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## The Relationships Between Attachment Styles and Narcissism Among Students of Shahid Chamran University in Iran

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### Abstract

The present study investigated on **the relationships between attachment styles** (secure, avoidant and anxious-ambivalent) **and narcissism**. The samples in this study consisted of 200 students (100 male, 100 female) that were selected randomly by multi stage random sampling methods. The instruments for collecting data's consisted of Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) and Adult Attachment Inventory (AAI). Data's was analyzed by correlation and hierarchical regression. The results of simple correlation showed that **there was a negative relationship between secure attachment, narcissism and there was positive relationships between avoidant, ambivalent attachment and narcissism**. Also, the regression analysis revealed that; **attachment styles have an important role in predicting narcissism prediction**. According to the founds that this study can be stated that **attachment styles can regulate narcissism**. These results should be considered as parents educating, counselors and mental health assistants.

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### Introduction

The term “narcissism” derives from the Greek myth of Narcissus, a youth who fell in love by his own reflection but, failed his attempt and caused him to reach to death (Young & Pinsky, 2006). The primary and fundamental studies in narcissism case, focused on as a matter of personality disorder, but now narcissism considered as a disorder in clinical level and so as a personality trait in the non-clinical level considered in the appellate literature and research. **During few past decades, narcissism boosted and increased between normal populations of a society (Campbell & Green, 2008)**. The narcissistic personality characterized by inflated self-views, a sense of entitlement, low level of empathy and emotional intimacy, exploit others and a desire of admiration (Morfe & Rhodewalt, 2001). Epidemiologic data's indicated that; narcissism personality in the general population was more widespread rather than clinical cases, in addition among the youth consisted in the age spectrum 20 to 29, widespread% 9/4 in lifespan (Torgersen, 2005). There are many factors that affected on forming narcissism personality between the people, with

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these regards, some researches (e.g., Bowlby, 1973; Sharifi, 2000; Bennett, 2006; Ahmadi, 2011) concentrate and emphasized on **parent-child in forming child's personality** and type of future relationships in adulthood has a determinative role. Bowlby (1973) in emphasizing on the importance of relationships between parent and child, believed that vital factor for child mental healthcare has a necessity; having a close - relationship, constantly with parent or fixed substitution of him or her. **According to Bowlby's belief many forms of neuroticism and personality disorders, is the result of child deprivation of parent treats or have no stability in a child's relationships between him and the other person that has attached to him or her** (Moemeni, Malekpor, Mavlavi & Amiri, 2010). Attachment styles as a changeable factor in personality tendencies and forming of them, has an important, determinative role and as an etiological factor considered in problems developing and personality disorders (Bowlby, 1973; Moemeni et al., 2010; Ahmadi, 2011). **According to past studies; narcissism is outcome of failure in making secure attachment of child with parent (Geiger, Crick, 2001; Bennett, 2006).** As the results of different studies; people with secure attachment has more tendencies to form the high levels of self esteem, although the children with insecure attachment (avoidance and anxiety-ambivalent) are more vulnerable in case of narcissism problems (Bennett, 2006). Pistole (1995) in the research with a multivariate approach said that: there was a relationship between attachment and narcissism, reported that various forms of insecure attachment which determined by different levels of avoidance or anxiety have a positive relationship with higher levels of narcissism. The hypothesis of the present study is: There is a relationship between attachment styles and narcissism.

## Methods

### *Participants*

The research population consisted of all the students of Shahid Chamran University in the academic year of 2010-2011. 200 university students (100 boys and 100 girls) were selected randomly through multistage random sampling method. The mean age of participants was approximately 23 years.

### *Measures*

*Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 (NPI-16)*. Is a short self report questionnaire for assessing narcissistic characteristics in non-clinical samples? Participants completed the 16-item NPI (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006). Each item of the NPI contains forced choices between a non-narcissistic response and a narcissistic response for example, individuals had to choose between the non-narcissistic statement (0), "I prefer to blend in with the crowd," or the narcissistic statement (1), "I like to be the center of attention." Participants' scores were averaged (0 = not at all narcissistic, 1 = extremely narcissistic). Thus, total scores on the NPI can range from 0 to 16, with higher scores indicated higher narcissism. The Iranian version of this questionnaire which was used to normed for the students of Shahid Chamran university. The Persian form was used. In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .68.

*Adult Attachment Inventory*: This scale was made by Simpson (1990). This scale consists of 13 items and 3 subscales: secure attachment style, avoidant attachment style and ambivalent attachment style. Each item was rated on a five-point liker scale. Alpha Cronbach's of this scale has reported 0.7 by Simpson (1990). Atari, Abbasi Sarcheshme and Mehrabi Zadeh Honarmand (2006) gained the reliability co-efficient of the mentioned questionnaire in Iran 0.89 by using a replication analysis method (after two years). The Persian form was used. In the present study Cronbach's alpha for 3 subscales were (secure, .75; avoidant .78 and ambivalent .80).

## Results

Table 1 shows the correlations of variables/ means and standard deviation. **There is a significant simple correlation among attachment styles (secure, avoidant and ambivalent) with narcissism.**

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. secure attachment	13.49	3.99	-	-	-	-
2. avoidant attachment	10.13	3.50	-.18*	-	-	-
3. ambivalent attachment	10.68	4.30	-.11*	.25**	-	-
4. narcissism	6.56	3.17	-.46**	.37**	.29**	-

\*P&lt;.05

\*\*P&lt;.01

As shown in Table 2 multiple regression analysis (enter method) showed that secure, avoidant and ambivalent attachment had a significant multiple correlation with narcissism ( $F=29.29$ ,  $p<.001$ ). These variables determine %31 of narcissism variance.

Table 2. The Results of Multiple Regression Analysis, Narcissism and Variables with Enter Model

Dependent variable	Predictor	MR	RS	F P	Regression coefficients		
					1	2	3
Narcissism	secure	.463	.215	F = 54.12 P<.001	$\beta = -.463$ t = -7.35 P<.001		
	avoidant	.522	.272	F = 36.85 P<.001	$\beta = -.381$ t = -5.93 P<.001	$\beta = .254$ t = 3.95 P<.001	
	ambivalent	.556	.31	F = 29.29 P<.001	$\beta = -.32$ t = -5.06 P<.001	$\beta = .261$ t = 4.15 P<.001	$\beta = .20$ t = 3.25 P<.001

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship of attachment styles with narcissism in students. The results of the present study showed that variables of secure, avoidant and ambivalent attachment style have a significant simple and multiple correlation with narcissism. The results of simple correlation showed that there was a negative relationship between secure attachment and narcissism and there was a positive relationship between avoidant, ambivalent attachment and narcissism. This result was in the same line as the study of Bennet (2006) and the study of Moemeni et al., (2011) and Ahmadi (2012) that showed that avoidant and ambivalent attachment style have a positive relationship with higher levels of narcissism and secure attachment has a negative relationship with narcissism. In the describing present results can say that; the people who have avoidant attachment style, overt narcissism characteristics such as: show and express tendencies to exploitation and needed to be master of their personalities, although they consider a little importance and respect to other senses or thoughts. Also could add that: with considering that the people with the avoidant attachment style have any confidence to others and always are pertaining a kind of emotional distance and often alone, aggressive. With this mind that the people in the childhood have no stable and constant relationships between parent and consider his/her mother as a safe place, because later features like: inflated self-view, a sense of entitlement, lacking in empathy and sense of exploitation are the features of narcissistic personality that grown up in themselves, too (Sharifi, 2000; Ahmadi, 2011). On the other hand, the children with the preoccupation parent anxiety ambivalent attachment has more probability that covert narcissism features such as; hypersensitive and shyness to grow up them and these people are not confident rather than themselves values and others importance. In contrast; the people who have secured attachment with parents that without any stipulations release stream of calmness to them. To help them that does the discover and probe the facts, are responsible to the child's needs and prepare a secure location for him/her to perform the practicing the self-assertion skills and any of persons need based on displaying skills and abilities does not confront to limitation and

repressing. So can grow up self-esteem in the suitable location (Sharifi, 2000). Regression analysis indicates that predictive variables determined 31 percent of narcissism variance (table 2). These variables are very important because, they determine about one-third of narcissism variance.

Pointing to the limitations of the current study, it should be considered that the relationship between predictors' variables and narcissism is not necessarily a casual relationship. Generalization of these results to the students of other universities should be done cautiously.

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