

The Impact of Attachment Styles on Helping Behavior in Adults

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ABSTRACT

Helping behavior is considered to be one of the characteristics of one's personality. Attachment styles play a vital role in development of personality. People differ greatly in helping behavior. This study investigates the possible effect of attachment styles on helping behavior. Total 115 participants were included in the study, out of which 56 were females and 59 were males. The study was conducted in Haripur and Peshawar. The participants have been selected by convenient sampling. Information was taken through demographic information sheet, Helping Attitude Scale and Adult Attachment Scale. ANOVA and t-test were used for analyzing differences between three Adult Attachment Scale and gender difference in helping behavior. Results showed that different attachment style significantly affect the helping behavior. It was found that males and females had no significant differences in helping behavior and also found that helping behavior was not affected by age. This study revealed that individuals having secure attachment style had high helping attitude as compare to those having anxious attachment style. From the present study it was also found that individuals having avoidant attachment style have high scores on Helping Attitude Scale as compare to individuals having anxious attachment style and secure attachment style.

KEYWORDS: Helping Behavior, Secure Attachment Style, Avoidant Attachment Style and Anxious Attachment Style.

INTRODUCTION

As we are social being we tend to remain around others and want to build healthy and good relationships with the significant others as well as the strangers. It is debatable that why people engage in helping other? There are a number of reasons, e.g, we help others because of their attractiveness or because helping others is one of the characteristic of the helping person or the person helping is in the good mood so we can say that help can be facilitated by mood as well (Benson, Karabenick & Lerner, 1976, Eisenberg, Guthrie, Isen, 1999). Many theorists have the view that human beings are born as a blank slate. The day an individual is born, he starts to train and teach himself to be good and acceptable by society. So helping others is one of the key factor in the teaching of being good, so it is undecided whether we help person because he/she is in need or we help to attain the title of being good.

Above all, being Muslim it is the obligation to help people in difficult times. Helping others in need does not only help the person who is in need but also it gives a peace of mind and satisfaction to the person who helps others. Helping others or giving charity is also one of the Pillars of Islam. Helping others also gives a sense of good karma by reducing the pains of others.

Personality is greatly affected by environment as well as by people around us. The people around us act as a moderator in the formation of our bond with others. When adolescence and adults find themselves in threatening and stressful situation, they become vigilant for attachment figure. In case of unavailability of attachment figures, a state of stress would be created which make them more vigilant and active about significant others' care and concern; these activities are termed as hyperactivating strategies (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). These strategies include different attention seeking behavior; dependency, crying, clingy behavior (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2003, Shaver & Hazan, 1993).

These acts results in two types of outcomes; when they avail the attention of significant others they become conscious about the prevalence of the care and the attention of significant others and continuously remain in thinking of unavailability of care and protection and underestimates the strength and abilities of their own selves. This would result in self doubt and increase in anxiety and results in anxious attachment style. And when the significant others fail to satisfy the individuals in time of needs and difficulties, it would cause individual to be self reliance and less dependent on others, thus, it deactivates the quest for support and affiliations and they mostly hide their pains and problems and hardly share them with others. It is termed as avoidant attachment style (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, in press).

Attachment is not considered to be created first by mother or parents rather it could be created by the child primary caregiver. As the interest in attachment beyond early life experiences has been increased, the attachment is to be considered related to all significant relationships across the life span which includes friends, life partner, siblings etc (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Kobak and Cole, 1994; Kobak and Sceery, 1988).

These attachment styles are develop in early life and can alter from one attachment style to other by their interaction with others and life experience (e.g., Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh Rangarajoo, 1996; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001).

In one study conducted by Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, and Nitzberg (2005), it is found that individuals with avoidant attachment style were less involve in helping behavior and were more concerned with their own independence. They have low level of affiliation needs so they were insensitive of other sufferings while the anxious attachment style individuals reported high level of personal stress when asked for their help but because of their low level of self confidence compel them from helping others in need. In individual with secure attachment style, there is low level of personal distress and high level of concern for others and they were also involve in taking out a person in difficulty from that problematic situation. The individuals with anxious style, mostly remain surrender by their own worries and problems so cannot participate in helping others. Their need of belongingness pushes them to help others but the core reason behind helping in such individuals is mostly the fulfillment of their own need for affiliations.

In another study by Hans IJzerman (2007), the relationship between helping behavior in cold and warm physical environment along with mediating effect of attachment styles was studied. The study found that those individual who had secure attachment style showed greater caring and helping behavior in the experiment in which children have to denote some stickers to others. Results of this study showed that securely attached children gave more stickers to others as compared to insecurely attached children; avoidant and anxious attachment styles.

One survey that was conducted in three different countries Israel, Netherland, United States have revealed that secure attachment style adults were more likely to be volunteers in their communities by performing helping behavior with elders and denoting their blood to person in need. While avoidant individuals were not volunteers as secure individuals and in contrast the anxious individuals are volunteers as compare to avoidant individuals but the reason behind that was less generous as compare to secure peers (Gillath et al., 2005).

Many studies have been conducted which found that females show more helping behavior as compare to males. In one study it was found that women are more altruistic and show more concern and worry about others in need (Eagly ,1987). In another study it was found that women were more empathetic and give more emotional support while males scored less. The researcher argued that gender tend to be important aspect in helping behavior (MacGeorge ,2003).

According to Stuart and Celia.,(2015); helping behavior is high in childhood because of the contribution of parents and teachers in developing prosocial tendencies in their children. In adolescence, this tendency starts decreasing because of their psychological and biological and hormonal changes but with time it recovers. They become more independent and involve in more volunteer activities to make new relationships and their own identity. Adult hood is the time when an individual have achieved much of his goals of life and have more time specially in late adulthood. But many studies, like bystander effect shows that adults engage in prosocial behavior less as compare to childhood and adolescence. This study shows a link between helping behavior and age but it does not completely have given clear evidence of decrease in helping behavior in adulthood

Rationale

The present study was designed to find out the level of helping behavior in adults with the addition of their attachment style relationship. Attachment style has been covered largely on adolescences and children but now interest has been shifted to adulthood as well because of the increasing effects of attachment styles later in life. Many studies have been conducted on attachment style and helping behavior with different variables but, this study has focused the helping behavior and its link with three adult attachment styles. This study has also explored the difference in adults of different age group including younger adults, middle adults and older adults. Previously it has been mentioned that adults involve in less helping behavior as compare to children and adolescences. The area was mainly focused on childhood, adolescence and adults. The present study aimed to find out that whether there is any significant difference in helping behavior of younger middle and older adults. This study also studied the helping behavior of male and female.

Objectives

1. To study the effect of different attachment styles on helping behavior.
2. To compare the level of helping behavior among males and females.
3. To study the variation in helping behavior of adults with different age groups.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant difference in helping behavior due to different attachment styles in adults.
2. Helping behavior will be high in adults with secure attachment style as compared to anxious attachment styles
3. Helping behavior will be high in adults with secure attachment style as compared to avoidant attachment style.
4. Helping behavior will be high in adults whose score high on anxious attachment style as compared to avoidant attachment style.
5. Helping behavior in females will be high as compare to males.
6. There will be significant difference in helping behavior among different age groups of adults.

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of one hundred and fifteen participants (n=115) including fifty six (n=56) females and fifty nine(n=59) males. The sample consisted of adults which include young adults (18 to 35years), middle adults (35 to 55years) and older adults (55 and above). The sample of females consisted of twenty five (n1=25) younger adults, twenty five(n2=25) middle adults and six(n3=6) older adults. While males consisted of twenty five (n1= 25) younger adults, twenty five (n2=25) middle adults and nine (n3=9) older adults. Convenient sampling technique was used for data collection.

The population of this study consisted of educated individuals with minimum of intermediate level. Uneducated individuals were not included in the present study. The participants below age of eighteen years were not included in the sample because study was done on adults which have minimum age limit of eighteen years

Instruments

The information was collected through Demographic Information Sheet, Helping Attitude Scale and Adult Attachment Scale.

1. Demographic Information Sheet

The Demographic Information Sheet consisted of age, gender and education.

2. Helping Attitude Scale

Helping Attitude Scale which was developed by Nickell in 1988. It measures the beliefs, feelings and behavior related to helping. It has 20 items. It assesses attitude on 5 point likert scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree). The cronbach's alpha value of HAS is .869. The test re test reliability of helping attitude scale is .837.

3. Adult attachment styles

Adult Attachment Scale is developed by Collin in 1996, it was built on the earlier work of Hazen & Shaver (1987) and Levy & Davis (1988). It is a 18 items scale and it is comprised of 5 point likert scale ranging from 1(not at all) to 5(very characteristic of me).

It measures adult attachment styles namely "Secure", "Anxious" and "Avoidant", Collins & Read (1990) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .69 for Close, .75 for Depend, and .72 for Anxiety. Test-retest correlations, for a 2-month period was .68 for Close, .71 for Dependent, and .52 for Anxiety.

Secure Attachment style is equal to high score on close and dependent subscale and low score on anxiety subscale.

Anxious Attachment style is equal high score on Anxiety subscale and moderate score on Dependent and Close subscale.

Avoidant Attachment Style is equal to low score on Anxiety, Close and Dependent sub scale.

Procedure

The present study was conducted on 115 participants and who were selected by convenient sampling technique. The data was collected from Peshawar and Haripur. The data was collected from different universities and hospitals of Peshawar and Haripur. Some of the data was collected from Fatima Jinnah hostel and Khyber Teaching Hospital. The participants were first debriefed about the purpose of study and instructed them to ask any

confusion regarding questionnaire. The participants were given assurance about confidentiality of the information, they have provided. At the end, participants were thanked for their cooperation and participation in the study.

RESULT

Table 1: The analysis of variance of attachment styles and helping behavior

Sources	df	SS	MS	F	P
Between groups	2	707.138	353.569	3.614	.03
Within group	112	10956.028	97.822		
Total	114	11663.165			

Table no 1 gives the result of variance between secure anxious and avoidant attachment styles in helping behavior. The variance ($F(2,114) = 3.614$ $p < .05$) in three attachment styles on Helping Attitude Scale is significance, which shows that the level of helping behavior vary with attachment styles.

Table 2: Means, SD and t-value of males and females on helping behavior scale

Males N=59		Females N=56		95% CI					
M	SD	M	SD	t (df)	p	LL	UL	cohen'd	
77.75	10.046	77.0	10.264	.394	.695	3.007	4.498	.0738	

Table no.2 shows the mean, standard deviation and t- value of the male and female on helping behavior scale. The result shows non significance difference ($t = 0.695$ $p > .05$) between males and females on helping behavior. So this result shows that there is no significant difference between males and females on helping behavior.

Table 3: The analysis of variance of helping behaviour among different age groups of adults.

Sources	df	SS	MS	F	P
Between groups	34	3371.232	99.154	.957	.545
Within group	80	8291.933	103.649		
Total	114	11663.165			

Table 3 shows the variances of helping behavior among different age groups of adults. This result shows that the variance ($F(34,80) = 0.957$ $p > .05$) among different age groups of adults is not significant in helping behavior.

Table 4: The descriptive statistics of different attachment styles and their helping behavior mean scores

AAS	N	M
Secure	50	78.42
Anxious	32	73.47
Avoidant	33	79.61
total	114	77.38

Table 4 shows the scores of each attachment style in helping behavior scale. Table shows that the score on Helping Attitude Scale of secure attachment style is higher than anxious attachment style and table 4 also shows that avoidant attachment style scores are higher than anxious and secure attachment styles on Helping Attitude Scale

DISCUSSION

Helping others is one of the important aspects of everyday life and is affected and varied by a number of factors. In the present study it was hypothesized that the helping behavior is affected by attachment styles. This study focused the different age groups of adults. This study also found that helping behavior also varies on the basis of gender and age.

This present study signified the hypothesis that helping behavior varies with different attachment styles which was proved. Table No.1 shows significant different in helping behavior among different attachment styles. This present finding is in accordance to the study conducted in which adult attachment style has significance effect on helping others or to give support and help people in need. Attachment security is related to more openness to others, empathy, support and tolerance for other as compare to anxious and avoidant attachment styles (Mikulincer et al., 2005).

This study also hypothesized that adults with secure attachment style will score higher than anxious and avoidant attachment style on Helping Attitude Scale. Table No 4 showed that scores of helping behavior of individuals with secure attachment style have higher than individuals with anxious attachment style which supported the Hypothesis No.2. But the Table No.4 also showed that the scores of secure attachment style individuals were less than the individuals with avoidant attachment style which was contradicted the Hypothesis No.3. Table No.4 showed that scores of helping behavior of secure and anxious attachment styles were not higher than avoidant attachment styles so hypothesis No.4 was not proved. Secure attachment style individuals have higher helping behavior than anxious is in line with previous research finding which shows that Anxious Attachment Style individuals were linked with low level of care giving and trust (Feeney & Collins, 2001). This finding is also in line with the study conducted in which it was found that anxious attachment style individuals reported less participating efforts in group work (Rom and Mikulincer, 2003). But this study contradicts with the study conducted in which it was found that individuals with avoidant attachment style, reported less involvement in helping behavior as well as volunteer activities (Erez, Mikulincer, van Ijzendoorn, & Kroonenberg, 2008).

This study also hypothesized that helping behavior in females will be higher as compared to males is not supported by the result which was shown in Table No.2. This result showed no significant difference among gender in helping behavior. One study was conducted in which it was hypothesized that females were involve more in emotional helping while males were involved in helping where situation is challenging and heronic. But the result revealed that there are no gender differences in helping behavior (Abdullahi & Kumar, 2016). This study is in line with the present study that there is no gender difference in helping behavior.

Another study which is in lined with present study, showed non significant differences between males and females in helping behavior (Barnett, 2000).

This study also hypothesized that helping behavior has significance difference with age. This study stated that in early adulthood helping behavior would be high as compare to middle and older adults. But from the results, given in Table NO.3, it was found that helping behavior was not significantly different among different age groups of adults. The present study was found contradictory to one study in which it was found that participants with age of 20 to 29 (younger adults) involve in more helping behavior by giving directions to others as compared to older adult participants. One of the possible reasons of non significant result is that the study did not contain equal amount of sample size in each group. The participants in older adults are only 15 which were not equal to the other age groups

CONCLUSION

From the present study it was concluded that helping behavior is effected by a number of factors. One of the factors is attachment styles. This study found that people with different attachment styles have different attitude towards helping others. The secure attachment style individuals whose own needs are met tends to be more co operative and supportive towards others as compare to anxious attachment style individuals whose needs are not fulfilled, so they are more anxious about others and tends to be reluctant to help others because of fear of being rejected while avoidant attachment style individuals from previous studies tend to be reluctant to help others and are more self reluctant. The findings of present study revealed that the avoidant attachment style individual show more helping behavior.

Helping behavior is also affected by gender differences but from present study findings there is no significance difference between males and females in helping behavior. Both score approximately same on helping behavior scale. From the present study it was also found that helping behavior is not related to age. Three groups including younger(18 to 35years), middle(35 to 55years) and older adults(55 and above age) show similarity in scores on Helping Attitude Scale.

Limitations

This study is important evidence of relationship of helping behavior and attachment styles. The comparative study of different attachment styles and their effect on helping behavior is revealed by this study. Along with this, the present study has some limitations which should be overcome by further work. Because of the shortage of time the data was collected by convenient sampling technique, which has also affected the effectiveness of the study. This study has targeted educated population so it cannot be generalized to uneducated population. Further studies can be conducted to find out the relationship of helping behavior with attachment styles of literate and illiterate population. Researchers can also explore the prevalence of different attachment styles of literate and illiterate sample.

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