

WITNESSED BETRAYAL TRAUMA, ANTICIPATORY MISTRUST AND ADULT ATTACHMENT PATTERN IN YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to study the relationship in witnessed betrayal trauma, anticipatory mistrust and adult attachment patterns in university students. The sample comprised of 100 students from various universities with ages ranging between 18-25 ($M=21.14$, $S.D.=1.71$). A correlational design was used and data was collected using purposive sampling. Participants completed a socio-demographic sheet, Betrayal Response Scale, Two-Dimensional Interpersonal Trust Scale and Short Form of Attachment Style Questionnaire. Results revealed that witnessed betrayal had significant positive relationship with attachment patterns and a negative relationship with trust dimensions and confidence in interactions. Other focused trust showed a positive relationship with discomfort to closeness, secondary relationships and confidence in interactions. While propensity to trust also had the same positive relation but was negatively related to avoidant attachment. Trust dimensions significantly predicted attachment patterns and partially mediated witnessed betrayal's relationships with anxious and avoidant attachment, discomfort with closeness, secondary relationships, and need for approval. However, no mediation was found for preoccupation with relationships or confidence in interaction. Overall, these results suggest that trust plays an important role in relating witnessed betrayal with attachment patterns.

I. INTRODUCTION

Relationship formation is very crucial for all individuals at every stage of life especially in a period of young adulthood. These relationships are built on the basis of trust, emotions and attachment. They also shape our expectations about ourselves and the world around us. If a person forms positive relationships with others, it not only helps in building secure connections but also fosters trust. However, on the other hand, negative and traumatic relationships lead to disruptive trust and poor interpersonal security. Similarly, witnessed betrayal trauma, which can be defined as a trauma that one develops after observing someone close to them like a parent, close friend, relatives being deceived, manipulated and emotionally harmed is also one such experience which causes a person to have beliefs of relationships being untrustworthy (Freyd, 2008; Platt & Freyd, 2015). Vicariously experiences can include parental infidelity, dishonesty, broken trust and emotional neglect. Such experiences leave a long last impact increasing distress for an individual even if he is not directly betrayed or harmed. Such practices can make a person believe that close relationships are not to be trusted which increases their doubt and insecurity.

As the Betrayal Trauma Theory states that betrayal especially from a close one disturbs a person's sense of security, safety and trust (Freyd, 2008). Likewise, the Attachment Theory also suggests that attachment with early care givers also shapes our expectations and attachment in our future relationships (Bowlby, 1973).

Similarly, Cognitive Schema Theory states that when an individual experiences negative interpersonal events or have gone through adverse circumstances so it results in the formation of negative schemas which harm confidence in relationships (Beck, 1967; Young, 1990). Previous researches also support these ideas by stating that betrayal or disturbing experiences can cause a person to develop trust issues as well as insecure attachment patterns. Studies have also found that betrayal trauma is directly linked to a person developing anxious and avoidant attachment. In the same way, it is also linked to an individual reporting lower levels of trust. Therefore, the overall quality of parental care plays a role in the formation of insecure or secure attachment. If adequate caregiving is provided it leads to secure attachment while on the other hand unreliable caregiving leads to insecure attachment (O'Connor et al., 2019). When a person's trust is harmed repeatedly through untrustworthy experiences, they develop an expectation of others being unreliable or dishonest before any betrayal happens. This refers to anticipatory mistrust. It results in an individual developing anxiety, being avoidant or always acting guarded which then affects attachment patterns in long term. Research shows that trauma is related to an individual being hyper vigilant and having difficulties with trust in interpersonal relationships (Yilmaz et al., 2022). Our beliefs about trust influence adult attachment styles. Individuals concerned about rejection have a tendency to look for reassurance. On the other hand, those who avoid closeness might feel uncomfortable with intimacy and keep their distance emotionally. In adult relationships, attachment styles can appear as needing approval, being constantly focused on relationships, feeling peculiar about being too close to someone, lack of prioritization of relationships, or feeling confident when interacting with others.

Prior researches have shown that experiencing betrayal or encountering childhood hardships can lead to anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, being suspicious of others' emotions, and having trouble with intimacy (Goldsmith, 2012; Widom et al., 2008). This indicates that struggle in relationships can shape how adults act in their relationships in the future. It influences their expectations from others, specifically about their lack of trust around people. Social Learning Theory also states that a person learns through observation and imitation of his surroundings (Bandura, 1977). Thus, if an individual has witnessed traumatic experiences he may learn the similar relational patterns. This can not only tarnish trust but also affect future relationship building. Likewise, Social Information Processing Theory suggests that past relationship experiences affect how we notice and understand social cues. This indicates that witnessing betrayal makes a person more aware of potential threats in relationships. This can result in increased closer attention to certain things, avoid getting too close, or being very sensitive to rejection (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge et al., 2015). An individual's belief in their ability to handle tough situations, called self-efficacy, also plays a role in how he handles relationships. It affects how people deal with difficulties. People who feel more confident in their abilities handle relationship issues competently. Those with less confidence avoid dealing problems and feel distressed. Therefore, self-efficacy explains why some individuals react strongly to betrayal in relationships. Previous researches examined that relationship problems, betrayal, trust, and adult attachment are related. However, there is limited literature on vicarious experiences of betrayal especially in collectivistic culture like Pakistan where loyalty and close emotional bonds are highly valued, so witnessing betrayal within family may influence later relational patterns and interpersonal growth. Thus, this study explores the experiences of trauma from witnessing betrayal, beliefs about trust, and adult attachment patterns in young adults. It also studies self-efficacy as an important psychological factor. By investigating these variables together, this research aims to offer a complete understanding of how witnessing betrayal relates to trust and formation of attachment patterns during young adulthood.

Hypotheses

1. There is likely to be a positive relationship between witnessed betrayal trauma and anxious attachment style, avoidant attachment style, need for approval, preoccupation with relationships, discomfort with closeness, and viewing relationships as secondary.
2. There is likely to be a negative relationship between witnessed betrayal trauma and other-focused trust, propensity to trust and confidence in interpersonal interactions.

3. Other-focused trust and propensity to trust are negatively related to anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, discomfort with closeness, relationships as secondary, preoccupation with relationships, need for approval.
4. Other-focused trust and propensity to trust are positively related to confidence in interaction.
5. Anticipatory mistrust will mediate the relationship between witnessed betrayal, preoccupation with relationships, need for approval, discomfort with closeness, relationships as secondary and confidence in self.
6. Witnessed betrayal trauma, propensity to trust, and other-focused trust are likely to significantly predict the anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, need for approval, preoccupation with relationships, discomfort with closeness, tendency to view relationships as secondary and confidence in interactions.

II. METHOD

Research Design

A correlational research design was used. Participant were taken from public and private sector universities of Lahore through purposive sampling which facilitated the selection of individuals with specific characteristics relevant to the study. The sample comprised of 100 university students aged 18-25 ($M = 21.14$, $SD = 1.71$). for sample description, see Table 1. Sample includes all the participants who have suffered through witnessed betrayal trauma. Participants who have any psychological disorder diagnosed by a professional were screened out from the study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=100)

Demographic Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Boys	26	26
Girls	74	74
Number of Siblings		
0-3	62	62
4-6	32	32
7-10	06	06
Education		
Inter/A level	20	20
Bachelors	77	77
Masters	03	03
Residential Background Area		
Urban	82	82
Rural	18	18
Family System		
Nuclear	82	82
Joint	18	18
Socio-economic status		
Low	05	05
Middle	86	86
High	09	09
General Home Environment		
Unsatisfactory	10	10
Neutral	34	34
Satisfactory	56	56

Measures

[1] Socio-Demographic Tool: Demographic questionnaire includes questions about background variables such as age, gender, family system, institute, general home environment, and their experiences related to betrayal events.

[2] Two-Dimensional Interpersonal Trust scale (TDITS; Zhang, 2021): The Two-Dimensional Interpersonal Trust Scale (TDITS; Zhang, 2021) was adapted into the Two-Dimensional Anticipatory Interpersonal Trust Scale (2D-AITS). It is an 11-item self-report measure that assesses other focused trust and propensity to trust. The items of the questionnaire were modified to represent expectations of others' future behavior. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert type scale. The original scale indicated Cronbach $\alpha = .89$ for other focused trust and $\alpha = .75$ for propensity to trust (Wang et al., 2023). In the present study, Cronbach's α was .58 for other-focused trust and .46 for propensity to trust. **[3]** Betrayal Response Scale ([BRS]; Komolafe & Shah, 2016): The Betrayal Response Scale (BRS; Komolafe & Shah, 2016) is a 29-item self-report measure which is used to assess social, personal, and behavioral responses related to betrayal trauma. It is based on two dimensions, Internalized Negative Emotions and Negative Interpersonal Responses; according to the author composite score was used in the present study. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). In the present study, BRS was adapted to indicate responses to witnessed betrayal trauma. Minor modifications included adding specific instructions and converting items to past tense. Pilot study indicated $\alpha = .76$ for the original version and $\alpha = .78$ for the modified version. The modified BRS demonstrated good internal consistency in the main study $\alpha = .85$.

[4] The Attachment Style Questionnaire ([ASQ-SF]; Feeney et al., 2010): The Attachment Style Questionnaire–Short Form (ASQ-SF; Feeney et al., 2010) is a 29-item self-report instrument used to examine adult attachment patterns in close relationships. It measures five attachment-related dimensions: Confidence, Need for Approval, Preoccupation with Relationships, Discomfort with Closeness, and Relationships as Secondary. The scale also gives two broader dimensions, Avoidant Attachment and Anxious Attachment, calculated from relevant subscale scores. Participants rate items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The ASQ-SF has demonstrated good internal consistency and an average construct validity across Western and Asian populations (Feeney et al., 1994; Iwanaga et al., 2017). In the present study, avoidant attachment indicates $\alpha = .83$ and for anxious attachment $\alpha = .62$. **[5]** General Self-Efficacy Scale ([GSES]; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995): The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) is a 10-item self-report measure that assess an individual's belief in their ability to cope with challenges, difficult situations, and to achieve desired goals. Participants respond on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The GSES has strong psychometric properties across diverse cultural contexts, including high internal consistency, satisfactory test–retest reliability, and stable construct validity. Cross-cultural validation across 25 countries has further supported its reliability (Scholz et al., 2002). In the present study, the GSES demonstrated internal consistency $\alpha = .89$.

Procedure

After the finalization of topic including consultation from the supervisor, approval of ethical committee was obtained. Permissions to use scales and questionnaires was requested from the respective authors through email. Due to smart lockdown the data collection was shifted to online mode and formal permission letter for data collection could not be obtained. The form included sociodemographic questionnaire, information sheet, informed consent form and study questionnaires. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were asked to answer truthfully, and their information was treated confidentially. A total of 150 participants were approached, 107 of them responded with a response rate of 71%. Out of these, 7 of the respondents were screened out as they did not fulfil the criteria.

III. RESULTS

Using IBM statistics SPSS, descriptive statistics and inferential analyses, such as Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Multiple Hierarchical regression and Mediation analysis were run to determine the relationship and predictive and mediating effects in study variables.

Table II: Frequency and Percentage of Demographic of the Participants (N=100)

Demographic Characteristics	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	%
At which age did you witness this betrayal?	17.1	2.88		
Whose relationship did you witness this betrayal in?				
Immediate Family			11	11
Close Relatives			31	31
Romantic Partners of others			10	10
Close Friends			48	48
What type of betrayal was witnessed by you?				
Infidelity/ Cheating			22	22
Deception/ Dishonesty			24	24
Abandonment/Emotional Neglect			54	54
How emotionally impactful was this experience for you at that time?				
Mild			03	03
Moderate			06	06
Severe			91	91
Do past experiences of seeing someone being betrayed make you believe that other appear sincere and kind only for personal gain?				
Not at all			10	10
To some extent			66	66
To a great extent			24	24
Before forming close relationship do you expect that others eventually hurt/betray you?				
Never			06	06
Rarely			11	11
Sometimes			46	46
Often			22	22
Always			15	15
Have you ever avoided/ delayed close relationship due to fear of emotional harm?				
Yes			82	82
No			18	18

Note. *M*= Mean; *SD*= Standard Deviation; *n*=frequency; %= percentage

Data revealed that the majority of participants had witnessed betrayal between the ages of 7 and 22 years, with a mean age of 17.17, primarily in the form of abandonment/ emotional neglect, especially among close friends. This had significant unfavorable emotional influence on their relationships, with many participants delaying future relationships and perceived others often act sincere for personal gain and may eventually hurt or betray sometimes.

Table II: Pearson's correlation between the study variables

Scales/Subscales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. General Self-Efficacy	-	-.21*	.23*	.25**	.21*	.25*	.22*	-.32**	-.26**	-.23*	.21*
2. Witnessed betrayal		-	-.20*	-.20*	.23*	.21*	.20*	.44**	.45**	.37**	-.21*
3. Other-focused Trust			-	.40**	-.20*	.20*	.20*	-.21*	-.21*	-.21*	.26**
4. Propensity to Trust				-	-.20*	.20*	.20*	.21*	.21*	.21*	.32**
5. Avoidant Attachment					-	.78**	.68**	.29**	.34**	.31**	.20*
6. Discomfort with closeness						-	.50**	.38**	.43**	.39**	.31**
7. Relationship as Secondary							-	.21*	.20*	.20*	.26**
8. Anxious attachment								-	.87**	.90**	.21*
9. Preoccupation with Relationships									-	.71**	.34**
10. Need for Approval										-	.37**
11. Confidence in Interactions											-

p*< .05, *p*< .01

Results showed that self-efficacy had significant positive relationship with trust dimensions, avoidant attachment, discomfort with closeness, relationships as secondary and confidence in interactions. In contrast, self-efficacy had significant negative relationship with witnessed betrayal, anxious attachment, preoccupation with relationships and need for approval. Witnessed betrayal had significant positive relationship with attachment patterns while negative relationship with trust dimensions and confidence in interaction. Other-focused trust had significant positive relationship with discomfort with closeness, relationships as secondary and confidence in interactions while negative correlation with anxious and avoidant attachment, preoccupation with relationships and need for approval. However, propensity to trust had significant positive relationship with discomfort with closeness, relationships as secondary, anxious attachment, preoccupation with relationship, need for approval and confidence in interactions while negative relationship with avoidant attachment.

Table III: Hierarchical Regression Models Predicting Attachment Subscales

Model	Predictor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Model 1	Age	.07	.08	.05	.05	.06	.05	-.05
	Gender	-.04	.06	-.04	.05	.05	.05	.05
	Unsatisfactory vs Neutral	-.09	.09	-.08	.08	.07	.07	-.06
	Unsatisfactory vs Satisfactory	.10	-.12	.09	-.09	-.09	-.08	.07
	Low vs High Income	.08	-.07	.08	-.06	-.06	-.06	.05
	Low vs Middle Income	-.05	.05	-.04	.04	.04	.04	-.04
	Family System	.05	-.04	.05	-.04	-.04	-.04	.05
	General Self-Efficacy	.23	-.25	.20	.20	-.22	-.21	.23
	R ²	.20	.24	.18	.16	.22	.20	.19
	ΔR ²	.20	.24	.18	.16	.22	.20	.19
Model 2	Age	.07	.09	.06	.05	.07	.06	-.06
	Gender	-.04	.06	-.04	.05	.05	.05	.05
	Unsatisfactory vs Neutral	-.10	.10	-.09	.08	.08	.08	-.07
	Unsatisfactory vs Satisfactory	.11	-.13	.10	-.09	-.10	-.09	.08
	Low vs High Income	.09	-.08	.08	-.06	-.07	-.07	.06
	Low vs Middle Income	-.06	.06	-.05	.04	.05	.04	-.04
	Family System	.05	-.05	.05	-.04	-.04	-.05	.06
	General Self-Efficacy	.25	-.26	.22	.22	-.23	-.24	.26
	Witnessed Betrayal	.30	.40	.33	.26	.37	.33	-.21
	R ²	.32	.40	.31	.27	.39	.35	.28
	ΔR ²	.12	.16	.13	.11	.17	.15	.09
Model 3	Age	.10*	.10**	.07	.06	.08**	.07*	-.07
	Gender	-.05	.07*	-.05	.06	.06	.06	.06
	Unsatisfactory vs Neutral	-.11**	.12**	-.10*	.10*	.10**	.09*	-.08*
	Unsatisfactory vs Satisfactory	.13**	-.14**	.12	-.11*	-.12**	-.11*	.10*
	Low vs High Income	.10*	-.09	.09*	-.07	-.08	-.08*	.07
	Low vs Middle Income	-1.71	.07	-.06	.05	.06	.05	-.05
	Family System	.06	-.06	.06	-.05	-.05	-.06	.07
	General Self-Efficacy	.27**	-.31**	.26**	.24**	-.27**	-.26**	.29**
	Witnessed Betrayal	.36**	.44**	.35**	.29**	.42**	.39**	-.24**
	Other-focused Trust	-.23**	-.27**	-.25**	-.22**	-.24**	-.24*	.26**
	Propensity to Trust	-.21**	.22**	-.20**	-.19*	-.22**	-.22**	.25**
	R ²	.44	.53	.43	.39	.52	.48	.41
	ΔR ²	.12	.13	.12	.12	.13	.13	.13

Note. N = 100. Subscales: 1 = Avoidant Attachment; 2 = Anxious Attachment; 3 = Discomfort with Closeness; 4 = Relationship as Secondary; 5 = Preoccupation with Relationships; 6 = Need for Approval; 7 = Confidence in Interpersonal Interactions. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Results revealed that general self-efficacy, home environment, witnessed betrayal and trust dimensions significantly predict all different attachment patterns. Other covariates like age significantly predicts avoidant attachment, anxious attachment, preoccupation with relationship and need for approval, gender significantly predicts anxious attachment, and high income significantly predicts avoidant attachment, discomfort with closeness and need for approval. Moreover, Model 3 of all attachment patterns explains 44%, 53%, 43%, 39%, 52%, 48% and 41% variance and 12%, 13%, 12%, 12%, 13%, 13% and 13% change in variance respectively.

Table IV: Mediation analysis of Other-focused trust and Propensity to trust in the Relationship between Witnessed Betrayal and Attachment Patterns (N=100)

Variables	Path	Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	t	P	95% CI
Avoidant Attachment	a ₁	Other-Focused Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	-.05	.01	-2.78	.007	-.086, -.014
	a ₂	Propensity to Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	.03	.02	1.50	.13	-.010, .070
	b ₁	Avoidant Attachment	Other-Focused Trust	-.79	.31	-2.55	.01	-1.407, -.183
	b ₂	Avoidant Attachment	Propensity to Trust	.36	.30	1.20	.23	-.228, .948
	c'	Avoidant Attachment	Witnessed Betrayal	.12	.05	2.30	.02	.018, .226
Anxious Attachment	a ₁	Other-Focused Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	-.06	.02	-3.00	.004	-.099, -.021
	a ₂	Propensity to Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	.05	.01	3.05	.003	.021, .095
	b ₁	Anxious Attachment	Other-Focused Trust	-.70	.27	-2.55	.01	-1.239, -.161
	b ₂	Anxious Attachment	Propensity to Trust	.62	.27	2.25	.02	.080, 1.174
	c'	Anxious Attachment	Witnessed Betrayal	.20	.04	4.52	<.001	.118, .298
Discomfort with Closeness	a ₁	Other-Focused Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	-.05	.01	-2.79	.006	-.090, -.016
	a ₂	Propensity to Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	.05	.01	2.95	.009	.019, .093
	b ₁	Discomfort with closeness	Other-Focused Trust	-.51	.20	-2.56	<.001	-.903, -.119
	b ₂	Discomfort with closeness	Propensity to Trust	.51	.20	2.56	.01	.121, .917
	c'	Discomfort with closeness	Witnessed Betrayal	.09	.03	2.79	.006	.028, .162
Relationship as Secondary	a ₁	Other-Focused Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	-.04	.01	-2.53	.01	-.085, -.011
	a ₂	Propensity to Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	.03	.01	1.68	.09	-.005, .069
	b ₁	Relationship as secondary	Other-Focused Trust	-.41	.16	-2.56	.01	-.728, -.096
	b ₂	Relationship as secondary	Propensity to Trust	.41	.16	2.55	.01	.097, .739
	c'	Relationship as secondary	Witnessed Betrayal	.03	.02	1.41	.16	-.015, .091
Preoccupation with Relationship	a ₁	Other-Focused Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	-.02	.01	-1.47	.14	-.065, .009
	a ₂	Propensity to Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	.05	.01	2.63	.01	.012, .088
	b ₁	Preoccupation with	Other-Focused	-.40	.15	-2.55	.01	-.713, -.093

	b ₂	relationship Preoccupation with relationship	Trust Propensity to Trust	.25	.16	1.56	.12	-.064, .564
	c'	Preoccupation with relationship	Witnessed Betrayal	.12	.02	4.59	<.001	.071, .177
	a ₁	Other-Focused Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	-.05	.01	-2.74	.007	-.089, -.015
	a ₂	Propensity to Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	.05	.01	2.89	.005	.018, .092
Need for Approval	b ₁	Need for Approval	Other-Focused Trust	-.25	.18	-1.37	.17	-.609, .109
	b ₂	Need for Approval	Propensity to Trust	.47	.18	2.55	.01	.110, .840
	c'	Need for Approval	Witnessed Betrayal	.11	.03	3.61	<.001	.051, .173
	a ₁	Other-Focused Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	-.04	.01	-2.50	.01	-.080, -.010
	a ₂	Propensity to Trust	Witnessed Betrayal	.02	.01	1.37	.17	-.011, .063
Confidence in Interpersonal Interactions	b ₁	Confidence in Interpersonal Interactions	Other-Focused Trust	-.24	.16	-1.50	.13	-.554, .074
	b ₂	Confidence in Interpersonal Interactions	Propensity to Trust	.36	.16	2.25	.02	.048, .686
	c'	Confidence in Interpersonal Interactions	Witnessed Betrayal	.06	.02	2.56	.01	.016, .122

Findings indicate witnessed betrayal significantly predict other-focused trust in its relationship with all attachment patterns except preoccupation with relationship and significantly predict propensity to trust in its relationship with anxious attachment, discomfort with closeness, preoccupation with relationship and need for approval (Path a₁ & a₂). Further, other-focused trust significantly related with all attachment patterns except need for approval and confidence in interpersonal interactions while propensity to trust is significantly related with all attachment patterns except avoidant attachment and preoccupation with relationship (Path b₁ & b₂). Contrary to this, witnessed betrayal significantly predicts all attachment patterns except relationship as secondary (Path c').

Table V: Indirect Effect of Witnessed Betrayal on Attachment Patterns via Other-focused Trust and Propensity to Trust

Variables	Mediator	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Avoidant Attachment	Other-focused Trust	.039	.017	.010	.075
	Propensity to Trust	.010	.012	-.008	.039
Anxious Attachment	Other-focused Trust	.035	.017	.006	.070
	Propensity to Trust	.031	.022	-.012	.074
Discomfort with Closeness	Other-focused Trust	.027	.013	.007	.057
	Propensity to Trust	.029	.015	.005	.065
Relationship as Secondary	Other-focused Trust	.019	.010	.004	.042
	Propensity to Trust	.013	.012	-.004	.039
Preoccupation with Relationship	Other-focused Trust	.011	.011	-.005	.032
	Propensity to Trust	.012	.012	-.006	.037
Need for Approval	Other-focused Trust	.013	.013	-.006	.038
	Propensity to Trust	.026	.014	.004	.056
Confidence in Interpersonal Interactions	Other-focused Trust	.010	.011	-.005	.034
	Propensity to Trust	.009	.010	-.007	.030

Table showed that the indirect effects of witnessed betrayal on all attachment patterns via other-focused trust are significant except preoccupation with relationship, need for approval and confidence in interpersonal interactions as the bootstrapped CI of this dimension is exclusive of zero. However, the indirect effects of witnessed betrayal on discomfort with closeness and need for approval via propensity to trust are significant and the bootstrapped CI of this dimension is exclusive of zero. Hence, it can be concluded that both other-focused trust and propensity to trust significantly mediated the relationship between witnessed betrayal and discomfort with closeness while partially mediated the relationship between witnessed betrayal and avoidant attachment, anxious attachment, relationship as secondary and need for approval. Moreover, both trust dimensions do not significantly mediate the relationship between witnessed betrayal and preoccupation with relationship and confidence in interpersonal interactions.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study investigates the relationship among witnessed betrayal trauma, anticipatory mistrust and adult attachment pattern along with the self-efficacy as a covariate in young adults. The sample of research was mainly single and female university students from nuclear family background. Most participants reported that they have witnessed betrayal in the form of abandonment and emotional neglect in close friendships during adolescence period. It aligns to the recent research that family structure and home environment play an important role in the development of trust and attachment patterns (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019). The first hypotheses that witnessed betrayal trauma was positively related to anxious and avoidant attachment, need for approval, preoccupation with relationships, discomfort with closeness and viewing relationship as secondary was consistent with correlational findings. It suggested that observing betrayal increases fear of betrayal and rejection which increased the need of reassurance and discomfort with closeness. It also supported the research studies that betrayal trauma leads to trust difficulties and insecure attachment patterns (Das & Jain, 2024). The second hypothesis that witnessed betrayal trauma is negatively related to other focused trust, propensity to trust and confidence in interactions was also consistent with findings. It suggested that by observing betrayal, young adults became cautious about trusting others and it also reduced their confidence in interpersonal situations. It supported the research studies which suggested that having exposure to violations of trust affected later expectations and behaviour regarding relationships (Das & Jain, 2024; Lathan et al., 2023).

The third hypothesis other focused trust and propensity to trust was negatively related to dimensions of insecure attachment patterns was partially inconsistent to the findings' as other focused trust was positively related to discomfort with closeness while viewing relationship as secondary and propensity to trust was positively related to anxious attachment, preoccupation with relationship, need for approval, discomfort with closeness and confidence in interactions. It suggested that having belief about other people as trustworthy is different from having a general tendency to trust others. Research studies suggested that fear of rejection due to exposure to betrayal trauma also affected the trust related behaviors (Abramov et al., 2022). Fourth hypothesis that other focused trust and propensity to trust is positively related to confidence in interactions was consistent to the findings which suggested that when people have positive expectations from others so they feel more comfortable in building relationships with others. Recent research suggested that there was a close relation among trust, self-efficacy and positive self-functioning (Szél & Kóródi, 2023). The hypothesis of mediation analysis that anticipatory mistrust would mediate the relationship between witnessed betrayal and dimensions of insecure attachment was partially supported by the findings. Other focused trust was a significant mediator of anxious and avoidant attachment but propensity to trust was an insignificant mediator of anxious and avoidant attachment which suggests that repeated exposure to betrayal results in reduction of trust over others. Therefore, it contributed to more anxious and avoidant attachment patterns.

Results showed that other focused trust and propensity to trust were a significant mediator of discomfort with closeness which suggested that exposure to betrayal resulted in difficulties in trusting others which lead to discomfort with intimacy. Other focused trust was also a significant mediator of viewing relationship as secondary while propensity to trust was an insignificant mediator of it which suggested that other focused trust was more important in examining whether a person avoids making relationships or considers them less important. Propensity to trust was a significant mediator of need for approval and other focused trust was insignificant which

suggested that a person exposed to witnessed betrayal trauma had a general willingness to trust others but still rely on reassurance of others. Mediation results showed that anticipatory mistrust did not mediate for preoccupation with relationships and confidence in interpersonal interactions which suggested that both of these dimensions maybe dependent on some other factors such as self-efficacy and coping styles. Recent research studies found that betrayal trauma in young adults was related to poorer well-being which suggested that mistrust was not the sole reason of every impact of betrayal trauma (Jankovic et al, 2024). Overall, mediation results best align with research studies which suggested that exposure to betrayal trauma was a threat to the secure attachment patterns and individuals respond to the same relational experience in different way as some individuals always stayed distant from others while others were willing to trust others but also relied over taking approval from others (Butler et al, 2022).

The results of multiple hierarchical regression were consistent with its hypothesis as witnessed betrayal, other focused trust and propensity to trust significantly predicted all the insecure attachment dimensions. It was also supported by research studies which found that betrayal trauma is related to trust difficulties and attachment patterns (Das & Jain, 2024). Moreover, other research studies further found that exposure to betrayal influences how individuals understood and respond to close relationships while dimensions of trust shaped expectations regarding others (Jankovic et al, 2024). Overall, the findings suggested that both observing betrayal and trust pattern contributed to attachment patterns instead of a single factor. The findings should also be understood within Pakistani culture. In Pakistani culture, close family and social relationships were very important. Therefore, when young adults observed betrayal within close relationships so it influenced the way they built their own relationships as they learnt that even close relationships also involved risk, rejection and betrayal. Even research studies on cultural betrayal trauma showed that breakdown of trust and betrayal trauma were related to psychological distress or PTSD symptoms (Gómez, 2022). Practical implications suggested that counsellors at university should consider witnessed betrayal when they assess relationship difficulties in students and they should plan such interventions which focus on trust, communication, emotional regulation and self-efficacy. Therefore, attention to experiences of betrayal would improve psychological support to young adults (Jankvoic et al., 2024).

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, witness betrayal trauma was significantly related to adult attachment pattern in young adults. Anticipatory mistrust showed a selective mediating role. Self-efficacy was related to trust and attachment as a covariate.

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