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Abstract	<p>The purpose of this study was to explore the role of emotional intelligence and coping styles as mediators in the relationship between adult attachment and distress. This study also attempted to develop the Myanmar version of the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) based on a translation of Collins and Reads' (1990) original instrument. Participants were 337 undergraduate students from University of Yangon who completed a battery of self-report questionnaires, including Outcome Questionnaire, Trait Meta-Mood Scale, Problem-Focused Styles of Coping Scale, Adult Attachment Scale, and Inventory of Interpersonal Problems. Factor analysis of the Myanmar version of the AAS revealed three subscale: Secure (.71), Anxious (.72), and Avoidant (.74). Further, the results of the multiple regression analyses revealed that adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) was a positive significant predictor to psychological and interpersonal distress, whereas adult attachment security (secure) was a negative significant predictor to psychological and interpersonal distress. The meditational analyses revealed that one factor of emotional intelligence (clarity of feeling) and two factors of coping styles (reactive and suppressive) functioned as mediators between adult attachment and distress. Implications of the findings for the importance of considering both emotional intelligence and coping styles in the investigation of the attachment-distress relationship are discussed.</p>
Keywords	Adult attachment, Emotional intelligence, Coping style, Psychological distress, Interpersonal distress
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# Emotional Intelligence and Coping Style as Mediators between Adult Attachment and Distress

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of emotional intelligence and coping styles as mediators in the relationship between adult attachment and distress. Participants were 337 undergraduate students from University of Yangon who completed a battery of self-report questionnaires, including Outcome Questionnaire, Trait Meta-Mood Scale, Problem-Focused Styles of Coping Scale, Adult Attachment Scale, and Inventory of Interpersonal Problems. The results of the multiple regression analyses revealed that adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) was a positive significant predictor to psychological and interpersonal distress, whereas adult attachment security (secure) was a negative significant predictor to psychological and interpersonal distress. The mediational analyses revealed that one factor of emotional intelligence (clarity of feeling) and two factors of coping styles (reactive and suppressive) functioned as mediators between adult attachment and distress. Implications of the findings for the importance of considering both emotional intelligence and coping styles in the investigation of the attachment-distress relationship are discussed.

Keywords: *adult attachment, emotional intelligence, coping style, psychological distress, interpersonal distress.*

## Introduction

Attachment has been linked to a number of interpersonal and psychological patterns that stem from early infancy and persist into adulthood (Bowlby, 1969). Infants develop internal working models (i.e., expectations, beliefs, and scripts) about themselves and others based on how secure they feel relying on their caregiver for basic needs (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978). Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) represents an important theoretical perspective for understanding an individual's experience of negative mood and interpersonal problems. The basic premise of attachment theory is that individual's emotional experiences with primary caregivers lead to the development of attachment security or insecurity. Attachment security or insecurity is then associated with the individuals' ability to connect with others and cope with affective or stressful problems (e.g., Kobak & Sceery, 1988). If individuals have caregivers who are consistent in their emotional availability, they are likely to develop attachment security and can effectively cope with negative events that arise in their lives (e.g., seek support from a friend). If individuals do not have caregivers who are emotionally available, individuals are likely to develop attachment insecurity and subsequently be less able to cope with stressful events in their lives (e.g., withdraw from others). A large body of research on attachment styles in adolescents and adult has found that insecure attachment styles are significantly related to overall distress and disruptions and

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daily functioning.

Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) recently indicated that adult attachments could be described in terms of two orthogonal dimensions attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Adult attachment anxiety is defined as the fear of rejection and abandonment. Adult attachment avoidance is characterized as the fear of intimacy and discomfort with closeness and dependence. In the attachment literature, it is well documented that the presence of these attachment dimensions are positively linked to indices of psychological distress such as depression and anxiety (e.g., Lopez, Mauricio, Gormley, Simko, & Berger, 2001), negative affect (e.g., Simpson, 1990), pathological narcissism (Wagner & Tangney, 1991), emotional distress and nervousness (Collins, 1996), and general distress symptoms (Lopez, Mitchell, & Gormley, 2002). In addition, these two dimensions of attachment have been positively linked to interpersonal difficulties (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), increased feelings of loneliness (Shaver & Hazan, 1989), and greater hostility toward others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). In addition, studies have found that insecure attachment negatively affects one's ability to tolerate interpersonal disputes or relational dynamics (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

In the past decade, researchers have become increasingly interested in understanding how these attachment dimensions are associated with distress beyond the direct links. Many researchers have suggested that there is a need to expand the attachment literature by exploring the complex relations between attachment and distress. Studies have identified a small number of mediators between attachment and distress such as dysfunctional attitudes and low self-esteem (Roberts, Gotlib, & Kassel, 1996), problem-focused coping (Wei et al., 2003), self-splitting and self-concealment (Lopez et al., 2002), maladaptive perfectionism (Wei et al., 2004), and social competencies and emotional awareness (Mallinckrodt & Wei, in press).

Research has also examined other factors that are linked to attachment and psychological and interpersonal distress. Emotional intelligence has been cited as the "emotional correlate" of the attachment construct (Kim, 2005), and has been found to predict an individual's level of psychological and interpersonal distress (Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2006). Emotional intelligence is being concerned with understanding oneself and others, relating to people, and adapting to and coping with the immediate surroundings to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands (Bar-On, 2006). Over the last decade, a body of work on attachment orientations has also provided a coherent account of individual differences in cognitive and affective processes related to EI abilities

(e.g. Collins, 1996). Attachment theory highlights the interpersonal roots of adult emotionality contending that emotional defenses associated with insecure attachment inhibit information processing of emotional messages, and block awareness of feelings and intentions in self and others (Bowlby, 1969). Adult attachment orientations incorporate both affective and cognitive rules and strategies that drive emotional reactions in individuals and relationships. Secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant persons employ fundamentally different strategies of affect regulation and emotion information processing (Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996).

Furthermore, coping style has been identified as a crucial link between attachment style and distress levels (Lopez, Mitchell & Gormley, 2002). Researchers have found that Bowlby's attachment theory (1973) has important implications for counseling (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). A central feature of Bowlby's theory is that the security of the bonds developed in childhood with caregivers affects psychological adjustment and coping resilience and conversely that insecure attachment is associated with relatively ineffective coping.

One line of research using problem-solving appraisal has shown a strong link between applied problem solving or coping and psychological distress. A growing body of research suggests that perceived problem-solving effectiveness is related to psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, hopelessness, anger, and interpersonal distress (Heppner & Lee, 2002).

From the above review and discussion, it is clear that there are well-established links among attachment, perceived problem solving, and psychological distress (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Persons with either attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance tend to use ineffective coping strategies, which in turn increase their levels of psychological distress. However, few studies have tested a mediational model to explore how affect regulation or cognitive processes (e.g., perceived coping) might mediate the link between attachment and psychological distress suggested by Kenny and Rice (1995). Lopez et al. (2001) reported result of regression analyses suggesting that problem coping styles partially mediate the impact of attachment anxiety on distress, and further that after attachment anxiety is controlled for, attachment avoidance is not significantly related to distress. Such research could form the basis for useful clinical interventions. If perceived coping is a mediator of the link between attachment and psychological distress, it may be possible to intervene by increasing people's perception of their coping effectiveness and thereby decrease their distress.

Despite the proliferation of studies examining the role of adult attachment styles in love relationships, work-family relationships and well-being (e.g., May Lwin Nyein & Nilar Kyu, 2014; Mya Thitsa Kyaw, 2012; Yin Yin Lin & Khin Mar Mar, 2012), there has been a few research work conducted examining the complex relations between attachment and distress in Myanmar.

The objective of this study is to understand the nature of relations between adult attachment and distress in Myanmar by exploring the role of emotional intelligence (attention, and clarity) and coping styles (reflective, reactive and suppressive) in the relationship between adult attachment and interpersonal and psychological distress. More specifically, on the basic of the literature reviewed, we generated the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1:* Adult attachment insecurity will be associated with higher levels of interpersonal distress.

*Hypothesis 2:* Adult attachment insecurity will be associated with higher levels of psychological distress.

*Hypothesis 3:* Adult attachment security will be associated with lower levels of interpersonal distress.

*Hypothesis 4:* Adult attachment security will be associated with lower levels of psychological distress.

*Hypothesis 5:* The relationship between adult attachment and distress will be mediated by emotional intelligence.

*Hypothesis 6:* The relationship between adult attachment and distress will be mediated by coping styles.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Surveys were distributed to 350 students of eight Departments: Department of Law, Department of Psychology, Department of Geography, Department of Anthropology, Department of Geology, Department of Zoology, Department of Physics and Department of Computer Science in University of Yangon. A total of three hundred and thirty seven usable data were returned; including 233 females (69%) and 104 males (31%), who were between 16 and 20 years old ( $M = 17.41$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). About 42% of the participants were first year students and 58% were second year students.

### **Procedure**

Sampling of undergraduate students was pursued through a random selection of general department units. Permission for the participants to take part voluntarily in this study

during school time was obtained from Heads of eight Departments in University of Yangon. In March of 2015, a prospective sample of 350 undergraduate students was pooled and survey questionnaires were administered to all students present in the class on the scheduled day. The survey booklet contained a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting participation and a battery of self-report questionnaires. Participants were told that their surveys were anonymous and they could refuse if they wished. Confidentiality was ensured. Valid responses were obtained from 96% of the respondents – 337 undergraduate students.

## **Measures**

*Adult Attachment Style:* The Myanmar version of the 18-item Adult Attachment Scale was used to measure adult attachment style in this study. The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) was originally developed by Collin and Read (1990). Respondents were asked to read each item and rate the extent to which it corresponded to their general attachment style on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not at all characteristics (1)* to *very characteristics (5)*. The AAS has three attachment dimensions: depend, anxiety, and close. The items were translated into Myanmar by the researcher and checked by supervisor against the original version to ensure the conceptual equivalence of the Myanmar version to the original version. Results of the factor analysis, the Myanmar version of the AAS yielded three factors. They are Secure, Anxious, and Avoidant. Cronbach's alpha for these subscales in the current study were found to be .71 for Secure, .72 for Anxious, and .74 for Avoidant. The Secure subscale contains six items and measures a person's positive sense of worthiness and expectation that other people are available, accepting, and supportive. A sample item is "I am comfortable depending on others". The Anxious subscale contains six items and measures a person's fear of abandonment or unloved. A sample item is "I often worry that my partner does not really love me". The Avoidant subscale contains six items and measures a person's fear of intimacy and desire of independence. A sample item is "I am nervous when anyone gets too close".

*Psychological Distress:* Psychological distress was measured with the 29-item Myanmar version of the Outcome Questionnaire. The Outcome Questionnaire (OQ) was originally developed by Lambert, Burlingame, Umphress, Hansen, Vermeersch, and Clouse (1996). It is a self-report measure that are designed to assess overall psychological functioning. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all (0)* to *extremely (4)*. The alpha for the OQ was found to be .92 in this study.

*Interpersonal Distress:* The 31-item Myanmar version of the Inventory of Interpersonal Problems was used to assess the levels of interpersonal distress. The Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP) was originally developed by Horowitz, Alden, Wiggins, & Pincus (2000). Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from *not at all* (0) to *extremely* (4). It consists of 2 dimensions: Dominance and Affiliation. Cronbach's alpha indicated acceptable reliabilities for two dimensions in the current study were .84 for Dominance and .73 for Affiliation. The alpha for the total IIP was .77. In this study, only the total scores of the Myanmar version of the IIP was used as a general indicator of interpersonal distress.

*Emotional Intelligence:* The 25-item Myanmar version of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale was used to measure emotional intelligence. It was originally developed by Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey and Palfai (1995). It has two factors in this study: Clarity and Attention. Participants are asked to rate how much they agree with each item on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Higher scores on each subscale indicate a higher level of functioning within that particular scale. In the present study, the alphas of the subscales were found to be .76 for Clarity and .74 for Attention.

*Coping Styles:* Coping styles was measured with the Myanmar version of the Problem-Focused Style of Coping Scale. The Problem-Focused Style of Coping Scale (PF-SOC) was originally developed by Heppner, Cook, Wright, & Johnson (1995). It comprises 18 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *almost never* (1) to *almost all of the time* (5). The PF-SOC consists of three separate subscales: Reflective Style, Reactive Style, and Suppressive Style. In the present study, the coefficient alphas for all three subscales were .73 for Reflective, .69 for Reactive, and .60 for Suppressive.

*Demographic Questionnaire:* This questionnaire included demographic variables of particular interest as control variables (i.e., age, sex, marital status, education level, and living styles).

## **Results**

### **Correlation analyses**

Intercorrelations among the variables, along with reliabilities, means and standard deviations for the measures used in the study, are presented in Table 1. First, an examination of the relationship between secure attachment style and distress (psychological and interpersonal), revealed significantly negative correlation ( $r=-.32, p<.001$ ,  $r=-.20, p<.001$ ).

**Table 1 Means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients and intercorrelations among study variables**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	17.41	0.69						
2. Sex	1.69	0.46	-.12*					
3. Education	1.58	0.49	.59***	.01				
4. Life Style	2.51	0.59	-.03	-.04	-.07			
5. Secure	21.00	4.63	-.10	-.04	-.14**	.03	(.71)	
6. Anxious	16.57	5.04	-.01	-.05	-.02	-.15**	-.24***	(.72)
7. Avoidant	16.22	4.40	.10	-.01	.14**	.02	-.36***	.11*
8. Clarity of feeling	43.61	8.59	-.02	-.06	-.02	.11	.37***	-.30***
9. Attention to feeling	32.61	7.73	-.01	-.14**	.02	-.12*	-.01	.17**
10. Reflective	23.25	5.27	-.05	-.01	-.03	-.04	.27***	.08
11. Reactive	15.53	4.29	-.04	-.13*	.03	-.21***	-.14**	.31***
12. Suppressive	12.50	3.77	-.01	-.11*	-.03	-.02	-.18***	.14**
13. Psychological distress	46.31	18.00	.01	.00	.05	-.15**	-.32***	.34***
14. Interpersonal distress	45.76	12.41	.11*	-.24***	.05	-.12*	-.20***	.34***

Regarding individuals with insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant), there were significant positive correlations with distress (psychological and interpersonal) ( $r=.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $r=.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $r=.31$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $r=.24$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Secure attachment style showed a significantly positive correlation with clarity of feeling ( $r=.37$ ,  $p<.001$ ) but not with attention to feelings ( $r=-.01$ , ns). Individuals with anxious attachment style revealed significantly negative correlation with clarity of feeling ( $r=-.30$ ,  $p<.001$ ), however they have positive correlation with attention to feelings ( $r=.17$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Regarding individuals with avoidant attachment pattern, significant negative correlations were found with clarity of feeling ( $r=-.26$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and attention to feelings ( $r=-.15$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Secure attachment style showed significantly positive correlation with reflective ( $r=.27$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and negative correlations with reactive ( $r=-.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and suppressive ( $r=-.18$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Anxious attachment style had a significantly positive correlation with reactive ( $r=.31$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and suppressive ( $r=.14$ ,  $p=.01$ ), and avoidant attachment style showed a significantly positive correlation with reactive ( $r=.16$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and suppressive ( $r=.34$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Anxious and avoidant attachment styles were not significantly correlation with reflective coping style ( $r=.08$ , ns,  $r=-.00$ , ns).

Moreover, as shown in Table 1, psychological and interpersonal distress revealed significantly negative correlation with clarity of feeling ( $r=-.65$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $r=-.36$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The psychological and interpersonal distress was not significantly correlated with attention to feelings ( $r=-.02$ , ns,  $r=-.01$ , ns). Further, psychological distress had a significant negative correlation with reflective ( $r=-.16$ ,  $p<.01$ ), but significantly positive correlation with reactive and suppressive ( $r=.51$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $r=.51$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Interpersonal distress was significantly positive correlation with reactive and suppressive ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $r=.40$ ,  $p<.001$ ) but not with reflective ( $r=-.02$ , ns).

Table 1 ~ Continued.

	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age								
2. Sex								
3. Education								
4. Life Style								
5. Secure								
6. Anxious								
7. Avoidant	(.74)							
8. Clarity of feeling	-.26***	(.76)						
9. Attention to feeling	-.15**	.01	(.74)					
10. Reflective	-.00	.36***	.05	(.73)				
11. Reactive	.16**	-.44***	.22***	.02	(.69)			
12. Suppressive	.34***	-.43***	-.06	-.19***	.41***	(.60)		
13. Psychological distress	.31***	-.65***	-.02	-.16**	.51***	.50***	(.92)	
14. Interpersonal distress	.24***	-.36***	-.01	-.02	.51***	.40***	.49***	(.77)

Note: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001, Sex (male=1, female=2), Life Style (living alone=1, living in hostel=2, living with family =3).

### Regression analysis

In order to test our hypotheses, regression analyses were conducted. In each regression analysis, age, sex, education, and life style were used at the first step of analysis as control demographic variables. Subsequently, on the second step, psychological distress and interpersonal distress were regressed on one of the three attachment styles (see Table 2). For the predictive effect of secure attachment on psychological distress, result was shown in regression equation 1 of Table 2. The combination of all the variables accounted for 12% of psychological distress' variance. After controlling for demographic variables (age, sex, education, and life style), secure attachment significantly explained 10% of the variances. Secure attachment was a negative predictor to psychological distress ( $\beta = -.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ). As shown in regression equation 2, the combination of all the variables explained 13% of the variances. After controlling for demographic variables (age, sex, education, and life style), anxious attachment significantly explained 11% of the variances. Anxious attachment was appeared as a positive predictor to psychological distress ( $\beta = .33$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Regression equation 3 showed the combination of all the variables explained 12% of the variances. After controlling for demographic variables (age, sex, education, and life style), avoidant attachment significantly explained 10% of the variances. Avoidant attachment had significantly positive relation to psychological distress ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In all regression equation of the Table 2, life style was significant predictor of psychological distress ( $\beta = -.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $\beta = -.16$ ,  $p<.01$ ). It means that respondents who are living alone were more likely to have psychological distress than others.

As shown in Table 2, the results of regression analyses on adult attachment styles as predictors of Interpersonal Distress are presented. Regression equation 1 showed the

**Table 2 Results of regression analysis with Adult Attachment as predictor of Distress**

	Psychological Distress				Interpersonal Distress			
	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	$\beta$	F	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	$\beta$	F
<b>Regression equation 1</b>								
Age	.02		-.04	2.02	.08		.07	7.19***
Sex			-.02				-.24***	
Education			.02				-.02	
Life Style			-.14**				-.12*	
Secure	.12	.10	-.32***	9.55***	.12	.04	-.20***	8.86***
<b>Regression equation 2</b>								
Age	.02		-.03	2.02	.08		.08	7.19***
Sex			.01				-.22***	
Education			.06				.01	
Life Style			-.09				-.08	
Anxious	.13	.11	.33***	10.03***	.18	.10	.31***	14.02***
<b>Regression equation 3</b>								
Age	.02		-.04	2.02	.08		.07	7.19***
Sex			-.01				-.23***	
Education			.02				-.03	
Life Style			-.16**				-.13*	
Avoidant	.12	.10	.32***	9.27***	.14	.06	.24***	10.38***

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

combination of all the variables explained 12% of the variances. After controlling for demographic variables (age, sex, education, and life style), secure attachment significantly explained 4% of the variances. Secure attachment was a negative predictor to interpersonal distress ( $\beta = -.20$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In regression equation 2, combination of all the variables explained 18% of the variances. After controlling for demographic variables (age, sex, education, and life style), anxious attachment significantly explained 10% of the variances. Anxious attachment was a positive explained 14% of the variances were presented in regression equation 3. After controlling for demographic variables (age, sex, education, and life style), avoidant attachment significantly explained 6% of the variances. Avoidant attachment had significantly positive relation to interpersonal distress ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

As shown in Table 2, Sex ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\beta = -.22$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\beta = -.23$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and life style ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p<.01$ ) were also significant predictors of interpersonal distress. Male respondents had higher scores of interpersonal distress than female respondents. Respondents who are living alone were more likely to have interpersonal distress than others.

Mediational analyses were conducted to investigate whether emotional intelligence and coping styles could account for the relationships found between adult attachments and distress (psychological and interpersonal). Following the method outlined by Baron & Kenny (1986), mediation is established when the following conditions are met: (1) a

significant relationship is found between the independence variables (adult attachment styles) and the presumed mediators (emotional intelligence, and coping styles); (2) a significant relationship is found between the presumed mediators (emotional intelligence, and coping styles) and the dependent variables (psychological and interpersonal distress); and (3) a significant association between the independent (adult attachment styles) and the dependent variables (psychological and interpersonal distress) is significantly reduced after statistically controlling for the presumed mediator. Conditions 1 and 2 were met in all cases. Therefore, three separate multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the mediational model for each case.

First, we conducted mediational analyses to investigate whether emotional intelligence could mediate for the relationship between adult attachment and psychological distress. Psychological distress was regressed on one of the three attachment styles first in each regression analysis. Subsequently, on the second step, clarity of feeling was added to

**Table 3 Results of regression analysis with Emotional Intelligence as mediators between Adult Attachment and Distress**

	Psychological Distress				Interpersonal Distress			
	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	$\beta$	F	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	$\beta$	F
<b>Regression equation 1</b>								
<i>Step 1</i>	.11			39.52***	.04			13.47***
Secure			-.32***				-.20***	
<i>Step 2</i>	.44			128.44***	.14			26.21***
Secure		.33	-.09		.10		-.07	
Clarity of feeling			-.62***				-.34***	
<i>Step 3</i>	.44			85.44***	.14			17.45***
Secure		.00	-.09		.00		-.07	
Clarity of feeling			-.62***				-.34***	
Attention to feeling			-.01				.01	
<b>Regression equation 2</b>								
<i>Step 1</i>	.12			45.31***	.11			42.27***
Anxious			.34***				.34***	
<i>Step 2</i>	.45			137.24***	.19			38.44***
Anxious		.33	.16***		.08		.25***	
Clarity of feeling			-.60***				-.29***	
<i>Step 3</i>	.45			91.91***	.19			25.70***
Anxious		.00	.17***		.00		.25***	
Clarity of feeling			-.60***				-.29***	
Attention to feeling			-.04				-.03	
<b>Regression equation 3</b>								
<i>Step 1</i>	.10			36.31***	.06			20.74***
Avoidant			.31***				.24***	
<i>Step 2</i>	.45			135.70***	.15			30.44***
Avoidant		.35	.15***		.09		.16***	
Clarity of feeling			-.61***				-.32***	
<i>Step 3</i>	.45			90.22***	.15			20.44***
Avoidant		.00	.15***		.00		.16***	
Clarity of feeling			-.61***				-.32***	
Attention to feeling			.01				.04	

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

the regression equation. Finally, attention to feeling was added on the third step to the regression equation to investigate whether the amount of variance accounted for by attachment style would be reduced. The results are presented in Table 3.

In the first regression equation, the relationship between secure attachment and psychological distress was reduced and became non-significant by clarity of feeling. But attention to feeling cannot reduce the relationship between secure attachment and psychological distress. In the second regression equation, the relationship between anxious attachment and psychological distress was reduced but remained significant by clarity of feeling. However, after entering for attention to feeling, the relationship between anxious attachment and psychological distress was not reduced. In the third regression equation, the relationship between avoidant attachment and psychological distress was reduced but remained significant by clarity of feeling. Attention to feeling was not mediated the relationship between avoidant attachment and psychological distress.

Second, mediational analyses were conducted to investigate whether emotional intelligence could mediate for the relationship between adult attachment and interpersonal distress (see Table 3). Interpersonal distress was regressed on one of the three attachment styles first in each regression analysis. On the second step, clarity of feeling was added to the regression equation. Finally, attention to feeling was added on the third step to the regression equation to investigate whether the amount of variance accounted for by attachment style would be reduced.

In the first regression equation, the relationship between secure attachment and interpersonal distress was reduced and became non-significant by clarity of feeling. But attention to feeling cannot reduce the relationship between secure attachment and interpersonal distress. In the second regression equation, the relationship between anxious attachment and interpersonal distress was reduced but remained significant by clarity of feeling. However, after entering for attention to feeling, the relationship between anxious attachment and interpersonal distress was not reduced. In the third regression equation, the relationship between avoidant attachment and interpersonal distress was reduced but remained significant by clarity of feeling. But attention to feeling cannot mediate the relationship between avoidant attachment and interpersonal distress. Therefore, emotional intelligence partially mediated the relationship between adult attachment and psychological and interpersonal distress.

Third, mediational analyses were conducted to investigate whether coping styles could mediate for the relationship between adult attachment and psychological distress.

Psychological distress was regressed on one of the three attachment styles first in each regression analysis. On the second step, reflective style was added to the regression equation. Afterwards, on the third step, reactive style was added to the regression equation. In the final step, suppressive style was added to the regression equation to investigate whether the

**Table 4 Results of regression analysis with Coping Styles as mediators between Adult Attachment and Distress**

	Psychological Distress				Interpersonal Distress			
	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	β	F	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	β	F
<b>Regression equation 1</b>								
<i>Step 1</i>	.11			39.52***	.04			13.47***
Secure			-.32***				-.20***	
<i>Step 2</i>	.11	.00		21.06***	.04	.00		6.97***
Secure			-.30***				-.21***	
Reflective			-.08				.04	
<i>Step 3</i>	.34			56.54***	.27			41.45***
Secure		.23	-.23***			.23	-.13**	
Reflective			-.11*				.01	
Reactive			.48***				.49***	
<i>Step 4</i>	.41			57.90***	.31			37.59***
Secure		.07	-.20***			.04	-.11*	
Reflective			-.06				.05	
Reactive			.36***				.40***	
Suppressive			.31***				.22***	
<b>Regression equation 2</b>								
<i>Step 1</i>	.12			45.30***	.11			42.28***
Anxious			.35***				.34***	
<i>Step 2</i>	.16	.04		30.78***	.11	.00		21.46***
Anxious			.36***				.34***	
Reflective			-.19***				-.04	
<i>Step 3</i>	.34			56.08***	.29			46.02***
Anxious		.18	.22***			.18	.20***	
Reflective			-.19***				-.04	
Reactive			.45***				.44***	
<i>Step 4</i>	.42			58.82***	.33			41.65***
Anxious		.08	.21***			.04	.19***	
Reflective			-.13**				.00	
Reactive			.32***				.35***	
Suppressive			.32***				.23***	
<b>Regression equation 3</b>								
<i>Step 1</i>	.10			36.31***	.06			20.74***
Avoidant			.31***				.24***	
<i>Step 2</i>	.12	.02		23.74***	.06	.00		10.39***
Avoidant			.31***				.24***	
Reflective			-.16**				.01	
<i>Step 3</i>	.34			58.54***	.28			43.82***
Avoidant		.22	.24***			.22	.16***	
Reflective			-.17***				-.03	
Reactive			.48***				.48***	
<i>Step 4</i>	.39			54.58***	.31			37.43***
Avoidant		.05	.16***			.03	.11**	
Reflective			-.12**				.01	
Reactive			.38***				.41***	
Suppressive			.27***				.20**	

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

amount of variance accounted for by adult attachment style would be reduced. The results were shown in Table 4.

In the first regression equation, although the reflective coping style not mediated the relationship between secure attachment style and psychological distress, the secure itself has a strong negative predictor to psychological distress. Also, after entering for reactive style, secures were not experienced psychological distress. Similarly, when suppressive style added to the regression equation, secures were also negatively related to psychological distress. In the second and third regression equation, the reflective coping style did not contribute to mediate the relationship between adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) and psychological distress. In the second step, after entering for reactive coping style, the relationship between adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) and psychological distress was reduced but remained significant. Suppressive coping style also reduced the relationship between adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) and psychological distress.

Finally, mediational analyses were conducted to investigate whether coping styles could mediate for the relationship between adult attachment and interpersonal distress. Interpersonal distress was regressed on one of the three attachment styles first in each regression analysis. On the second step, reflective style was added to the regression equation. Afterwards, on the third step, reactive style was added to the regression equation. In the final step, suppressive style was added to the regression equation to investigate whether the amount of variance accounted for by adult attachment style would be reduced. The results were shown in Table 4.

In the first regression equation, the reflective coping style not mediated the relationship between secure attachment style and interpersonal distress; however the secure attachment itself has a strong negative predictor to interpersonal distress. And, after entering for reactive coping style, individuals with secure attachment were not experience interpersonal distress. Similarly, when suppressive coping style was added to the regression equation, secure was also negatively related to interpersonal distress. In the second and third regression equation, the reflective coping style did not contribute to mediate the relationship between adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) and interpersonal distress. After entering for reactive coping style, the relationship between adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) and interpersonal distress was reduced but remained significant. Suppressive coping style also reduced the relationship between adult attachment insecurity

(anxious and avoidant) and interpersonal distress. Therefore, coping style partially mediated the relationship between adult attachment and psychological and interpersonal distress.

### **Discussion**

According to results, it was found out that adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) was associated with higher level of interpersonal distress, providing support for Hypothesis 1. On the other hand, adult attachment security (secure) was associate with lower level of interpersonal distress, resulting in support for Hypothesis 3. The current findings supported the previous studies. Anxious attachment style is focused on minimizing distance from others and obtains support through the use of clinging and controlling responses (Haggerty, Hilsenroth, & Vala-Stewart, 2009). Avoidant attachment style was related to independence and social withdrawal consistent with the deactivating attachment strategy (Fraley et al., 2000). Secure attachment manifests in low or balanced avoidance and anxiety, is proposed to create conditions for an open trusting interpersonal style and for the possibility to optimally explore one's environment (Grossman, Grossman, Kindler, & Zimmermann, 2008). The literature on attachment insecurity may contribute to the development of interpersonal distress by systematically biasing the processing of both past and future interpersonal information. Consequently, insecurely attached individuals may be hypervigilant for certain types of interpersonal threats (e.g., separation from a significant other, romantic rejection, etc.), distort inter-and intrapersonal feedback, and subsequently engage in maladaptive interpersonal behavior (e.g., excessive dependence or clinging) (Baldwin, 1992; Mikulincer, 1998). Furthermore, attachment insecurity may result in deficits in social skills and social competence that could produce problems in interpersonal functioning and decrease the likelihood of receiving positive benefits from social interaction (Doane & Diamond, 1994).

Moreover in this study, attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) was associated with higher level of psychological distress, providing support for Hypothesis 2. Otherwise, adult attachment security (secure) was associate with lower level of psychological distress, resulting in support for Hypothesis 4. Empirical evidence suggests that individuals high in attachment anxiety are preoccupied with relational distress, feelings of unworthiness, and excessive worry about the availability and responsiveness of others. Individuals high in attachment avoidance are uncomfortable with intimacy, are likely to suppress emotional responses, and are compulsively self-reliant during times of distress. Individuals with secure attachment have positive self-other perceptions, report higher levels of emotion regulation

and adjustment (Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998), and experience greater levels of psychological well-being. Similarly, insecure adult attachment has been found to be associated with affective distress, including depression (Kobak, Sudler, & Gamble, 1991); while, secure adult attachment appears to provide a buffer against the psychological distress typically associated with major life stressor (Hammen et al., 1995; Milkunicer et al., 1993).

Regarding gender, we found that male students reported higher interpersonal distress than female students. This is consistent with previous researches findings that, compared to women, men have more interpersonal distress related to being domineering, vindictive, and cold (Lippa, 1995) as well as greater difficulty on the some subscales such as “hard to be sociable, hard to be supportive, and hard to be involved” (Barkham et al., 1996). And, respondents who are living alone were more likely to have psychological distress and interpersonal distress than others. Shepherd (2012) reported that living alone might leave a person feeling isolated and slipping into a norm of not socializing and lacking trust of support, temper bad moods and others, perhaps even becoming socially more awkward. These can be markers for mental health problems. Raymo (2015) also proposed that individuals who live alone are less happy than individuals who living with others.

The meditational analysis revealed that emotional intelligence partially functioned as a mediator between adult attachment and psychological and interpersonal distress. Current findings in regard to emotional intelligence are also supported by previous researches. Specifically, clarity of emotion is associated with greater experience of positive affect (Emmons & Colby, 1994), positive well-being and affective well-being (Gohm & Clore, 2002; Lischetzke & Eid, 2003; Salovey et al., 1995), faster rebound from an induced negative mood (Salovey et al., 1995), adaptive coping styles as well as self-affirming attributions (i.e. stable, global, and internal) for the occurrence of positive events (Gohm & Clore, 2002a, 2002). On the other hand, clarity of emotion is negatively related to ambivalence over emotional expression, depression, neuroticism and mood lability, social anxiety, rumination, negative affect, vulnerability to distress, and levels of Weinberger Adjustment Inventory distress (Weinberger & Schwartz, 1990) which consists of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and low well-being (Lischetzke & Eid, 2003; Salovey et al., 1995; Salovey et al., 2002).

Whereas, attention to emotion is associated with a belief in the usefulness of expressing emotion (Emmons & Colby, 1994), private and public self-consciousness (Salovey et al., 1995), intensity of emotion (Emmons & Colby, 1994), and may also play a role in depression such that depressed individuals may allocate too much attention to their

emotions (Salovey et al., 1995). In addition, attention to emotional lies in the fact that people who pay a lot of attention to their emotions tend to initiate rumination cycles that can harm their psychological well being and their interpersonal functioning. Especially, individuals who are anxiously attached actively attend to their experience which further heightens their emotional distress. Salovey et al., (2002) proposed that attending to one's emotion too much has been associated with an increase in ruminative thought as well as anxiety and depression. Thus Hypothesis 5 was partially supported.

Finally, the meditational analysis revealed that coping styles partially functioned as a mediator between adult attachment and psychological and interpersonal distress, supporting Hypothesis 6. The results found out that the reflective coping style does not mediate the relationship between adult attachment and psychological distress. These findings support previous research that the reflective style does not appear to add unique understanding to this coping conceptualization, especially when consideration certain distress outcomes (Heppner et al., 1995) and thus is not included in a multitude of studies examining the relationship of problem-solving coping to multiple correlates (Lopez, Mauricio, Gormley, Simko, & Berger, 2001; Lopez, Mitchell, & Gormley, 2002; Wei, Heppner, & Mallinckrodt, 2003).

Furthermore, the results of the present study found out that adult attachment security (secure) was negatively related to coping styles (reactive and suppressive) and negatively related to psychological and interpersonal distress, whereas adult attachment insecurity (anxious and avoidant) was positively related to coping styles (reactive and suppressive) and positively related to psychological and interpersonal distress. Mikulincer and Florian (1998) argued that individual with secure attachment tend to cope with distress by acknowledging it, freely expressing emotion, and constructively coping with the distress. Conversely, people with anxious attachment tend to cope with distress by exaggerating the distress as threatening and uncontrollable, reacting with strong emotional responses (Lopez, Mauricio, Gormley, Simko, & Berger, 2001), and relying on others' reassurance to moderate affect.

Similarly, people with avoidant attachment tend to cope with distress by protecting themselves against others' rejection, inhibiting emotional displays, and denying negative affect. Thus, unfortunately, coping strategies preferred by adults with either anxious or avoidant attachment tend to be relatively ineffective and tend to actually increase their distress (Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Lopez et al., 2001; Mallinckrodt, 2001; Mikulincer & Florian, 1998).

The results of the current study have important implications for the field of psychology. Bowlby (1973) acknowledged that attachment patterns are difficult to change in

adulthood even though it is not impossible. Studies related to examining mediators of the relation between attachment and mental health outcomes are particularly important for counseling and psychotherapy because mediators can be potential interventions to help individuals relieve their distress. In addition, identifying the mediators can help individuals reduce the impact of attachment patterns without having to change the patterns, which is a more difficult task.

Therefore, given the observed importance of EI and coping, continuous development and participation in EI and coping training programs will be useful for individuals experiencing distress. Slaski and Cartwright (2003) recruited individuals to participate in an emotional intelligence training program which exposed them to emotional intelligence skills and allowed them to practice these skills in order to ensure learning occurred. Results of the training indicated not only increased EI scores but increased well-being. Along the same vein, making an effort to train counselors, supervisors, and educators in EI and coping skills appears a worthy endeavor. In fact, requiring the addition of an EI and coping style training in counseling graduate programs might be particularly useful.

The current study evidences that emotional intelligence and coping styles partially mediated the relationship between adult attachment and distress. The results further highlight the importance of considering both emotional intelligence and coping styles in the investigation of the attachment-distress relationship. The current study also suggests that emotional intelligence and coping uniquely relate to various forms of adult attachment. The results support previous research that focuses on the unique needs of individuals who evidence different forms of attachment styles (Wei, Vogel, Ku, & Zakalik, 2005). These results also suggest explicit interventions for counseling populations who evidence either an anxious or an avoidant attachment style. It is hoped that the current findings can assist psychologists who are performing brief therapy to target their treatment goals in a quick and effective manner. Therefore, if the psychologists identified the effective skills and strategies for insecurely attached individuals, they could use these skills and strategies to decrease the distress experienced by them.

In conclusion, the present study provides emotional intelligence and coping styles as mediators between adult attachment and distress. The current study only focused on alleviating deficits and distress of individuals. However, current research must also be conducted under a wellbeing approach. For example, instead of focusing on maladaptive one might want to focus on adaptive coping, and perhaps a well-being outcome instead of a distress one.

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