate or deal with the other students and roommates (Khozaei et al., 2010). Students also face numerous problems including monetary issues, adjustment problems, self-helplessness, distress, modification in eating habits, and many other problems due to living in hostels (Iftikhar & Ajmal, 2015). More significantly, interpersonal problems are important to focus because of their eminent impact on the socialization of students. The interpersonal problems represent the attachment styles that students have to socialize with other students. This study aimed to investigate the effect of attachment styles on the interpersonal problems. Furthermore, we intended to test the mediating role emotional regulation and cut-off in the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal problems.

The attachment styles of an individual are the mental representations of oneself and others, while interpersonal problems are the behavioral outcomes of those attachment styles (Williams & Elwood, 2010). Attachment security and insecurity of an individual is associated with the ability of an individual to socialize with others and their coping for affective or other stressful problems (Kobak & Sceery, 1988). In this case, if previously students were having consistent emotional availability by parents and peers, they possess attachment security and coping against interpersonal problems. They show more compassion, altruistic behaviour and emotional stability with other students in hostel. On the other hand, if students previously were not having emotional availability, they are likely to develop attachment insecurity and eventually be less capable to cope with interpersonal problems (Ishaq et al., 2018; Wei et al., 2005). These attachment styles have an impact on students' relationships with friends, family and romantic partner as well (Kobak & Sceery, 1988).

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Bowlby (1980) and Ainsworth (1978) stated that attachments may be divided into four types: propinquity seeking, isolation protest, safe haven, and secure base, which are detectable in the attitude of an attached person in a certain context. Attachment has a direct link with both type and intensity of interpersonal conflicts. The interpersonal styles that show people's thinking about themselves that either they need love or more affection or about others that how much they are dependable and responsive can be taken as attachment styles. As by definition attachment styles are the cognitive representations of interpersonal relationships through whole life in which individual compared his or her relations with others and see how others reacts to their public relations and their close interactions with other individuals (Collins & Read, 1999).

This research might provide a significant contribution in strengthening the ground of attachment theory as the attachment theory infers that the children develop to capability to regulate their emotions through secure attachment style, which usually is the result of supportive and sensitive parenting (Bowlby, 1980). In the current study, we have tried to provide the empirical support to attachment theory's thesis through hypothesizing the relationship between attachment styles, emotional regulation techniques (i.e., emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff), and interpersonal problems. This study is novel in its own way which investigates the indirect effects of attachment styles on interpersonal problems through emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff. Through this study, we would be able to understand the emotional mechanism between the association of attachment styles and interpersonal problems.

Literature Review

According to Davila et al. (1997), alteration in attachment styles causes distress among individual for example insecure attachment had been found to be linked with depression. Hostel student' educational performance gets effected by the satisfaction level of the students with their hostel life. If they are highly satisfied, they will perform well and otherwise vice versa because it plays important role in the quality of life of the students. Persons et al. (1993) suggested that dependent attachment styles were found to be linked with symptoms of anxiety. Later, the actual mental model of attachment of an individual endured by his/her interpersonal experiences that are being faced by him/her due to relationship with others (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Likewise, interpersonal problems may also be caused by the unbending use of poorly adjusted affect regulation tactics, like over reactive use of emotions or suppression of emotions, also caused negative mood and interpersonal problems (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). Hayden et al. (2017) reviewed the literature on the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal problems and found that people with anxious and avoidant attachment styles tend to have more interpersonal problems. Similar conclusions have been devised by Lavy (2017) that the students with insecure attachment styles tend to have lesser interpersonal skills (Bonache et al., 2019).

Interpersonal problems are the feature difficulties that an individual faces relating to others and are sources of instinctive distress (Homey, 1950; Horowitz et al., 1994). Interpersonal problems may indicate the dysfunctional interpersonal mechanism that are used to govern the agonizing emotions that lead the acceleration of early dysfunctional architecture (Ali et al., 2021; Young et al., 2003). An interpersonal problem is the most important type of real-life problem in which the hindrance is a battle between two or more people building a relationship in the demands and expectations arises among them (Jacobson & Margolin, 1979; Naseer, Mubeen & Farooq, 2021). According to Schneider (2014), interpersonal problems including charm disarrangement can be categorized in four major types: common anxiety/shyness (i.e., feeling inferior, shy, and anxious in social gatherings), interpersonal sensitivity (i.e., heightened sensitivity to rejection), interpersonal aggression (i.e., Exploitation), and social evasion (i.e., having no interest in the relationships of others).

Emotional reactivity denotes both to intensity of emotion response and the threshold of emotion response towards outstanding stimuli and it has also been described to be occurred during acute mood episodes (Etain et al., 2008). Dykas and Cassidy (2011) explained that people process social information according to their experiences about attachment with others i.e., in secure attachment individuals process the information in a positively biased way, whereas in insecure attachment individuals process it in a negatively biased style. Emotional reactivity is a type of maladaptive affective regulation in which individuals exaggerate their negative feelings in order to bring about support from others and to guarantee their accessibility (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002).

Likewise emotional reactivity, emotional cut-off can be defined as a kind of maladaptive affective regulation which is a switch off strategy in which individuals suppress their negative feelings and enhance their distance from threatening stimuli or from other people to avoid anxiety caused by their availability (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). The process through which individual distant themselves from others to avoid the anxiety causing circumstances is called emotional cut off (Gilbert, 2016). Similarly emotional cutoff can also be defined as refusing an unsolvable issue regarding attachment with parents, living independently and distancing themselves psychically or psychologically from parents. The emotional distancing of an individual from another individual is considered as emotional cut off. When emotional cut off exists it causes increase in anxiety level of an individual like rise in intensity level of mental disturbance, workplace issue, family and societal issue regarding different relationships (Bonache et al., 2019; Bowen, 1978).

After reviewing the related literature on this association between attachment style and interpersonal problems, a couple of weaknesses and knowledge gap can be observed. Firstly, no study has been found by the researcher which has tested the mediating effect of emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff in the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal problems. Secondly, previous studies do not explain whether and how the emotional mechanisms play their role in interpersonal problems. In order to fill this knowledge gap in the literature, this study aimed to test the mediational role of emotional reactivity and cutoff between attachment styles and interpersonal problems in hostel students. Moreover, we intended to test the gender differences across attachment styles, emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and interpersonal problems in hostel students.

Hypotheses

- There would be a positive relationship between anxious attachment styles, dependent attachment style, affect regulation (emotional reactivity and cutoff) and interpersonal problems.
- There would be a negative relationship between close attachment style and affect regulation (emotional reactivity and cutoff) and interpersonal problems.
- The emotional reactivity and cut off would mediate the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal problems.
- Female students would likely to have more interpersonal problems as compared to male students.

Methodology

Research Design

Correlational research design was used to conduct this study. A survey method was used to collect the data and analyze it through different statistical analyses with respect to the study hypotheses.

Sample

An estimated Sample through G-power calculator was ($N = 178$) postgraduate students but for present study data was collected from a sample of 200 postgraduate students ($n= 100$ men) and ($n=100$ women) living in hostels of two universities of Lahore-Pakistan, University of the Punjab ($n=140$) and University of Education ($n=60$). The average age of the participants was 22.3 ($SD = 1.46$).

Assessment Tools

Adult Attachment Scale Revised (AASR): The AASR (Collins, 1996) is a scale used to measure the close relationship between adults. The dimensions of attachment were maintained in their three original scales: Close, evaluating comfort with closeness and intimacy; depend, measuring reciprocal availability of others when needed; and anxious, evaluating the amount of worry about being left alone and unloved. There are a total of 18 items, six on each dimension and they are scored on a scale from 1 to 5 (1- not at all characteristics of me, 5- very characteristic of me). The reliability alpha value was .60, .70 and .73 for close, dependent and anxiety subscales of AASR respectively.

Differentiation of Self Inventory (DIS): DIS scale was developed by (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998) which is consisted of 43 items. The response pattern of the items is a 6-point likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 6 (very true of me). For current study, the items of two subscales were used: Emotional Reactivity and Emotional Cutoff. The reliability analysis shows the reliability of these two subscales as .74 and .73 respectively.

Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP-32): The IIP-32 developed by Barkham et al. (1996). This measure has 32 items and participants were asked to rate two types of items: interpersonal behaviors that are "hard for you to do" (e.g. "it is hard for me to be assertive with other people") and interpersonal behaviors that "you do too much" (e.g. "I open up too people to much"). Ratings of the degree to which each a problem is distressing are made on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The IIP-32 items measure provides a total score reflecting overall interpersonal distress and 8 sub-scale scores with each sub-scale representing a problematic interpersonal behavior: hard to be assertive, hard to be sociable, hard to be supportive, hard to be involved, too caring, too dependent, too aggressive, and too open. The reliability of subscales was ranging from .61 to 76.

Results

After data collection, data was analyzed in SPSS and AMOS. The results of intercorrelations among variables depicted that the close attachment style was significantly and negatively correlated with emotional reactivity, emotional cut off and all interpersonal problems, except too open. Dependent attachment style was significantly and positively correlated with emotional reactivity, hard to be assertive, too aggressive, too open, and too caring but non-significantly correlated with emotional cut off, hard to be involved, hard to supportive. Anxious attachment style was significantly and positively correlated with emotional reactivity, emotional cut off and all interpersonal problems, except hard to involved (Table 1).

Table 1. Psychometric Properties and Pearson Product Moment Correlation among Study Variables

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Close Attachment	-.25**	-.43**	-.19**	-.26**	-.38**	-.32**	-.25**	-.24**	-.25**	-.11	-.20**	-.28**
2.Dependent Attachment	1	.54**	.06	.27**	.12	.14*	.11	.05	.23**	.22**	.19**	.23**
3.Anxious Attachment		1	.17*	.32**	.28**	.25**	.14*	.12	.41**	.15*	.23**	.35**
4.Emotional Reactivity			1	.36**	.15*	.27**	.18*	.18*	.21**	.19**	.26**	.19**
5.Emotional Cut-off				1	.28**	.33**	.21*	.28**	.42**	.29**	.36**	.33**
6.Hard to be sociable					1	.59**	.50**	.47**	.42**	.16*	.35**	.33**
7.Hard to be Assertive						1	.57**	.50**	.34**	.21**	.34**	.39**
8.Hard to be Supportive							1	.40**	.34**	.23**	.23**	.37**
9.Hard to be Involved								1	.39**	.14*	.38**	.32**
10.Too Aggressive									1	.14*	.36**	.62**
11.Too Open										1	.30**	.23**
12.Too Caring											1	.35**
13.Too Dependent												1

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

Structured equation model (SEM) was employed through AMOS to examine the mediating role of emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff in the relationship between Attachment styles and interpersonal problems in hostel students.

Table 2. Fit Indices for Attachment Styles, Emotional Reactivity, Emotional Cutoff, and Interpersonal Problems (N = 200)

Model	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Initial model	471.68	32	14.74	.68	.39	-.48	.26
Model fit	10.08	6	1.68	.99	.99	.93	.05
$\Delta\chi^2$	461.60						

Note. All change in chi-square values are computed relative to $\chi^2 > .05$. GFI=Goodness of Fit Index, CFI= Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker Lewis Index, RMSEA= Root Mean Square Errors of Approximation, χ^2 = Chi-square.

The result of fit indices indicated for attachment styles, affect regulation and interpersonal problems shown in table. Absolute fit for model fit was $\chi^2 (32, 200) = 471.68, p > .05$. The fit indices were considered to provide an indication of good fit of the data with the tested model. The model fit was analysed in one key step. In this step, the indices of absolute and relative fit (GFI, CFI, TLI and RMSEA) were compared. Because the chi square test of absolute model fit is sensitive to sample size and number of parameters, investigators often turn to various descriptive fit statistics to assess the overall fit a model to the data. Hu and Bentler (1998) recommended χ^2/df in between one and three, RMSEA value .08 or lesser and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) .9 or higher are considered as good while $.9 \leq .8$ is considered permissible sometimes. Since the Root Means Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) for initial model were .26, whereas, the GFI, CFI, TLI values were .68, .39 and .48 respectively, while χ^2/df was 11.74. The model didn't fit well according to the descriptive measures of fit. So the model modification started as suggested by the modification indices. Modification indices suggested covariance between exogenous variables because of multicollinearity factor as they are similar in context as well. Moreover, the covariance in survey-based research can legitimately draw (Kenny, 2012; Tomas & Oliver, 1999). The criteria of modification indices for covariance should be at least 4.0 (Arbuckle, 2012). So, only that covariance was drawn which chi square change was 4 or greater. Again, the indices of absolute and relative fit (CFI, TLI, NFI and RMSEA) were compared. The Root Means Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) for the model fit after drawing covariance was .05 whereas, the GFI, CFI and TLI values were .99, .99 and .93. These were accurate enough to the model to fit model as it can be seen from figure.

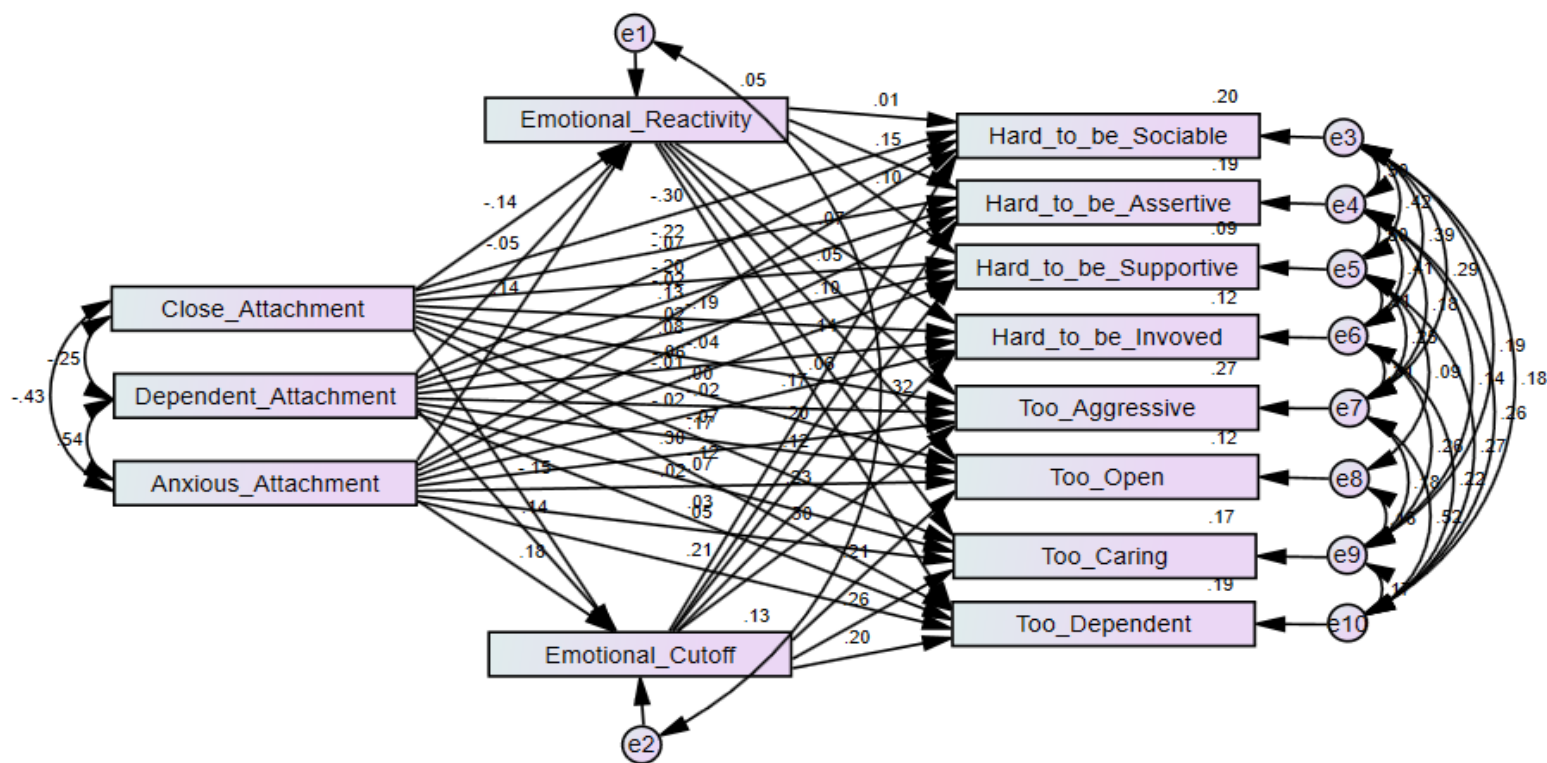


Figure 1. Empirical Results from Model Representing Standardized Estimates.

Table 3. Standardized Estimates of Direct and Indirect Path Ways

Paths	Direct Effect	Indirect Effects	
	β	β	CI 95%
Emotional Reactivity → Hard to be Social	.01		
Emotional Reactivity → Hard to be Assertive	.15*		
Emotional Reactivity → Hard to be Supportive	.10		
Emotional Reactivity → Hard to be Involved	.06		
Emotional Reactivity → Too Aggressive	.05		
Emotional Reactivity → Too Open	.10		
Emotional Reactivity → Too Caring	.14		
Emotional Reactivity → Too Dependent	.06		
Emotional Cutoff → Hard to be Social	.17		
Emotional Cutoff → Hard to be Assertive	.20*		
Emotional Cutoff → Hard to be Supportive	.12		
Emotional Cutoff → Hard to be Involved	.23*		
Emotional Cutoff → Too Aggressive	.30*		
Emotional Cutoff → Too Open	.21*		
Emotional Cutoff → Too Caring	.26**		
Emotional Cutoff → Too Dependent	.20*		
Close Attachment → Emotional Reactivity	-.15*		
Close Attachment → Emotional Cutoff	-.15*		
Close Attachment → Hard to be Social	-.30*	-.03	-.07, .01
Close Attachment → Hard to be Assertive	-.22*	-.05*	-.10, -.01
Close Attachment → Hard to be Supportive	-.20*	-.03	-.07, -.01
Close Attachment → Hard to be Involved	-.20*	-.04*	-.09, -.01
Close Attachment → Too Aggressive	-.04	-.05*	-.10, -.01
Close Attachment → Too Open	.01	-.05*	-.09, -.01
Close Attachment → Too Caring	-.07	-.06*	-.11, -.02
Close Attachment → Too Dependent	-.12	-.04*	-.09, -.01
Anxious Attachment → Emotional Reactivity	.14		
Anxious Attachment → Emotional Cutoff	.18		
Anxious Attachment → Hard to be Social	.13	.03	.01, .08
Anxious Attachment → Hard to be Assertive	.08	.06	.02, .11
Anxious Attachment → Hard to be Supportive	-.01	.04	-.01, .08
Anxious Attachment → Hard to be Involved	-.02	.05	.01, .11
Anxious Attachment → Too Aggressive	.30**	.06*	.01, .12
Anxious Attachment → Too Open	-.02	.05	.01, .11
Anxious Attachment → Too Caring	.06	.07	.01, .13
Anxious Attachment → Too Dependent	.21*	.05	.01, .10
Dependent Attachment → Emotional Reactivity	-.50		
Dependent Attachment → Emotional Cutoff	.14*		
Dependent Attachment → Hard to be Social	-.07	.02	.01, .07
Dependent Attachment → Hard to be Assertive	-.02	.02*	-.02, .07
Dependent Attachment → Hard to be Supportive	.02	.01	-.02, .04
Dependent Attachment → Hard to be Involved	-.06	.03	-.01, .08
Dependent Attachment → Too Aggressive	-.02	.04	.01, .10
Dependent Attachment → Too Open	.17	.02	-.01, .07
Dependent Attachment → Too Caring	.07	.03*	-.01, .09
Dependent Attachment → Too Dependent	.03	.02*	-.01, .07

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3 revealed the results of direct effects of attachment styles, affect regulation on interpersonal problems in hostel students. Table also showed the indirect effects of these variables through affect regulation (emotional reactivity and cutoff) on interpersonal problems. Results revealed that significant direct predictor of emotional reactivity was only hard to be assertive as an interpersonal problem. And for emotional cutoff the direct predictors as subscales of interpersonal problems were hard to be assertive, hard to be involved, too aggressive, too open, too caring and too dependent. It means there was a direct relationship exist between mediators and dependent variables. Similarly, the negative direct prediction of close attachment style on emotional reactivity and cutoff was also revealed through the table. The dependent and anxious attachment styles also directly predict the emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff respectively. Table also revealed that attachment styles also showed direct effect on interpersonal problems as close

attachment style negatively showing direct effect on hard to be social, hard to be assertive, hard to be supportive, hard to be involved; anxious attachment positively predicting too aggressive and too open interpersonal problems.

Significant indirect predictors of attachment styles on interpersonal problems due to mediators' emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff were also determined. The close attachment style has negatively significant indirect effect due to emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff on interpersonal problems i.e., hard to be assertive, hard to be supportive, hard to be involved, too aggressive, too open, too caring and too dependent. Further, anxious attachment style showed significant positive prediction with interpersonal problem of too aggressive and dependent attachment style showed significant indirect effect on interpersonal problems of hard to be assertive, too caring and too dependent through emotional Cutoff. Table 4 depicted that gender differences were significant only across hard to be involved, too open and too caring. Female students were significantly high on hard to be involved, too open and too caring, as compared to male students.

Table 4. Independent Sample t-Test for Gender Differences across Interpersonal Problems in Hostel Students (N = 200)

Variables	Men (n=100)		Women (n=100)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Hard To Be Sociable	6.24	3.07	6.52	3.43	.61	.544	-1.18	.63	.08
Hard To Be Assertive	7.25	3.50	7.04	3.16	.45	.657	-.72	1.14	.06
Hard To Be Supportive	6.96	3.75	6.58	3.97	.69	.488	-.69	1.46	.09
Hard To Be Involved	7.21	3.72	8.39	3.47	2.32	.021	-2.18	-.17	.32
Too Aggressive	6.37	3.46	6.56	3.55	.38	.702	-1.17	.78	.05
Too Open	7.69	2.78	9.81	3.89	4.42	.001	-3.06	-1.17	.62
Too Caring	7.88	2.72	9.47	3.23	3.76	.001	-2.42	-.75	.53
Too Dependent	6.63	3.37	6.61	3.77	.04	.969	-.98	1.02	.01

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, CI = Confidence Interval, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of attachment styles on interpersonal problems through emotional regulation in students living in hostels. Results of the study depicted that close attachment style negatively predicts interpersonal problems, while dependent attachment style and anxious attachment style positively predicts interpersonal problems (i.e., hard to be social, hard to be supportive, hard to be assertive, hard to be involved, too aggressive, too open, too caring, too dependent). Mediational effects of emotional regulation constructs i.e., emotional reactivity and emotional cut-off were significant between attachment styles and number of interpersonal problems. The results presented the evidence that attachment styles of students have a significant influence on the interpersonal problems of students living in hostels.

All over the world, but particularly in Pakistan, hostels have great importance in the educational journey of the students. Hostel life expands the social circle of the hostilities, because hostel is a combination of multicultural social groups. The personality attributes linked with hostel students such as they considered being confident, punctual, social, realistic, compromising, responsible, and sharp in many domains of life. During hostel stay students learn to live with different types of individuals and hostel life also increases the student's level of patience. It prepares students to accept challenges in practical life. Individual differences are very common among the hostel roommates (Iftikhar & Ajmal, 2015).

Interpersonal problems are the sources of instinctive distress that an individual face while socializing with other people (Horowitz et al., 1994). These interpersonal problems may be caused by the unbending use of poorly adjusted affect regulation skills, like over reactive use of emotions or suppression of emotions, also caused negative mood and interpersonal problems (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). In the current study, it was found that emotional reactivity has significant positive relationship with interpersonal problem of too caring. Furthermore, emotional cut-off has significant positive relationship with interpersonal problem of hard to be assertive, hard to be involved, too aggressive, too open, too caring and too dependent. Results of model testing presented that emotional reactivity and cut-off predicted number of interpersonal problems. These results strengthen the assumption that poor emotional regulation has a significant role in causing interpersonal problems.

Living in a strange environment of hostel made the individuals vulnerable for having issue is regulating their emotions known as affect regulation. In this state, people show maladaptive affective regulation which is a hyperactive strategy in which individuals overreact to their negative feelings in order to elicit support from others and to guarantee their availability (Asif et al., 2022; Ishaq et al., 2017; Naseer, Mubeen & Farooq, 2021; Naseer, Mussarat & Malik, 2022). Having emotional reactivity combined with attachment style, individual acts according to their attachment style (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). This notion supported the study hypothesis, but the results did not show the correlation of both attachment styles with all subscales of interpersonal problems. It means with different attachment styles, students face some interpersonal problems with each other's during their hostel life. A study by Stepp et al. (2008) was

conducted to investigate the relationships among adult attachment styles and interpersonal problems. Results of the study clearly indicated that both anxious and avoidant attachment styles were connected with interpersonal problems among students. Erozkhan (2009) studied the effect of relationship styles on anxiety sensitivity. The results showed that the anxiety sensitivity had a negative relationship with close attachment style and a positive correlation with anxious and dependent attachment styles. Similarly, in the current study it was assumed that there is likely to be a negative association of close attachment style with emotional cut-off and interpersonal problem. The results of current study show that, close attachment style has highly significant negative relationship with emotional cut-off and interpersonal problem of hard to be social, hard to be assertive and too dependent. The results of the study are consistent with number of studies' results that the insecure attachment styles positively associate with interpersonal problems while the secure or close attachment styles negatively associate with these problems (Bonache et al., 2019; Hayden et al., 2017; Lee & Park, 2020).

In current study it was assumed that female students face more interpersonal issues than male students. Results of the research indicated there were significant gender differences in interpersonal problems. More specifically, female students showed more interpersonal problem of hard to be involved, too open, and too caring than male students. Similarly, a study by Al-Qaisy (2010), which was made on determining the impact of the gender, across hostel life of the new students and the degree of social, psychological and education changing and goal achievement. The results of this research reported that the students who come from far off cities, towns and villages do not adjust rapidly instead of it they take time because they do not feel comfortable in the university environment. Considering these environmental problems, in current situation of COVID-19 pandemic, students' risk perceptions, COVID-19 anxiety, and protective behaviors play an important role in their academic and daily life performance i.e., interpersonal problems (Asif et al., 2020; Idrees et al., 2022; Solbakken et al., 2021). The present study has brought some facts to light that the female students face difficulties in building the sound social, educational and changing in difference to the male students. The results of this study provide empirical support for the relational mechanisms of students living in hostels away from their home.

Conclusion

This study was designed to test the effect of attachment styles on the interpersonal problems. To understand the emotional mechanism of the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal problems, we hypothesized the mediating role of emotional regulation and cut-off in the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal problems. The results of the study revealed that anxious and dependent attachment styles cause more interpersonal problems as compared to close attachment style, and that emotional reactivity and cutoff explain this relationship as a mediator. This study results emphasize on the need that university hostels should provide counselling services for students to help them out to have better adjustment and to how to cope with interpersonal problems after coming in hostels.

Recommendations

Following the methodology of this study, multimethod approach can result more in-depth view of predicting factors of interpersonal problems (e.g., phenomenological approach). Future research could also investigate additional factors such as personality types and self-defeating strategies that may mediate the relationship between attachment styles and interpersonal problems. Future research should examine whether the individuals with different attachment styles deal with their negative mood and interpersonal problems in the same way across different ethnic groups.

Limitations

Following the design and implications of this study, there are a few limitations which need to be addressed. The current study recruited a small sample which leads toward the type I error and the problems of generalizability. Considering the lack of cultural aspect, tools for attachment styles and interpersonal problems were not validated which should be considered while researching on the interpersonal problems of Asian students.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Idrees: Conceptualization, design, data collection and analysis, writing. Malik: Design, editing/reviewing, supervision, final approval.

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