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## Relation between emotional intelligence and attachment styles in delinquent adolescents

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### Abstract

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and attachment styles in delinquent adolescents. In this study 75 delinquent adolescents were selected by means of accessible sampling procedure from Remedial and Training Institute of delinquent adolescents in Iran. These adolescents completed measures of Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey et al., 1995), and Revised Attachment Scale (Collins, 1996). Analysis of data with utilization of multiple regression analysis revealed that emotional intelligence of delinquent adolescents can be predicted from the magnitude of their attachment styles. Moreover, data revealed that delinquent adolescents with anxious attachment were lower in emotional intelligence than individuals with a secure attachment style.

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*Keywords:* Emotional Intelligence; Attachment Styles; Delinquent Adolescents; Remedial and Training Institute; Iran

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### 1. Introduction

Bowlby (1980) believed that emotional regulation ability is related to individuals' attachment style and emotional distresses are shaped and maintained in accordance to with individual's attachment styles (Mikulincer et al., 1998). Studies also show that attachment orientation of individuals are associated with their emotional intelligence (e.g., Bringen & Robinson, 1991; Magi, Distel & Liker, 1995). Magi and associates (1995) found that secure individuals were relatively accurate in decoding facial expressions of negative emotions, while avoidant individuals were lower in emotion decoding accuracy. Moreover, they found that anxious/ambivalent individuals were inaccurate in decoding anger, showing the relation of emotional decoding and attachment orientation.

Relation between attachment quality and emotional perception has been demonstrated by Feeney, Noller, & Callan (1999). These investigators demonstrated that anxious attachment was negatively related to accuracy in decoding partners positive non verbal behaviors as measured by a naturalistic test of non verbal accuracy. Kafetsios (2000) employed both laboratory and naturalistic tasks of emotional decoding accuracy of partner's facial expression. He found a positive association between secure attachment and emotion decoding accuracy of partner's facial expressions.

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In addition to emotion perception, attachment orientations are related to differences in emotional regulations at different life – stages (Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer & Florian, 2001). Insecure adolescents are less ego-resilient, more anxious, and hostile than their secure friends when they grow- up as adults. They experience less positive and more negative emotions their relationship with others. Insecure partners not only tend to experience more negative emotions but also suppress their emotions more than secure partners (Feeney, 1995). Suppressing emotion make them more vulnerable to psychological distresses, and lead them to more inhibition of emotion rather than appreciation, and management of their emotions. Studies also suggest that avoidance individuals pay less attention to affect and are less attentive to emotional events ( Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995; Fraley, Garner & Shaver, 2000) However, anxious individuals pay particular attention to negative emotions (Collins, 1996; Fraley & Shaver, 1997).

Although avoidant people activity deny feeling distressed, they show more physiological symptoms in stressful situation (Dozier, Kobak, 1992). Kafetsios (2004) investigated the relation between emotional intelligence abilities, and individual attachment orientation. He used MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2002) and concluded that all subscale of emotional intelligence test were correlated with a secure attachment. In another study Kafetsios (2002) found that with controlling gender, and age of participant attachment quality was a reliable predictor of a emotional intelligence.

Kafetsios & Yeadou (2003) and Fullam (2002) discovered that individuals with a secure attachment were more emotionally intelligent in compare to avoidant and anxious individuals. Marylene and associates (2008) discovered that attachment orientation and components of emotional intelligence were associated with each other. Moreover, they reported that a secure attachment was a reliable predictor of all components of emotional intelligence (Hamarta et al., 2009). There are some evidence that some demographic data can have impact on individual's emotional perception (e.g., Mayer & Geher, 1996; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Studies also found that gender differences can influence individual's performance in all domains of emotional intelligence as measured by MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2002).

Although research finding show that quality of attachment is related to individual's emotional intelligence, most of these investigations have been conducted in the United States and European countries. Due to cultural difference, in Islamic countries, individuals in Islamic countries may show different emotional regulation and attachment orientation in these countries. Iran also is one of Islamic countries predominantly with Shia Muslim.

Since people in Iran are different from Americans and European countries in terms of their cultural and religious backgrounds, investigating the relation between these constructs in individuals who live in Iran is necessary. This study fills the existing gap in the area.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants*

Population in the current study was consisted of Remedial and Training Institute of delinquent adolescents in Iran. An accessible sampling procedure was utilized in this study and 75 delinquent adolescents between 13-25 years were selected as a sample. In this study all participants were male, and with a history of crime single (the capital city of Iran ). After preparation of assessment devices, questionnaires were administered on delinquent adolescents by a trained research assistant. Permission of custodial personell was sought to distribute questionnaires at the Remedial and Training Institute of delinquent adolescents. All members of custodial personell that we contacted had a good cooperation. In general 75 individuals completed the questionnaires.

### *2.2. Measures*

#### *2.2.1. Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey et al., 1995).*

We used the Farsi version of the TMMS (Haddadi Koohsar, 2010). This instrument is made up of 30 items and makes an index of the levels of perceived emotional intelligence. Respondents are asked to rate their degree of agreement on each of the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale includes there sub factors: Attention to one's feelings, Clearness of emotions clarity. and mood repair

attention to fallings, measured by first 13 items, shows the degree to which people behavior they pay attention to their felling (i.e.,“I think about my mood constantly”)11 items in this measure assesses to the clarity of emotion (i.e.,“I frequently make mistakes about my feelings”), and mood repair measured by the remaining 6 items which refers to the capacity of individuals to control negative emotions (i.e., “Although, I some times feel sad, I usually have an optimistic out look”) internal consistency with values of 86, 88 and 82 was estimated for attention, clarity, and repair respectively (Salovey et al., 1995). In the present study, we obtained Cronbach alphas values for each of the TMMS dimensions and total of .62, .49, .14 and .70 for attention, clarity, repair mood, and full scale respectively.

2.2.2. Revised Attachment Scale (RAS; Collins, 1996).

We used the Farsi version of the RAS (Haddadi Koohsar, 2010). This scale is consisted of 18 items and three subscales 1) *Discomfort with dependency*, higher scores reflect greater discomfort depending on others. 2) *the discomfort with closeness scale*, higher scores reflect greater discomfort with closeness and intimacy, and, 3) *the anxious score*, higher scores reflect stronger fear of being rejected or unloved. Internal consistency for all subscales has been calculated in a high level: alpha coefficients for discomfort with closeness was 0.82, for discomfort with dependency was estimated 0.80, and for the anxious subscale was 0.83 (Collins, 1996). In the Farsi version alpha coefficient for the close, depend, and anxious subscales was 0.48, 0.55, and 0.79 respectively.

3. Results

The results have been presented in the following tables:

Table 1. Matrix of correlation between emotional intelligence and attachment styles in delinquent adolescents

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.TMMS-Attention	38.64	6.56	-				
2.TMMS-Clarity	33.21	4.83	0.12	-			
3.TMMS-Mood Repair	18.78	3.83	0.30*	0.10	-		
4.RAS-Close Attachment	17.83	3.94	0.33*	0.02	0.62**	-	
5.RAS-Depend Attachment	17.84	4.00	0.15	-0.02	0.12	-0.20**	-
6.RAS-Anxious Attachment	9.23	5.35	0.02	-0.01	-0.18*	-0.08	-0.07

\*\* P < 0.01 \* P < 0.05

Table 1 shows that close attachment is associated with emotional intelligence dimensions (attention and mood repair). Individuals who show a close attachment (they enjoy a close relations) were higher in emotional intelligence dimensions (attention and mood repair).

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis method to predict emotional intelligence from student's attachment styles in delinquent adolescents

Dependent	Variables Predictor	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P	B	SEB	β
TMMS-Attention	Stepwise Regression	0.33	0.11	4.80	0.035			
	Close Attachment					0.56*	0.26	0.33
TMMS-Mood Repair	Stepwise Regression	0.45	0.20	11.45	0.001			
	Close Attachment					0.47**	0.14	0.45

\*\*P < 0/01 \* P < 0/05

As indicated in table 2 only close attachment were significant predictors of attention to feelings (R<sup>2</sup>= 11%) and mood repair (R<sup>2</sup>= 20%). In other words attention to feelings and mood repair of delinquent adolescents with close attachment were higher than other delinquent adolescents. Moreover, attention to feelings and mood repair of delinquent adolescents with anxious attachment was lower than other adolescents. Inspecting beta analysis shows that close attachment can positively predicts magnitude of attention and mood repair of delinquent adolescents, while anxious attachment were negatively associated with attention to feeling and mood repair.

#### 4. Discussion

In the current study relation between emotional intelligence and attachment styles in delinquent adolescents has been investigated. Results of multiple regression analysis indicated that emotional intelligence in delinquent adolescents can be predicted by their attachment styles. Individuals, who hold a close attachment style, were higher in emotional intelligence in compare to others, and individuals who had a anxious attachment style, were lower in emotional intelligence. The results of the current study were consistent with some other investigation (e.g., Bringen & Robinson, 1991; Magi, Distel, & Liker, 1995; Kafetsios, 2004, 2002; Mayer et al., 2002; Kafetsios and Yeadou, 2003; Marylene et al., 2008; Hamarta et al., 2009).

Kafetsios (2004) investigated the relation between emotional intelligence abilities, and individual attachment orientation. He used MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2002) and concluded that all subscale of emotional intelligence test was correlated with a secure attachment. In another study Kafetsios (2002) found that with controlling gender, and age of participant attachment quality was a reliable predictor of emotional intelligence.

Marylene and associates (2008) discovered that attachment orientation and components of emotional intelligence were associated with each other. More over, they reported that individuals with a secure attachment were a reliable predictor of all components of emotional intelligence (Hamarta et al., 2009). There are some evidence that some demographic data can have impact on individual's emotional perception (e. g., Mayer & Geher, 1996). Studies also found that gender differences can influence individual's performance in all domains of emotional intelligence as measured by MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2002)

Kafetsios & Yeadou (2003) and Fullam (2002) discovered that individuals with a secure attachment were more emotionally intelligent in compare with avoidant and anxious individuals. These findings are consistent with result of the current study.

Since the current study was an ex post facto research developing a causal relation between emotional intelligence and attachment styles, investigators in the future can design an experimental design in which environmental prompting instigate the attachment styles in individuals, and study their consequence in development or escalation of emotional intelligence. Current study has implications for prevention, and interventions of emotional problems in delinquent adolescents. Improvement of individuals' attachment style yields to enhancement in their emotional intelligence.

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