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## PARENTAL BONDING & FAMILY COMMUNICATION AS PROTECTIVE FACTOR FOR ATTITUDE TOWARDS DRUG ABUSE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Parental Bonding, Family Communication, Attitude, Drug Use, Protective Factor and University Students	The students who enter university first time often have adjustment issues and sometimes to overcome their fear regarding attachment to new environment, they use negative sources. The drug use is becoming common practice now a days. Furthermore, taking drugs not only affect their health but also weaken their relationship with family, friends and peers. Thus, the purpose of this study was to find relationship amid parental bonding, family communication and attitude towards drug use in university students. Correlational research design used in study and through survey method 160 students participated with age range 18-28 ( $M = 25.3$ , $SD = 2.5$ ) from both private and government universities. The finding of the study showed that in parental bonding father overprotection significantly negatively linked with attitude toward drug use and family communication negatively associated with attitude toward drug use. Family communication predicted attitude toward drug use in students. Moreover, students in public universities prefer to use drugs as compared to students in private universities. This study will provide guidance for parents and institutes to develop strong relationship and resolving trust issues and what are root causes of drug use. It also helps to improve communication by using findings that elaborated negative contributing factors associated with bad communication.
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## INTRODUCTION

The parental bonding is the process of bonding in which relationship and other attachments developed, nourished between members. This forming of the relationship is stronger between mother and child as compared to other family members. Parental bonding and unconditional love between parents and child are the key feature to develop strong relationship later in the society (APA, 2020). Parental bonding divided into different categories like secure relationship,

avoidant relationship, ambivalent relationship and disorganized relationship. By maintaining their relationships with their offspring, they maintain the family bonding and secure it from outer threats (Benoit, 2004). Drug abuse among university students is a pressing public health issue, often influenced by the individual, social, and familial factors. There are various factors especially positive factors one which are connected to virtuous communication between family members.

Family communication is all about how family members communicate with each other and to which degree they can communicate openly, express true feeling, share subjective thoughts, collaborative decision making and fearlessly showing love (Olson & Barnes, 2004). According to Hsia (2024) consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez faire are pattern of communication used by family members to communicate openly and fearlessly. Family communication always fall within these patterns and provide strength and bonding to family relationships. Attitude towards drug use identified the behavior of individual and make it easy to choose what to take and what to not. Positive attitude toward bad things and substances motivated individual to use them without paying attention to its bad side. The attachment to institute, assertiveness, self-esteem and positive peer modeling are the main pillars for measuring the attitude toward the substance use (Ebrahim, Radwan & Amrosy, 2022; EMCDDA, 2015; Pirzadeh, & Parsakia, 2023).

Students from 18 to 30 years are more prone to use drugs and other substances in their though time and chaliya, ghutka, opium or heroin are starters (Salman, 2019). This research is based on family communication pattern theory which focused on how family plays an important role in shaping and changing self-perception and help each other strengthen their bonding. Good and active communication amid family members increase their strength, commitment and morale and give confidence to them whereas harsh, negative and less communication decreased their moral and self-confidence. Shatter confidence and feeling of worthlessness further demotivate members to work effectively in their daily lives and lead towards the use of bad and harmful things such as the drug use, smoking, internet addiction, and drinking (Koerner & Mary, 2002). according to attachment theory use of such harmful things are considered as self-medication to compensate for the poor attachment, broken relationship, and lacking love and care (Bowlby, 1973).

### **Rationale of Study**

Drug use is prevailing among teens and adults which is further affecting their daily activities and health. As students are pillar of success of a country therefore, their healthy functioning is way more important than other things. Now a days they communicate with family and friends only to ask for financial aids and becoming lonely. The drug use can negatively impact diverse fields of life such as daily routine, peer relationship, attachment with family, social bonding, romantic relationship, mental and physical health and many more. As Johnson in 2019 found that healthy growth, perception, mindsets, emotional reactions and character were all resolve around family traditions and societal norm. In Pakistan many universities are trying to control the alarming rate of students who are taking drugs and other substances but students who are addicted took it out of university premises. Thus, it is vital to understand contributing factors

of drug use. The research aimed is to identify relationship between parental bonding, family communication and attitude towards drug use and how to improve relationship with family & friends.

### Objectives of Study

1. To study relationship between parental bonding, family communication and attitude toward drug use in students.
2. To identify the predictors of drug use in students and To test university and friendship differences in the students.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The researches showed how family communication maintain relationship between individual while other reveals what are factors linked with bad habits and substance addiction (Hamady, Elazab, Mahmoud & Hamid, 2024). In parental bonding father care was the factor that linked with mutual constructive family communication pattern. The perceived parental bonding and parents' mutual communication plays fundamental role in developing affiliation amid parents and child and shaping attachment in the future (Hazarati, Sadeghi & Panaghi, 2021; Saladino, Mosca, Petrucci, Lauriola, Verrastro & Cabras, 2021). Good and positive parental attachment with child in early years considered as vital factor for future healthy development and improve living style (Sakay, 2020). Alexithymia was caused by lack of bonding with their child and later in life inspire them to start drinking, taking drugs just to calm themselves. The parental bonds helps maintaining strong relationships with others in future (Lanjekar, Joshi, Lanjekar, Wagh & Wagh, 2022; Lyvers, Mayer, Needham & Thorberg, 2019; Overall, Pietromonaco & Simpson, 2022).

Insecure and poor attachment associated with high risk factors such as emotional distress, lack of self-confidence and less effective coping to rebuild their affiliation. Mental health disorders and disorder became root cause for drug use. People with good family relations tend to suffer less health issues as compared to those with insecure attachments (Durjava, 2018). As, Nakhoul, Obeid, Sacre, Haddad, Soufia, Hallit and Hallit, (2020) found that poor parental attachment was one of the leading factors of substance use in Lebanese adolescents. As their relationship weakens, they became more aggressive and start using drugs, cigarette, waterpipes, internet and alcohol. Thus, Habibi, Hosseini, Darharaj, Moghadamzadeh, Radfar and Ghaffari (2018) highlighted those conflicts amid family members encourage smoking in young adults, yet they prefer, attracted by external objects to overcome their fears and lacking. These external objects include use of cigarette, internet & other dangerous things to compensate basic psychological needs.

Expression of emotions and following society tradition helps adolescents to keep them away from substance use whereas ignoring conflicts motivate them to use substances (Shin et al., 2018). The university learners especially living in hostels are at very high risk to use substance, smoking, internet addiction etc. because of peer pressure and emotional disturbance (Igbal et al., 2024). Student having family issues, ineffective talk with family on topic of harmful things

lead towards health issues, feeling of worthlessness, perception of drug use and many more. In this situation drug dealers approach students and provide drugs as healing medication for their psychological disturbance (Mukhtar, 2022; Salman, 2019). Communication pattern and its orientation is negatively linked with addiction to external objects but conformity orientation of communication leads toward addiction tendency in learners (Harichand, 2021; Rahimi & Fathi, 2021).

Hafeez (2020) found drug use was high among the private university students as compared to public university students. The female students were highly at risk to use drugs to overcome their frustration and emotions as compared to male students (Naeim, Rezaeisharif & Kamran, 2021). Students considered drug use as a harmful thing and prefer to avoid such substances to keep them physically and mentally healthy. Substance use also build conflicts between family members & can cause sleep deprivation (Shah, 2020). Family communication pattern predicted significantly addiction tendency in learners (Chauke, 2021). Rahimi and Fathi 2021). As many of researches focused on exploring the role of parental bonding with addiction but in Pakistan there is need to find the factors linked with drug addiction and how family communication changes their perspectives (Ebrahim, Radwan & Amrosy, 2022). Thus, this study focused on identifying relationship amid parental bonding, family communication and attitude towards drug use.

### Research Hypothesis

- ✓ There is likely to be significant positive relationship between parental bonding & family communication.
- ✓ There is likely to be negative relationship between parental bonding and attitude toward the drug usage.
- ✓ There is likely to be significant negative association between family communication and attitude towards drug use.
- ✓ Parental bonding and family communication are likely to predict attitude towards drug use in students
- ✓ There is likely to be differences in the attitude toward drug use in the students of private and public university
- ✓ There is likely to be friendship difference in the attitude towards the drug use among the students in institutions.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The correlational research was used and a sample of 160 students recruited by using purposive sampling from the private and government universities of Lahore, Pakistan in 2021. Thus, the restrictive criteria for participation eligibility included the students only from Lahore city, day scholars, students who were living with their parents, using the drugs, who never undergo any therapy and never taken any prescription about drugs. The demographic information offered the significant information about personal individualities. In this linking, age range was 18-28 years ( $M = 25.3$ ,  $SD = 2.5$ ) both male ( $n = 51$ , 32%) and female ( $n = 109$ , 68%) participated in the study.

**Table 1**
*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 160)*

Characteristics	f (%)	M(SD)
Age		21.68(7.18)
Gender		
Women	109(68.1)	
Men	51(31.9)	
Family System		
Nuclear	115(71.9)	
Joint	45(28.1)	
Working Status		
Employed	35(21.9)	
Unemployed	125(78.1)	

**Table 1A**
*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 160)*

No. of Friends	
Less than 9	
Equal or more than 10	
Father Education	
Undergraduate	117(73.1)
Post graduate	43(26.9)
Mother Education	
Uneducated	8(5)
Undergraduate	117(78.1)
Post graduate	35(21.9)
Ever used Drugs?	
Yes	42(26.3)
No	118(73.7)

## Measures of Study

Demographic variables included information about age, sex, education, family system, drug use, family income. Parental Bonding Scale was developed by [Parker \(1979\)](#) with two subscales and 25 items. Response score for care scale (12 items) ranged 0-36 and for overprotection (13 items) 0-39. This scale scoring is reliable over time and not affected by age of parents. Family communication scale consisted of 10 items with age range 12 and over, as developed by [Olson \(2010\)](#) with 1-5 Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Response score ranges 10 (low family communication)-50 (high family communication). Attitude towards Drug Abuse scale was developed by [EMCDDA \(2015\)](#) and has 12 items on 5 point-Likert scale where 1 indicated totally negative attitude to drugs and 5 means favorable attitude towards drugs. The rationale behind using scales was its relevance to selected sample and their items were more relatable to study.

## Procedure of Study

The participants were selected by using purposive sampling and survey started with a written consent form which stated the purpose of study and ethical consideration. Data was collected online due to the COVID-19. Participants' information was kept anonymous and confidential. They were informed of their right to withdraw from research any moment and their queries were answered. Participants took almost 20 minutes to fill their demographic information and questionnaires.

## RESULTS OF STUDY

**Table 2**

*Psychometric Properties of Research Issues (N =160)*

Scales	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Parental Bond				
Mother's Care	29.0	3.6	12 - 39	0.71
Mother Overprotection	31.3	4.8	13 - 45	0.64
Father Care	29.7	3.9	12 - 45	0.65
Father's Overprotection	32.1	4.8	13 - 49	0.81
Family Communication	36.5	8.9	10 - 50	0.92
Attitude towards Drug Use	26.9	6.5	14 - 41	0.62

Table 2 described reliability coefficient of parental bonding, family communication & attitude towards drug use and value of Cronbach's alpha for all scales is amid 60-92 as indicated good reliability.

**Table 3**

*Relationship among Research Issues (N= 160)*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Age	21.68	7.18	-						
2.Mother Care	29.20	3.95	-.06	-					
3. Mother Overprotection	30.22	5.38	.10	.33***	-				
4. Father Care	30.11	4.38	-.01	.49***	.21**	-			
5. Father Overprotection	31.26	5.41	.03	.26**	.45***	.37***	-		
6.Family Communication	36.51	8.94	-.17*	.01	.03	-.13	.03	-	
7. Attitude	26.91	6.51	-.01	-.08	-.09	-.10	-.17*	-.24**	-

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

The results indicated that there was significant negative relationship found between age and family communication. As the age increases family communication between family members decreases. Significant negative association between family communication and attitude toward drug use indicated less communication amid members inspire them to think about using drugs in university life. Non-significant bond found amid parental bonding & attitude toward drug use.

**Table 4**

*Multiple Hierarchal Regression for Predicting Attitude towards Drug Use (N = 160)*

Variables	Attitude towards Drug Use					R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
	B	95% CI		SEB	$\beta$		
Step 1						.10	.10
Age	-.01	-.15	.13	.07	-.01		
University	-2.26	-4.31	-.21	1.03	-.17*		
Family System	1.30	-1.02	3.64	1.18	.09		
Friends	.07	-.25	.39	.16	.03		
Relationship	.61	-1.87	3.10	1.26	.04		
Educated Mother	.77	-.13	1.69	.46	.144		
Ever used drug	1.48	-1.38	4.35	1.45	.10		
Any prescribed drug	1.42	-3.71	6.56	2.60	.04		
Step 2						.14	.04
Mother Care	.01	-.30	.32	.15	.007		
Mother Overprotection	.07	-.14	.29	.11	.06		
Father Care	.01	-.27	.29	.14	.007		
Father Overprotection	-.27	-.50	-.04	.11	-.23*		
Step 3						.19	.05**
Family Communication	-.17	-.29	-.06	.05	-.24**		

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

In table 4 findings suggested that model one predicted 10% variance ( $F = 1.75$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and type of university predicted attitude toward drug use. Model two has 4% variance ( $F = 1.73$ ,  $p > .05$ ) yet father's overprotection found as significant predictor of attitude toward drug use. Model three 5% variance ( $F = 2.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ), communication predicted attitude toward the drug use in students.

**Table 5**

*University Differences towards Research Issues (N = 160)*

	Public		Private		t(158)	P	Cohen's d
	(n = 85)		(n = 75)				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Parental Bonding							
Mother Care	28.97	3.93	29.46	3.98	-.78	.43	0.12
Mother Overprotection	29.89	5.16	30.60	5.63	-.82	.40	0.13
Father Care	30.12	3.77	30.09	5.01	.05	.95	.006
Father Overprotection	31.57	5.19	30.92	5.67	.76	.44	0.11
Family Communication	35.58	9.35	37.57	8.37	-1.40	.16	0.22
Attitude towards Drug Use	28.11	6.12	25.56	6.71	2.52	.01	0.39

Table 5 indicated that significant differences in term of university type were found in attitude toward drug use in students. Students studying in public university think about using drugs or



not ( $M = 28.11$ ,  $SD = 6.12$ ) those who are studying in private university ( $M = 25.456$ ,  $SD = 6.71$ ). however, were non-significant university differences exist in the parental bonding and family communication.

**Table 6**

*Independent Samples T-test Determining Age Differences (N = 160)*

	Less than 9		$\geq 10$		t(158)	P	Cohen's d
	(n = 101)		(n = 59)				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Parental Bonding							
Mother Care	29.65	3.76	28.44	4.18	1.88	.06	0.30
Mother Overprotection	30.25	5.54	30.16	5.13	.09	.92	0.01
Father Care	30.44	4.18	29.54	4.68	1.26	.21	0.20
Father Overprotection	31.88	5.43	30.22	5.26	1.88	.06	0.31
Family Communication	36.70	9.26	36.20	8.41	.34	.73	0.05
Attitude towards Drug Use	25.72	6.29	28.96	6.41	-3.12	.002	0.51

The table 6 revealed that there were significant differences in term of no. of friends in attitude toward drug use. Students with few friends have no attitude toward drug use while students who socially active and have many friends showed their preference for using drugs. Moreover, non-significant differences in term of no. of friends were found in parental bonding and family communication.

## DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to test relationship amid parental bonding, family communication and attitude toward drug use in university students. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies which indicated that parental bonding is associated with substance use and attitude towards it. Good and positive parental attachment with child in early years considered as crucial factor for healthy development and improve living style (Sakay, 2020). Alexithymia was caused by lack of parental bonding with their child and later in life encourage them to start drinking or taking drugs just to calm themselves. Strong parental bonding helps maintaining healthy and strong relationships (Lyvers et al., 2019). Still, findings suggested that only father overprotection is associated with attitude toward drug use in students. Nakhoul et al. (2020) stated that poor parental attachment was link with use in Lebanese adolescents. As their bond weakens, they became more aggressive & start using drugs, cigarette, waterpipes, internet and alcohol.

Habibi et al., (2018) stated that conflicts between family members motivate to start smoking in young adults. Later they prefer and attracted by external objects to overcome their fears and lacking. These external objects include use of cigarette, internet and other dangerous things to compensate their basic psychological needs. Finding revealed that in Pakistani culture family communication found to have significant negative relationship with attitude toward drug use which means positive talk, expression of emotions, sharing of perspective and understanding each other help to suppress the negative thought and behaviors such as smoking, snatching,



fighting and using substances (Asad et al., 2025). These findings are consistent with research conducted by Salman (2019) which stated that ineffective talk with the family on the topic of harmful things lead towards health issues, feeling of worthlessness, perception of drug use and many more.

Communication pattern and its orientation is negatively associated with addiction to external objects whereas conformity orientation of communication leads toward addiction tendency in learners (Rahimi & Fathi, 2021; Walakouw, 2024). Findings were not in line with research conducted by Mousavi, Shams, Taghigh and Bazgir (2024), stated that family communication was not associated with tendency to use drugs. Drug related awareness is directly depending on the perception of students and low level of interquartile associated with high awareness of substance abuse (Ahmad, 2020). The findings of the regression analysis showed that family communication was a significant predictor of attitude toward the drug use whereas parental bonding was not. These findings are supported by the previous research as Ostad, Rahimi and Fathi (2021) found family communication pattern significantly predicted addiction tendency in learners.

Results showed that students from public university have positive attitude toward drug use whereas literature indicated that students in private universities have positive attitude toward substance use (Downey et al., 2024; Hafeez, 2020). Students in universities take drugs more frequently without noticing the risk and had no limitations. Such perspective lead toward the future use of drugs (Ahmad, 2020). Students with larger social group and friends tend to have positive attitude toward drug use as compared to those students who have few friends. The cultural differences and societal norms might be the factors for variation in findings as most of the literature is based on western researches. Another reason could be the attachment because in Pakistan women are not allowed to express their feelings and emotions openly. Suppressing their emotions might be reason for not having strong bonding with family members especially with mother.

## CONCLUSION

Drugs are easily available in universities which encourage students to take them. Friends and class fellows often offer drugs to each other to overcome fear and sometimes for fun. Family attachment plays important in shaping future behavior of children. Therefore, it is important maintain parental bonding with the children especially when they are entering in the higher education institutions for further studies. This study showed that the father overprotection and family communication were negatively associated with attitude toward drug use in students. Only family communication predicted attitude toward drug use in the university students. Thus, students in public universities have high risk for taking drugs as compared to students from private universities. Having few friend decrease the tendency to use drugs in university life.

## Limitations & Suggestions

This research is conducted on a very small sample and only quantitative data was collected. To deeply understand the concept of drug preference in Pakistan qualitative researches should be

conducted. Data was only taken from Lahore city; data should be collected from all provinces for a more representative study. The family communication can be used as mediator for better understanding. To fill the gap between Pakistani culture and how it changes results further researches are required. In this connection,, for clearly and to know the root cause of positive attitude toward drug use, it is important to conducted this study on primary and elementary level.

## Implications

These findings are useful for understanding the current situation in the universities regarding drug abuse and its association with other factors. The findings also revealed that in parental bonding mother care or overprotection is not linked with drug use in later life which provide a base to for the future debate and researches. Further these results highlight the importance of building strong therapeutic alliance to guide and secure students from using the substances in their university life. Thus, the findings can be used to resolve family issues caused by lack of communication. Awareness based seminars on the parental bonding and drug use should be conducted in both rural and urban areas. In universities small activities should be held for students which helps them to improve mental distress and teach them how to control negative thinking.

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