

**Reflective functioning, personality organization,  
and attachment security among Pakistani youth: a descriptive study.**



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## Research Completion Certificate

Certificate that the research work contained in this thesis titled “**Mediating Role of Sense of Self between Reflective Functioning and Secure Attachment**” has been carried out and completed by **Mr. Bilal Khalid Dogar, Student I.D No: 14004142010**; Student of M.Sc. Psychology, session 2014 – 2016, under my supervision. This study is an independent research work and carried out under given instruction and consideration.

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## **Declaration**

I, Bilal Khalid, Student No: 14004142010 student of M.Sc. in the subject of psychology, session of 2014 - 2016, hereby declare that the material printed in this thesis titled “Reflective functioning, personality organization, and attachment security among Pakistani youth: a descriptive study” is original work and has not been printed, published or submitted as research work, thesis or publication in any form in any university, research institution in Pakistan or abroad.

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## Table of Contents

No.		Page #
1	Introduction	10
2	Literature Review.	14
	Insecure Attachment and Emotion dysregulation	14
	Reflective Functioning and Secure Attachment	18
	The evidence from BPD studies	18
	Evidence beyond BPD studies	19
	Conflicting evidence from BPD patients	20
	Mentalization and Organization of Self	21
	Significance	22
	Objectives	22
	Hypotheses	23
3	Method	24
	Participants	24
	Measures	24
	Reflective Functioning	24
	Personality Organization	25
	Adult style of Attachment	26

	Procedure	26
4	Results	27
	Descriptive Statistics	27
	Gender differences	28
	Association Analysis	30
	Correlation Matrix showing Relationship of Study Variables	30
	Mediation Analysis	31
	Anxious Attachment Style	31
	Avoidant Attachment Style	31
5	Discussion	33
	Conclusion	36
6	References	36
	Appendices	42
	Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ)	42
	Inventory of Personality Organization (IPO)	47
	Emotions in Close Relationships (ECR-R)	55
	Informed Consent Letter	61
	Thesis Similarity Report	62

## Abstract

Reflective functioning is the capacity to reflect on our own mental experiences and experiences of others. It is a reflexive process with unconscious roots in the interpretation of each other's actions that develops in early childhood through the process of attachment with the primary caregiver. In addition, reflective functioning and attachment are both thought to be implicated in the development of personality. While this triadic relationship is supported by theory, empirical evidence for it is still lacking. In this observational study, we investigated the correlates of reflective functioning, attachment style and personality organization in a final sample of 91 teenagers and young adults (13-30 years) from Pakistan. We further conducted a mediation analysis to detect possible interaction effects between the sub scales of these constructs. The instruments administered were the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ; Fonagy & Ghanai, 2008), the Inventory of personality organization (IPO; Lenzenweger, Clarkin, Kernberg, & Foelsch, 2000), and the Experiences in Closed Relationships- Revised (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). Reflective functioning was found to be significantly correlated with two sub scales of personality organization, namely; primitive defenses and reality testing whereas there was no significant correlation with identity diffusion. On the other hand, primitive defenses and identity diffusion were found to be significantly correlated with anxious attachment and avoidant attachment style. Reality testing was significantly correlated with anxious attachment but not with avoidant attachment style. Mediation analysis revealed that there was significant negative indirect association of anxious attachment with reflective functioning through primitive defenses and through reality testing but not through identity diffusion. Also there was significant negative indirect association of avoidant attachment with reflective functioning through primitive defenses but not through identity diffusion and reality testing.

### Keywords:

Reflective functioning, borderline personality organization, attachment styles, reality testing, primitive defenses, sense of self, identity diffusion

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Since eternity, the self has been the topic of interest for scholars and philosophers. Iqbal (1940) sees all life as individual and puts forward his belief that there is no such thing as universal. He explains that, in the highest form of individuality a person becomes self contained exclusive center and this form is achieved through evolution. As human beings we begin in a state of chaos and an evolution is ensued from chaos to cosmos. Uniqueness in the self is characterized by how self is organized. Individuals differ in all areas such as beliefs, desires, motivations etc. Undoubtedly, the human high level cognitive capacity, that is rationality, plays a determining role in how the self is organized as it is intimately involved in self defining features such as self-consciousness, integrity, responsibility and freedom (Bolton & Hill, 1996). But the interplay of rationality with these features forms an intentional stance. This intentional stance is relevant to a person and how the self is organized. It ensures continuity of the experience, developing a coordinated self-structure which helps in understanding and explanation of the behavior (Fonagy & Target, 1997).