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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to study the effect of *attachment styles* on *perception of family environment* and to observe whether there is any relationship between the two dimensions of attachment (viz., *anxiety* and *avoidance*) and the eight dimensions of family environment (viz., *perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organisation* and *perceived control*) among female college students. A random sample of 156 female college students responded to the Family Environment Scale (Bhatia & Chaddha, 1993) and the Emotions in Close Relationships – Revised Scale (Fraley et al., 2000). The results revealed that *attachment styles* have significant effects on *perceived cohesiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence* and *perceived active recreational orientation*. The findings are discussed in details in the paper. Such an understanding of the effect of *attachment styles* on the *perception of family environment*, as furnished by this study, is instrumental in optimizing the young persons' adjustment with their environment.

Key words: attachment styles, family environment, adult attachment styles, attachment-related anxiety, attachment-related avoidance.

INTRODUCTION

Family as a Social System

A family system is a social and/or biological construction made up of a set of people related by blood or intention. The family is a primary socialization setting and is, therefore, considered to be a very important factor influencing child development (Ozcinar, 2006). Family is the basic social unit of society; it is in the family that we first learn to share, love, help and play. The basic principle behind families is that they effectively prepare family members to be the contributing members of society and be strong. The family environment encountered in day-to-day life by the children has an impact on their overall behavior and attitude. Parents shape the lives of their children from birth through adulthood both by action and by example. In adolescence, though the influence of friends and peers takes on greater importance the family still continues to play a significant role in shaping the behaviours and choices of teens as they face the challenges of growing up is clearly demonstrated by research (Brown et al., 2006). Good parenting skills, close parent/child relationships, shared family activities and positive parent role modelling all have well-documented effects on adolescent health and development.

Family is the basic unit of a society. It is the oldest and most important of all the institutions that man has devised to regulate and integrate his behavior as he strives to satisfy his basic needs. Its key position rests in its multiple functions in relation to overall development of its members, their protection and overall wellbeing. Therefore, it would emerge that not only the social and physical wellbeing of the individual is taken care of by the family, but the psychological wellbeing as well (Bhatia & Chaddha, 1993). It is within a family that an individual learns to grow. It plays a very important role in the moulding of an individual's personality (Hoffman, 1991).

A crucial element of a positive family is a strong sense of commitment to one another. Open and accepting atmospheres are among the core aspects of strong families. In a secure and safe family, no one discredits or looks down upon one another. Trust is one of the most vital components of a positive family. The parents have a bond of trust which they pass it down to their off springs. Strong communication is the framework for successful family environments.

According to Sandy (2007), family members need to be able to communicate and express their feelings freely and also need to possess strong active listening skills. All families have challenges and weaknesses, but only few families use key strengths to grow and prosper. Research regarding level of family conflict suggests that a conflictual family environment is associated with adolescents' insecurity and psychological distress, as well as aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder (Wissink et al., 2006). An environment filled with sadness and negativity can seriously affect a child's behaviours. An atmosphere that constantly focuses on the bad things in life can quickly change the child's natural tendencies for positivity to negativity. A study by Chassin et al. (1999) affirms the belief that environments considered negative by the child do indeed cause emotional distress. Family environment continues to be of crucial importance throughout adolescence and young adulthood (Van Wel et al, 2000). Family cohesion and supportive relationships between family members are associated with adolescent psychological adaptation and lower depression (Herman et al., 2007).

Dimensions of Family Environment

The familial environment can be broadly be segregated into eight dimensions (Bhatia & Chaddha, 1993), as given in the Family Environment Scale. They are: cohesion (degree of commitment, help, and support family members provide for one another), expressiveness (extent to which family members are encouraged to act openly and express their feelings and

thoughts directly), conflict (amount of openly expressed aggression and conflict among family members), acceptance and caring (extent to which the members are unconditionally accepted and the degree to which caring is expressed in the family), independence (extent to which family members are assertive and independently make their own decisions), active-recreational orientation (extent of participation in social and recreational activities), organization (degree of importance of clear organization structure in planning family activities and responsibilities) and control (degree of limit setting within a family).

Attachment and Attachment Styles

Family is the most important factor of socialisation. It is within its realm that an individual primarily experiences the outside world and relations. The first bond an infant has with its mother is the root of attachment. This bond later in life develops into relationships with others around the individual. This is the underlying foundation of Attachment Theory. According to John Bowlby (1951), *attachment* is a binding affection or a close emotional bond between two people. Bowlby (1982) hypothesized that attachment behaviour persists throughout life, from the cradle to the grave. According to him, attachment occurs when there is a "warm, intimate and continuous relationship with the mother in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment." Ainsworth (1963) defined *attachment* as an affectional tie that one person or animal forms between himself and another specific one - a tie that binds them together in space and endures over time.

Working Models of Attachment

Attachment theory, initially studied by Bowlby, Ainsworth and others in the 1960s and '70s primarily in the context of children and parents, was extended to adult romantic relationships in the late 1980s. A basic tenet of attachment theory is the construct of the *internal working model* (Bretherton, 1990). Bowlby (1973) characterized *internal working models* as mental representations constructed from interaction patterns between individuals

and their principal attachment figures. Working models represent the internalised development of the relationship between the caregiver and the child. Bowlby (1989) theorized that, as the infant grows up, the pattern of behavioural transactions that characterize the attachment dyad becomes internalized. The infant learns that certain behaviours are expected when certain cues are presented to him/her and in much the same way, the caregiver learns that certain actions performed by the infant require certain types of behaviours.

Based on experiences with attachment figures, representations of the self and others emerge, reflecting the degree to which the individual feels worthy of care and affection from others (model of self) as well as the degree to which the individual generally perceives others to be available, accepting and responsive (model of others). Internal working models are presumed to maintain a fixed pattern from which to pursue social interactions. Children usually interpret experiences in light of their working models rather than change their working models to fit new experiences. Only when experiences cannot be interpreted in the light of working models do children modify their working models (Feeney, Noller & Roberts, 1998).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) have proposed that working models consist of two parts: one part deals with thoughts about the self; the other part deals with thoughts about others. They further propose that a person's thoughts about self are generally positive or generally negative. The same applies to a person's thoughts about others. In order to test these proposals, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) have looked at the relationship between attachment styles, self-esteem, and sociability.

The secure and dismissive attachment styles are associated with higher self-esteem compared to the anxious and fearful attachment styles. This corresponds to the distinction between positive and negative thoughts about the self in working models. The secure and anxious attachment styles are associated with higher sociability than the dismissive or fearful

attachment styles. This corresponds to the distinction between positive and negative thoughts about others in working models. These results suggested working models indeed contain two distinct domains—thoughts about self and thoughts about others—and that each domain can be characterized as generally positive or generally negative.

Continuity of Attachment

A basic principle of attachment theory is that attachment relationships continue to be important throughout the life span (Ainsworth, 1982, 1989; Bowlby, 1977, 1980, 1982). Although evidence exists documenting the continuity of attachment-related behaviours (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Bowlby, 1973, 1980; Ricks, 1985; Rutter, 1988), investigators have only recently examined the relationship between working models of attachment and social and emotional adaptation in adults. A number of studies have examined continuity of attachment from infancy to adolescence and adulthood in both low and high-risk samples (Hamilton, 2000; Waters, Merrick Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Lewis, Feiring & Rosenthal, 2000; Weinfeld, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000). Results from these studies have indicated that factors such as divorce, single parenthood, life threatening illnesses within the family, parental drug abuse, death of a family member and other negative life events were all indicative of change to attachment insecurity.

In addition to the longitudinal studies looking at attachment stability, the research on this topic has expanded over the last two decades as investigators have examined continuity and discontinuity across particular development periods such as infancy (Bar-Haim, Sutton-Fox & Marvin, 2000; Egeland &Farber, 1984; Vondra, Hommerding & Shaw, 1999) early childhood (Moss, Cyr, Bureau, Tarabulsky & Dubios-Comtois, 2005; NICHD, 2001), middle childhood and adolescence (Allen, McElhaney, Kuperminc, & Jodi, 2004; Ammaniti, Van IJzendoorn, Speranza & Tambelli, 2000), and adulthood (Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 2002; Sharfe & Bartholomew, 1994; Zhang & Labouvie-Vief, 2004). These studies have also

identified variables such as stressful life events, family risk, and depression as predictive of change from security to insecurity or disorganization (Allen, McElhaney, Kuperminc, & Jodi, 2004; Bai-Haim, Sutton-Fox & Marvin, 2000; Moss, Cyr, Bureau, Tarabulsky & Dubios-Comtois, 2005).

There have been fewer findings regarding the factors that contribute to stable security or change from insecurity to security. Of the studies that have succeeded in discovering results related to the trajectory towards security, variables such as relationship satisfaction, greater emotional openness, and fewer negative life events (Egeland & Farber, 1984; Vondra et al., 1999) have been found to be related to change towards attachment security.

Attachment Styles

Attachment style has been conceptualized as an organizational construct for emotion, cognition, and behaviour (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). *Attachment style* reflects a strategy for organizing emotions and cognitions pertaining to self and others (Maim & Goldwyn, 1998). Bartholomew (1990) defined four attachment prototypes viz., *secure, fearful, preoccupied,* and *dismissing*, based on the intersection of the positive and negative variations in the working models of self and other. The self-model was characterized by the degree of self-worth and anxiety experienced in close relationships (e.g., neuroticism, self-esteem and acceptance). The other-model was characterized by the tendency to seek out or avoid support (e.g., sociability, extraversion, and warmth) (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Bartholomew (1994) suggested that the two dimensions should be considered simultaneously. The resulting combination of positive-negative attitudes about self and positive-negative attitudes about others yields four *attachment styles*. They are: *secure* (positive self and other), *preoccupied* (negative self, positive other), *dismissing* (positive self, negative other) and *fearful-avoidant* (negative self and other).

Secure Attachment Style

A person with a *secure attachment style* has high self-esteem and is positive about other people, so he/she seeks interpersonal closeness and feels comfortable in relationships. For example, secure adults express trust in their partners (Mikulincer et al., 1998) and are able to work together to solve problems (Lopez *et al.*, 1997). The secure pattern (positive self and other) is characterized by capacity for intimacy while maintaining personal autonomy. Those with a secure style report having had a warm relationship with their parents (Bringle & Bagby, 1992) and perceive their past and present family life in positive terms (Levy *et al.*, 1998). Compared to those with other attachment styles, secure individuals are less prone to becoming angry, attribute less hostile intent to others, and expect conflicts to have positive and constructive outcomes (Mikulincer, 1998). Secure individuals are best able to form lasting, committed, satisfying relationships (Shaver & Brennan, 1992).

Fearful-Avoidant Attachment Style

A person with a *fearful-avoidant attachment style* is low in self-esteem and negative about other people. The fearful pattern (negative self and other) is characterized by anxious avoidance of intimacy due to fear of loss or rejection. By minimizing interpersonal closeness and avoiding close relationships, fearful-avoidant individuals hope to protect themselves from the pain of being rejected. They describe their parents in negative terms (Levy *et al.*, 1998), are hostile and become angry without realizing it (Milkulincer, 1998), and experience less intimacy and enjoyment interacting with current or potential romantic partners (Tidwell, Reis & Shaver, 1996). This attachment style is associated with negative interpersonal relationships, feelings of jealousy, and the use of alcohol to reduce their anxiety about social situations (McGowan, Daniels & Byrne, 2000).

Preoccupied Attachment Style

A *preoccupied attachment style* is defined by a negative view of self, combined with positive expectations that other people will be loving and accepting. The preoccupied pattern (negative self, positive other) is characterized by anxious pursuit of closeness and reassurance from others. As a result, preoccupied individuals seek closeness in relationships (sometimes excessive closeness), but they also experience anxiety and shame because they feel they are not "worthy" of the other person's love (Lopez *et al.*, 1997). Distress about the possibility of being rejected is extreme. The need for love and approval plus self-criticism leads to depression whenever a relationship goes badly (Whiffen *et al.*, 2000).

Dismissing Attachment Style

A very positive self-image (sometimes unrealistically positive) is characteristic of the *dismissing attachment style*, and the self-descriptions of these individuals differ greatly from the way others describe them (Onishi, Gjerde & Block, 2001). The dismissing individual views himself or herself as worthwhile, independent, and very much entitled to a close relationship; other people are more likely to view them less positively and to describe them as unfriendly and limited in social ability. A major problem is that they expect the worst of others, so they are likely to fear genuine closeness. In other words, the dismissing pattern (positive self, negative other) is characterized by high self-esteem and defensive maintenance of independence in relationships.

To the researcher's knowledge, there is a paucity of studies examining, in details, the effect of attachment styles on the perception of the various aspects of the family environment among female young adults who are attending college. Such a scarcity of literature is particularly evident in the Indian context. Thus, the present research endeavour aims to study female college students' *attachment styles*, and determine whether their *perception of family environment* is influenced by the same. In the current study, *attachment styles* (viz., *secure,*

fearful, preoccupied and *dismissing*) is treated as the Independent Variable, and *perception of family environment* measured in terms of the eight dimensions of family environment (viz., *perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organisation* and *perceived control*) is treated as the Dependent Variable.

Objectives

Specifically, the objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To observe whether there is any relationship between the two dimensions of attachment (viz., *anxiety* and *avoidance*) and the eight dimensions of family environment (viz., *perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organisation* and *perceived control*) in female college students.
- To observe whether the female college students' *perception of family environment*, measured in terms of the eight dimensions of family environment (viz., *perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organisation* and *perceived control*) vary as a function of their *attachment styles* (viz., *secure, fearful, preoccupied* and *dismissing*).

Hypotheses

H1. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived cohesiveness* in female college students.

H2. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived expressiveness* in female college students.

H3. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived conflict* in female college students.

H4. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived acceptance & caring* in female college students.

H5. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived independence* in female college students.

H6. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived active recreational orientation* in female college students.

H7. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived organisation* in female college students.

H8. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimension of *perceived control* in female college students.

H9. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived cohesiveness* in female college students.

H10. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived expressiveness* in female college students.

H11. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived conflict* in female college students.

H12. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived acceptance & caring* in female college students.

H13. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived independence* in female college students.

H14. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived active recreational orientation* in female college students.

H15. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived organisation* in female college students.

H16. There will be a significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived control* in female college students.

H17. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived cohesiveness*.

H18. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived expressiveness*.

H19. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived conflict.*

H20. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived acceptance & caring*.

H21. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived independence*.

H22. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived active recreational orientation*.

H23. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived organisation*.

H24. There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) of the female college students on *perceived control.*

Sub-hypotheses from the main hypotheses were framed as and when required. These sub-hypotheses have been presented in the corresponding sections of Results and Interpretation.

METHOD

Research Design

The present study is a quantitative study in which *attachment styles* (viz., *secure, fearful, preoccupied* and *dismissing*) is treated as the Independent Variable, and *perception of family environment,* measured in terms of the eight dimensions of family environment (viz., *perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organisation* and *perceived control*), is treated as the Dependent Variable. This study adopts a correlation design to determine whether there is any correlation between the two dimensions of *attachment* (viz., *anxiety* and *avoidance*) and the eight dimensions of *family environment* in female college students. This study also adopts a between-groups design to observe whether female college students with different *attachment styles* differ with respect to their perception of family environment.

Sample

For the present study 156 college students, of which all were female, aged between 18 and 22 years were randomly selected from six colleges.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Age of the subjects: 18-22 years.
2. Educational qualification of the subjects:
    - Subjects aged 18 – 20 years – Pursuing Under Graduation
    - Subjects aged 21 – 22 years – Pursuing Post Graduation
3. Residing in different areas of Hyderabad.
4. Subjects belonging to nuclear or extended families.
5. Middle-Middle or Upper-Middle class socio-economic background.
6. Having at least one sibling and at most 2 siblings.

7. Educational qualification of the parents: At least graduation

Exclusion criteria:

1. Male students.
2. Females aged less than 18 years and over 22 years
3. Single children and those with more than 2 siblings.
4. Number of family members more than 7.
5. Those who belonged to the lower or upper socio-economic strata.
6. Subjects living away from home or in joint families.
7. History of any chronic physical or psychological disorder of the subjects.
8. History of any chronic physical or psychological disorder of the family members.
9. History of divorce, separation or remarriage of parents.
10. Subjects with one or both parents deceased.

Instruments

Three questionnaires were used in this research. They were:

1. **Information Schedule**

Participants were asked to provide their gender, age, education, family information (Parents' education, socio-economic status, number of siblings), physical and psychological health of the respondents as well as their family members, and the like in writing, on the Information Schedule.

2. **Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire**

The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) questionnaire is a revised version of Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's (1998) Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) questionnaire, devised by Fraley, Brennan and Waller in 2000. ECR-R is designed to assess individual differences with respect to attachment-related anxiety (i.e., the extent to which

people are insecure vs. secure about the availability and responsiveness of romantic partners) and attachment-related avoidance (i.e., the extent to which people are uncomfortable being close to others vs. secure depending on others). It consists of 36 personal statements to be scored on a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1). The questionnaire measures the attitudes of the participant in terms of the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance. The commonly used estimate of internal consistency reliability tends to be .90 or higher for the two ECR-R scales. IRT analyses suggest that the reliability might be a bit less at the secure end of both dimensions than at the insecure end of the dimensions.

The participants were assigned to groups on the basis of the median of each dimension. The median for avoidance was found to be 3.22 (MAVOID), while the median for anxiety was calculated to be 3.33(MANX). Thus, the participants were assigned to the four Bartholomew groups in the following manner:

(a) If the person's anxiety score was < MANX and the person's avoidance score was < MAVOID, then she was assigned to the *secure* group.

(b) If the person's anxiety score was < MANX and the person's avoidance score was >= MAVOID, then she was assigned to the *dismissing* group.

(c) If the person's anxiety score was >= MANX and the person's avoidance score was >= MAVOID, then she was assigned to the *fearful* group.

(d) If the person's anxiety score was >= MANX and the person's avoidance score was < MAVOID, then she was assigned to the *preoccupied* group.

3. **Family Environment Scale – Bhatia and Chaddha (FES-BC)**

Based on the Family Environment Scale by Moos (1974), this scale consists of three dimensions which are taken from Moos' scale. It was conceptualised by Bhatia and Chaddha. It consists of 69 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 'Strongly

agree' (5) to 'Strongly Disagree'(1). The scale measures the *perception of family environment* of the participants. It is subdivided into eight dimensions, namely, Cohesiveness, Expressiveness, Conflict, Acceptance & Caring, Independence, Active Recreational Orientation, Organisation and Control. Thus, for the present study *perception of family environment* is treated as the Dependent Variable, which is measured in terms of the eight dimensions that are termed as *perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organisation and perceived control*. Higher scores in the FES indicate the participant's favourable perception of the family environment. This scale has a reliability of 0.95.

Procedure

After selecting the measures, a few arrangements were made for data collection. The questionnaires and the Information Schedule were prepared and organized. The authorities of the colleges who gave permission for data collection were contacted. The researcher visited the colleges on the scheduled dates. Rapport was established with the students and they were made aware that their participation in the study was purely voluntary. They were assured of maintaining confidentiality through-out the study. The students who agreed to participate in the study were requested to sign an 'Informed Consent Form'. Next, the Information Schedule was administered. The students who met the sampling criteria were screened. On the next appointment the instructions for the questionnaires (namely, the ECR-R and the FES-BC) were given first and the subjects were requested to respond to the items. There was no fixed time limit for any of the questionnaires. However, the respondents were asked to complete each questionnaire in about 30 minutes.

Scoring and Treatment of Data

After completion of data collection, the responses were scored by hand according to the manuals. Then the statistical treatments of the scores were done. Means and Standard Deviations of the eight dimensions of *family environment* were calculated for the total sample. Product Moment Correlation was computed to determine whether there was any significant correlation between the two dimensions of *attachment* and the eight dimensions of *family environment*. One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted for testing the difference between the variances of the groups of adolescents categorized on the basis of *attachment styles.*

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 – *Means and Standard Deviations of the eight dimensions of the Family Environment Scale for the female college students with different attachment styles (N=156)*

Dimensions of Family Environment	**Attachment Styles**							
	Secure (N=39)		Fearful (N=39)		Preoccupied (N=39)		Dismissing (N=39)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Perceived Cohesiveness	55.8974	6.45957	49.1538	8.75857	51.1282	10.45839	50.5897	9.34631
Perceived Expressiveness	34.4359	5.62324	33.9487	7.46905	32.4615	7.12241	35.9231	4.89567
Perceived Conflict	45.6154	5.92770	43.4615	5.48129	41.5897	7.21737	47.5641	5.65125
Perceived Acceptance & Caring	44.8205	6.45173	42.7179	7.50070	44.7436	8.06786	48.7692	5.03389
Perceived Independence	31.7692	3.52780	30.4872	4.03845	30.5897	6.05987	34.7949	2.77374
Perceived Active Recreational Orientation	29.4615	8.69012	26.1538	8.64973	29.5641	7.07403	32.3077	4.87828
Perceived Organisation	9.5128	3.29970	9.7436	3.02375	9.0769	2.61961	9.5128	2.05031
Perceived Control	15.3333	2.39883	15.3590	1.91239	15.6410	2.59034	16.3077	2.22609

Table 2 – *Correlation between the two dimensions of attachment (viz., anxiety and avoidance) and the eight dimensions of the Family Environment Scale (viz., perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organization and perceived control) for the total sample (N=156)*

Dimensions of Family Environment	Dimensions of Attachment			
	Anxiety		Avoidance	
	r	p	r	p
Perceived Cohesiveness	-.203*	.011	-.238**	.003
Perceived Expressiveness	-.298**	.000	.122	.128
Perceived Conflict	-.416**	.000	.106	.188
Perceived Acceptance & Caring	-.372**	.000	-.022	.786
Perceived Independence	-.396**	.000	.063	.436
Perceived Active Recreational Orientation	-.247**	.002	-.091	.258
Perceived Organisation	-.031	.701	.179*	.025
Perceived Control	-.106	.188	.045	.580

*p < 0.05
**p <0.01

Table 2 reveals that there is significant negative correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimensions of *perceived cohesiveness* (r= -0.203, p<0.05) , *perceived expressiveness* (r= -0.298, p<0.01), *perceived conflict* (r= -0.416, p<0.01), *perceived acceptance & caring* (r= -0.372, p<0.01), *perceived independence* (r= -0.396, p<0.01), and *perceived active recreational orientation* (r= -0.247, p<0.01). However, there was found to be no significant correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimensions of *perceived organisation* and *perceived control*. Thus, **hypotheses H1 – H6 were accepted** and **hypotheses H7 and H8 were rejected**.

The results also indicated that there is significant negative correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived cohesiveness* (r= -0.238, p<0.01) and significant positive correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived organisation* (r= 0.179, p<0.05). However, this study reported no significant correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the other dimensions of family environment (viz., *perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation* and *perceived control*). Thus, **hypotheses H9 and H15 were accepted** and **hypotheses H10 – H14 and H16 were rejected**.

Table 3 – Results of One-Way ANOVA with attachment styles as IV and perception of family environment as DV.

Source	DV (Perception of Family Environment)	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Attachment Styles	Perceived Cohesiveness	1000.769	3	333.590	4.234**	.007
	Perceived Expressiveness	238.282	3	79.427	1.960	.122
	Perceived Conflict	786.532	3	262.177	7.028**	.000
	Perceived Acceptance & Caring	750.224	3	250.075	5.312**	.002
	Perceived Independence	472.282	3	157.427	8.606**	.000
	Perceived Active Recreational Orientation	741.769	3	247.256	4.412**	.005
	Perceived Organisation	9.077	3	3.026	.389	.761
	Perceived Control	24.071	3	8.024	1.523	.211

**p <0.01

As is evident from the above table (Table 3), the present study reported significant effects of *attachment styles* on *perceived cohesiveness* ($p<0.01$), *perceived conflict* ($p<0.01$), *perceived acceptance & caring* ($p<0.01$), *perceived independence* ($p<0.01$), and *perceived active recreational orientation* ($p<0.01$) but not on *perceived expressiveness, perceived organisation* and *perceived control* ($p>0.05$). Thus, **hypotheses H17, and H19 – H22 were accepted** and **hypotheses H18, H23 and H24 were rejected**.

Since *attachment styles* (IV) consisted of four groups (viz., *secure, fearful, preoccupied* and *dismissing*), post-hoc analyses (Tukey) were conducted to statistically determine the significance of difference between them, with respect to the DV, i.e., *perception of family environment*. Due to the non-significant value of F in case of *perceived expressiveness, perceived organisation* and *perceived control,* further post hoc tests were not conducted.

Under this section the sub-hypotheses to be verified were as follows:

H17a. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*.

H17b. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*.

H17c. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*.

H17d. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*.

H17e. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*.

H17f. There will be a significant difference between the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*.

H19a. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict*.

H19b. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict*.

H19c. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict*.

H19d. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict*.

H19e. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict*.

H19f. There will be a significant difference between the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict*.

H20a. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.

H20b. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.

H20c. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.

H20d. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.

H20e. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.

H20f. There will be a significant difference between the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.

H21a. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students with respect to *perceived independence*.

H21b. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived independence*.

H21c. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived independence*.

H21d. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived independence*.

H21e. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived independence*.

H21f. There will be a significant difference between the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived independence*.

H22a. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.

H22b. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.

H22c. There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.

H22d. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.

H22e. There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.

H22f. There will be a significant difference between the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.

The results of the post hoc analyses are presented in Table 4 – Table 8.

Table 4 – *Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the four attachment styles with respect to the dimension of perceived cohesiveness.*

Dependent variable	Attachment styles (target variable)	Attachment styles (comparison variables)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	P
Perceived Cohesiveness	Secure	Fearful	6.74359**	2.01013	.005
		Preoccupied	4.76923	2.01013	.087
		Dismissing	5.30769*	2.01013	.045
	Fearful	Preoccupied	-1.97436	2.01013	.760
		Dismissing	-1.43590	2.01013	.891
	Preoccupied	Dismissing	.53846	2.01013	.993

*p < 0.05
**p <0.01

Table 4 reveals that the *secure* female college students significantly differed from the *fearful* ($p<0.01$) and the *dismissing* ($p<0.05$) college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*. Thus, **hypotheses H17a and H17c were accepted**. This means that (as is evident from the mean scores in Table 1) the *secure* (M=55.8974) female college students perceived higher cohesiveness in the family environment than the *fearful* (M=49.1538) and the *dismissing* (M=50.5897) female college students.

On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the *fearful*, the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students ($p>0.05$) with respect to *perceived cohesiveness*. Similarly, the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students' perception of cohesiveness did not differ significantly ($p<0.05$). Thus, **hypotheses H17b, H17d, 17e and H17f were rejected**.

Table 5 – *Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the four attachment styles with respect to the dimension of perceived conflict.*

Dependent variable	Attachment styles (target variable)	Attachment styles (comparison variables)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	P
Perceived Conflict	Secure	Fearful	2.15385	1.38309	.406
		Preoccupied	4.02564*	1.38309	.021
		Dismissing	-1.94872	1.38309	.496
	Fearful	Preoccupied	1.87179	1.38309	.531
		Dismissing	-4.10256*	1.38309	.018
	Preoccupied	Dismissing	-5.97436**	1.38309	.000

*p < 0.05
**p <0.01

Table 5 shows that the *secure* female college students significantly differed from the *preoccupied* female college students ($p<0.05$) with respect to the dimension of *perceived conflict*. Moreover, there were significant differences between the *dismissing* and the *fearful* female college students ($p<0.05$); and the *dismissing* and the *preoccupied* female college students ($p<0.01$) with respect to *perceived conflict*. It must be noted here that according to the manual of FES-BC, higher scores on this dimension indicate perception of lower conflict in the family environment. This means that (as is evident from the mean scores in Table 1) the *secure* ($M=45.6154$) female college students perceived lower conflict in the family environment than the *preoccupied* ($M=41.5897$) ones. Also, the *dismissing* ($M = 47.5641$) female college students perceived lower conflict in the family environment than the *fearful* ($M = 43.4615$) and the *preoccupied* ($M = 41.5897$) female college students. Thus, **hypotheses H19b, H19e and H19f were accepted**.

On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the *secure*, the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students ($p>0.05$), and the *fearful* and *the preoccupied* female college students ($p>0.05$) with respect to *perceived conflict.* Thus, **hypotheses H19a, H19c and H19d were rejected**.

Table 6 – *Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the four attachment styles with respect to the dimension of perceived acceptance and caring.*

Dependent variable	Attachment styles (target variable)	Attachment styles (comparison variables)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	P
Perceived Acceptance & Caring	Secure	Fearful	2.10256	1.55380	.531
		Preoccupied	.07692	1.55380	1.000
		Dismissing	-3.94872	1.55380	.058
	Fearful	Preoccupied	-2.02564	1.55380	.562
		Dismissing	-6.05128**	1.55380	.001
	Preoccupied	Dismissing	-4.02564	1.55380	.051

**p <0.01

Table 6 reveals that there is a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students (p<0.01) with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*. From the mean scores in Table 1, it can be seen that the *dismissing* female college students (M = 48.7692) perceived higher *acceptance and caring* in the family environment than the *fearful* female college students (M = 42.7179). Thus, **hypothesis H20e was accepted**.

Table 6 also shows that the *secure* female college students did not differ significantly from the *fearful*, the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students (p>0.05), and that the *preoccupied* female college students did not differ significantly from the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students (p>0.05) with respect to the dimension of *perceived acceptance & caring*. Thus, **hypotheses H20a – H20d, and hypothesis H20f were rejected**.

Table 7 – *Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the four attachment styles with respect to the dimension of perceived independence.*

Dependent variable	Attachment styles (target variable)	Attachment styles (comparison variables)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	P
Perceived Independence	Secure	Fearful	1.28205	.96854	.549
		Preoccupied	1.17949	.96854	.617
		Dismissing	-3.02564*	.96854	.011
	Fearful	Preoccupied	-.10256	.96854	1.000
		Dismissing	-4.30769**	.96854	.000
	Preoccupied	Dismissing	-4.20513**	.96854	.000

*p < 0.05
**p <0.01

The results presented in Table 7 indicate that the *dismissing* female college students significantly differed from the *secure* (p<0.05), the *fearful* (p< 0.01), and the *preoccupied* (p< 0.01) female college students with respect to *perceived independence*. From the mean scores in Table 1, it can be seen that the *dismissing* female college students (M = 34.7949) perceived higher *independence* in the family environment than the *secure* (M = 31.7692), the *fearful* (M = 30.4872) and the *preoccupied* (M = 30.5897) female college students. In contrast, no significant differences were observed between the secure, the fearful and the preoccupied female college students (p>0.05) with respect to *perceived independence*. Thus, **hypothesis H21c, H21e and H21f were accepted**. However, **hypothesis H21a, H21b and H21d were rejected.**

Table 8 – Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the four attachment styles with respect to the dimension of perceived active recreational orientation.

Dependent variable	Attachment styles (target variable)	Attachment styles (comparison variables)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	P
Perceived Active Recreational Orientation	Secure	Fearful	3.30769	1.69530	.211
		Preoccupied	-.10256	1.69530	1.000
		Dismissing	-2.84615	1.69530	.338
	Fearful	Preoccupied	-3.41026	1.69530	.188
		Dismissing	-6.15385**	1.69530	.002
	Preoccupied	Dismissing	-2.74359	1.69530	.371

**p <0.01

Table 8 shows that there is a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students (p<0.01) with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*. From the mean scores in Table 1, it can be seen that the *dismissing* female college students (M = 32.3077) perceived higher *active recreational orientation* in the family environment than the *fearful* female college students (M = 26.1538). Thus, **hypothesis H22e was accepted**.

Table 8 also shows that the *secure* female college students did not differ significantly from the *fearful*, the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students (p>0.05), and that the *preoccupied* female college students did not differ significantly from the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students (p>0.05) with respect to the dimension of *perceived active recreational orientation*. Thus, **hypotheses H22a – H22d, and hypothesis H22f were rejected**.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In the following section the obtained results have been summarized. The findings of the present study revealed:

- Significant correlation between *anxiety* and –
  - *perceived cohesiveness*
  - *perceived expressiveness*
  - *perceived conflict*
  - *perceived acceptance & caring*
  - *perceived independence*
  - *perceived active recreational orientation*

- No significant correlation between *anxiety* and –
  - *perceived organisation*
  - *perceived control*

- Significant correlation between *avoidance* and –
  - *perceived cohesiveness*
  - *perceived organisation*

- No significant correlation between *avoidance* and –
  - *perceived expressiveness*
  - *perceived conflict*
  - *perceived acceptance & caring*
  - *perceived independence*
  - *perceived active recreational orientation*

- *perceived control*

- Significant effects of *attachment styles* on –
  - *perceived cohesiveness*
  - *perceived conflict*
  - *perceived acceptance & caring*
  - *perceived independence*
  - *perceived active recreational orientation*

- No significant effects of *attachment styles* on –
  - *perceived expressiveness*
  - *perceived organisation*
  - *perceived control*

- The findings of the present study further revealed:
  - Significant differences between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students; and the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness.*
  - No significant differences between the *fearful*, the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students; and the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived cohesiveness.*
  - Significant differences between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students; the *dismissing* and the *fearful* female college students; and the *dismissing* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict*.

- No significant differences between the *secure*, the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students; and the *fearful* and *the preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived conflict.*
- Significant differences between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.
- No significant differences between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students; the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students; the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students; the *preoccupied* and the *fearful* female college students; and the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived acceptance & caring*.
- Significant differences between the *dismissing* and the *secure* female college students; the *dismissing* and the *fearful* female college students; and the *dismissing* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived independence.*
- No significant differences between the *secure*, the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* female college students with respect to *perceived independence*.
- Significant differences between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.
- No significant differences between the *secure* and the *fearful* female college students; the *secure* and the *preoccupied* female college students; the *secure* and the *dismissing* female college students; the *preoccupied* and the *fearful* female college students; and the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* female college students with respect to *perceived active recreational orientation*.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the current research endeavour was to study the effect of the four *attachment styles* (viz. *secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing*) on the eight dimensions of family environment (viz. *cohesiveness, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active recreational orientation, organisation and control*). This study also aimed to observe whether there is any relationship between the two dimensions of attachment (viz., *anxiety* and *avoidance*) and the eight dimensions of family environment (viz., *perceived cohesiveness, perceived expressiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, perceived active recreational orientation, perceived organisation* and *perceived control*) in female college students.

The present study reported that there is a significant negative correlation between the dimension of *anxiety* and the dimensions of *perceived cohesiveness, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence* and *active recreational orientation* in the family environments of female college students. This is in accordance with previous researches (Johnson et al., 2001) which state that decreased family cohesion can inadvertently provide family environments that are associated with increased feelings of loneliness, which may be associated with anxiety in young adults. The results also revealed that as *anxiety* decreased, the participants' perception of *expressiveness* in their family increased, which might be due to the fact that a less-anxious person is more likely to express himself/herself freely in a family setting. Similarly, the negative correlation between *anxiety* and *perceived acceptance* can be explained in the light of previous studies (Bögels et al., 2006) which reported that individuals who are accepted by their family members are more likely to be less anxious than those who are not accepted. Individuals who perceive more *independence* in their family environment are less anxious as being more independent gives the individuals a scope to handle as much as they can themselves which lets them develop an internal sense of control and personal

agency (Rapee et al., 2013). It was also found that as the participants' anxiety decreased, *active recreational orientation* of the family increased. This finding may be explained in the light of previous research done by Pastore & Newman (1990) (as cited in Munger, R. L., 1991) which have shown that as the family's participation in active recreational activities together in lieu of sedentary activities is significantly related to a decrease in an individual's internalised problems (e.g., worry, anxiety, depression etc.). The results also indicated a negative correlation between *anxiety* and *perceived conflict*. This finding is in contrast to previous studies which connote that there exists a positive correlation between the two dimensions (Johnson et al, 2001), and requires further investigation.

The results also indicate that there exists a significant negative correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived cohesiveness* and a significant positive correlation between the dimension of *avoidance* and the dimension of *perceived organisation* in the family environments of female college students. Researchers (Johnson et al, 2001) have also conceded that as the cohesiveness of a family decreases, the individual becomes more avoidant and lonely. The results showed that as *avoidance* increased, *perceived organisation* also increased. This is plausible since attachment–related avoidance, which refers to the extent to which people are uncomfortable being close to others, may not be directly hindering an individual's perception of organization, which refers to the degree of importance of clear organization structure in planning family activities and responsibilities. Moreover, individuals with high avoidance may tend to perceive greater organisation and structure in an environment as a coping tactic to reduce their discomfort regarding having to interact too closely with others.

Upon further analysing the data through one-way ANOVA and post-hoc (Tukey) analyses it was found that the *attachment styles* (viz., *secure, fearful, preoccupied* and *dismissing*) of the female college students have significant effects on the dimensions of

perceived cohesiveness, perceived conflict, perceived acceptance & caring, perceived independence, and *perceived active recreational orientation*. These findings have been explained in the light of previous research and theoretical underpinnings.

To elaborate further, the obtained results suggested that there is a significant difference in the manner in which female college students with different *attachment styles* perceived *cohesiveness* in their family environments. It was found that the students with *secure attachment style* perceived more cohesiveness than those with *fearful* or *dismissing attachment styles*. This can be explained on the grounds that those who are secure in their relationships tend to view themselves and others in a positive manner, thereby perceiving more cohesion. According to Pfaller et al. (1998), participants who are securely attached report significantly higher levels of adaptability, cohesion, and satisfaction in their family of origin than the avoidant and anxious–ambivalent participants. In contrast, a person with a *fearful attachment style* is low in self-esteem and negative about other people. Such individuals anxiously avoid intimacy due to fear of loss or rejection. They describe their parents in negative terms (Levy *et al.*, 1998), are hostile and become angry without realizing it (Milkulincer, 1998), and experience less intimacy and enjoyment interacting with current or potential romantic partners (Tidwell, Reis & Shaver, 1996). This attachment style is associated with negative interpersonal relationships, feelings of jealously, and the use of alcohol to reduce their anxiety about social situations (McGowan, Daniels & Byrne, 2000 in Baron & Byrne, 2003). Thus, the *fearful* college student's perception of familial *cohesiveness* will inevitably be far less optimal than that of a *secure* student's perception of the same. Similarly, the *dismissing* student's perception of lower *cohesiveness* in the family environment, as compared to the *secure* students, may be attributed to the former's characteristic features. Although, the *dismissing* individuals view themselves as worthwhile, independent, and very much entitled to a close relationship, other people are more likely to

view them less positively and to describe them as unfriendly and limited in social ability. A major problem is that they expect the worst of others, so they are likely to fear genuine closeness. Thus, under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the *dismissing* college students perceived lower familial cohesiveness than the *secure* college students.

Researchers (Pietromonaco et al, 2004) suggest that although conflict may be somewhat aversive for everyone, the degree to which conflict evokes an attachment relevant threat and the precise nature of the threat varies depending on the content of working models of attachment. The results of the present study indicate that there is a significant difference in the manner in which individuals with different *attachment styles* perceive *conflict* in their family environments. It was observed that the female college students with *secure attachment style* perceived less conflict than those with the *preoccupied attachment style*. A person with a *secure attachment style* has high self-esteem and is positive about other people, so he/she seeks interpersonal closeness and feels comfortable in relationships. The secure pattern (positive self and other) is characterized by capacity for intimacy while maintaining personal autonomy. Moreover, those with a secure style report having had a warm relationship with their parents (Bringle & Bagby, 1992) and perceive their past and present family life in positive terms (Levy *et al.*, 1998). Thus, compared to those with other attachment styles, secure individuals are less prone to becoming angry, attribute less hostile intent to others, and expect conflicts to have positive and constructive outcomes (Mikulincer, 1998). In other words, the securely attached individuals are able to communicate openly during conflicts (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994; Simpson et al, 1996). In contrast, people with a *preoccupied attachment style*, characterized by a negative view of self and positive view of others, are likely to experience conflict as a threat to their relationships. For people with a preoccupied style, conflict may trigger concerns about being abandoned by the partner or about the partner's responsiveness to their needs, leading to hyperactivation of the attachment system

(Kobak & Duemmler, 1994; Simpson et al., 1996). As a result, people with a preoccupied attachment style may respond to conflict by displaying intense emotions and excessively focusing on their own concerns, and they may have difficulty attending to the information conveyed by their partners.

The results also indicated that the female college students with *fearful* and *preoccupied attachment styles* perceive more *conflict* in their family environment than those with the *dismissing attachment style*. For people with a *dismissing attachment style*, conflict may pose a threat because it impinges on their preference for independence and self-reliance, a preference that may reflect a belief that others will be emotionally unavailable and unresponsive. During conflict, *dismissing* individuals might be pressured to engage in behaviours that are connected to establishing emotional closeness such as revealing personal thoughts and feelings, a process that may threaten their need to maintain their independence. Thus, people with a dismissing-avoidant attachment style may respond to conflict by deactivating the attachment system, leading them to withdraw or downplay the significance of conflict (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994). On the other hand, individuals with a *fearful attachment style* describe their parents in negative terms (Levy *et al.*, 1998), are hostile and become angry without realizing it (Milkulincer, 1998), and experience less intimacy and enjoyment interacting with current or potential romantic partners (Tidwell, Reis & Shaver, 1996). Thus, as this attachment style is associated with negative interpersonal relationships and feelings of jealously (McGowan, Daniels & Byrne, 2000), it is not surprising that the *fearful* college students perceived higher *conflict* in the family environment as compared to the *dismissing* college students. Additionally, in contrast to the *dismissing* attachment pattern, the *preoccupied* pattern (negative self, positive other) is characterized by anxious pursuit of closeness and reassurance from others. However, in spite of seeking closeness in relationships, *preoccupied* individuals also experience anxiety and shame because they feel

they are not "worthy" of the other person's love (Lopez *et al.*, 1997). As a result of the extreme anxiety and distress about the possibility of being rejected, these individuals may perceive even the slightest hint of a conflict as a potential cause for not being loved and approved.

In addition, it was observed that there is a significant difference with respect to how individuals with different *attachment styles* perceive *acceptance and caring* in their family environment. It was found that the individuals with *dismissing attachment style* perceived their family environment to be more accepting and caring than those individuals with *fearful attachment style*. This might be due to their innate traits, with *dismissing* individuals envisioning themselves as worthy of acceptance and care, while the *fearful* individuals' low self-esteem and negative patterns of thinking about others hinder their self-worth and their expectations of acceptance and care from their family (McGowan et al., 2000, Onishi et al., 2001).

There was also found to be significant differences in the manner in which individuals with different *attachment styles* perceived *independence* in their family environment. *Dismissing* individuals were found to perceive more independence than the *secure, fearful* and *preoccupied* individuals. This can be explained with the help of findings of previous researchers (Meyer, 2010) who have identified that *dismissing* individuals have a strong desire for independence at the expense of intimacy, thus perceiving their family environment to be more independent than those individuals with secure, fearful and dismissing attachment styles. In other words, the *dismissing* pattern (positive self, negative other) is characterized by high self-esteem and defensive maintenance of independence in relationships. On the other hand, a person with a *secure attachment style* has high self-esteem and is positive about other people, so he/she seeks interpersonal closeness and feels comfortable in relationships. For example, secure adults express trust in their partners (Mikulincer, 1998) and are able to work

together to solve problems (Lopez *et al.*, 1997). Thus, the *secure* pattern (positive self and other) is characterized by capacity for intimacy while maintaining personal autonomy. In contrast to the *dismissing* individual, a person with a *fearful attachment style* is low in self-esteem and negative about other people. Hence, the *fearful* pattern (negative self and other) is characterized by an intense fear of loss or rejection. Thus, although the *fearful* individuals anxiously avoid interpersonal closeness in the hope of protecting themselves from the pain of being rejected, they do not necessarily seek independence. Moreover, as opposed to the *dismissing attachment style*, the *preoccupied attachment style* is defined by a negative view of self, combined with positive expectations that other people will be loving and accepting. Thus, the *preoccupied* pattern (negative self, positive other) is characterized by anxious pursuit of closeness and reassurance from others. As a result, it is understandable why *preoccupied* female college students, while seeking closeness in relationships (sometimes excessive closeness), will not defensively pursue *independence* like their *dismissing* counterparts.

Lastly, the obtained results indicate that there exist significant differences in the perception of *active recreational orientation* in the family environment by individuals with different *attachment styles*. It was found that *dismissing* individuals perceived higher *active recreational orientation* than the *fearful* individuals. This can also be attributed to the innate trait in the former attachment style which results in *dismissing* individuals perceiving themselves as worthy of having a convivial family environment which includes family participation in recreational activities, in contrast to the *fearful* individuals who experience negative interpersonal relationships and describe their parents and family members in negative terms (Levy et al, 1998).

Thus, the present study establishes, within its scope, that the attachment styles of female college students greatly affect their perception of family environment, reiterating the

fact that secure people tend to perceive their families in a better manner. The study also throws light on the relationship between the two dimensions of attachment viz. *anxiety and avoidance* with the eight dimensions of family environment viz. *cohesiveness, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active recreational orientation, organisation and control,* indicating high levels of correlation between the same. The present study once again reinstates the importance of favourable family environment and healthy attachment styles in an individual's life.

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