

Understanding the Role of Attachment Security and Social Learning in Predicting Empathy Development

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Trevor Archer ¹  Professor Department of Psychology University of Gothenburg Sweden trevorcsarcher49@gmail.com	Reviewer 1: Thseen Nazir ¹  Professor of Psychology and Counseling Department, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey. Email: thseen.nazir@ihu.edu.tr Reviewer 2: Mohammad Masoud Dayarian ²  Assistant Professor, Department of Counseling, Khomeinishahr Branch, Islamic Azad University.Komeinishar/Isfahan,Iran. dayariyan@iaukhsh.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The example from Elyasi et al. (2022) is used to generalize to “professional domains requiring interpersonal sensitivity.” This inference is overly broad. Consider limiting it to healthcare settings unless additional evidence from other professions is presented.

The use of the Morgan and Krejcie table for a population “exceeding 100,000” lacks specificity. Please provide the exact population frame or rationale for this estimation (e.g., all undergraduate students in South Africa or within selected universities).

While the IRI is adequately described, the authors should report the Cronbach’s alpha for each subscale from the present sample to confirm internal consistency reliability.

The SLTS is briefly described, but no sample reliability index is reported. Including Cronbach’s alpha values from the current sample would enhance transparency.

The authors mention that “assumptions of linearity, normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were examined and met,” yet only provide limited details. Please specify exact VIF, tolerance, and histogram or Q-Q plot shapes to support these assumptions.

The reported mean for “attachment security” is high ($M = 172.48$), but without a possible range or scale midpoint, readers cannot interpret what “high” means. Please include theoretical range or cutoff points for interpretability.

The phrase “the emotional structure provided by secure attachment enables the consistent and authentic expression of empathy” is conceptually rich but should be supported with empirical evidence or neuroscientific findings that distinguish between consistency and authenticity in empathic expression.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The authors mention that “peer attachments also play a critical role in adolescence...” This is a key point that would benefit from elaboration—specifically distinguishing between same-gender versus cross-gender peer attachments, which are known to affect empathic responsiveness differently.

The statement, “empathy can be shaped even in the absence of optimal attachment conditions...” is powerful but deserves more nuance. You might reference resilience literature to support the argument that compensatory social learning can offset early relational deficits.

The authors introduce “cultural values around interdependence...” but do not engage with any South African cultural variables. Given that the sample is South African, this omission is a missed opportunity to contextualize the study. I suggest integrating literature specific to sub-Saharan African collectivist norms or post-apartheid relational structures.

The correlation between attachment security and social learning ($r = .51$) suggests some multicollinearity. While VIF is below critical thresholds, the potential conceptual overlap should be acknowledged in the discussion.

The authors note that the model explained 50% of the variance in empathy development. This is a substantial figure; however, the authors should report effect sizes (e.g., Cohen’s f^2) to assess practical significance.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.